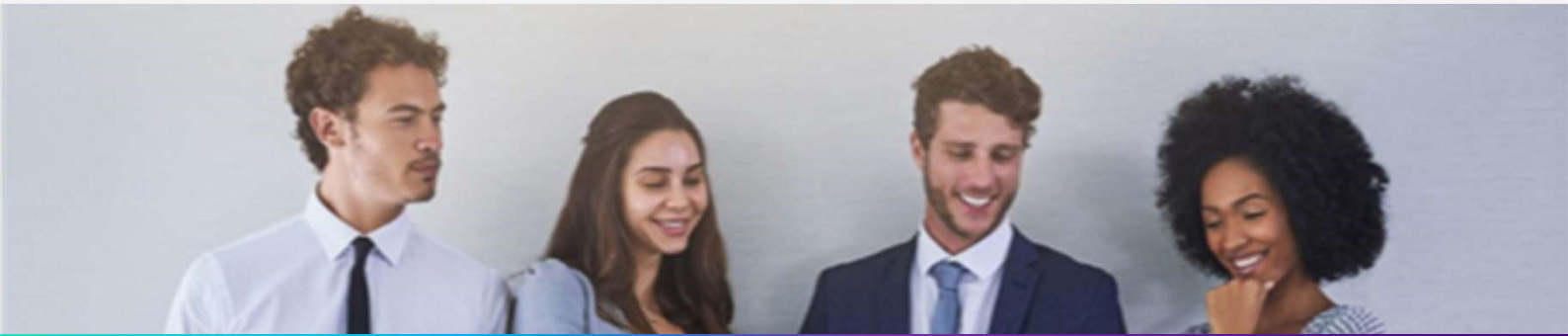


# Who's sabotaging the efforts to build trust in the team?

*Trust is complex. It means different things to different people. Although, it's fair to say that for everyone, a level of trust is foundational for human interactions. And from a business perspective, trust can manifest itself in different ways: loyalty, collaboration, productivity. Yet, trust is fickle. It can disappear despite all the good intentions. Why is that? Or maybe the question should be, who is sabotaging the efforts?*



## Trust is the elusive magic for teams

Trust isn't just something that you feel. Its effects are visible. In a team where there's trust, people step up, support each other and do their best work – together! Trust is the magic that breaks down organizational silos, fosters collaboration, stimulates engagement and deepens teamwork. The outcome? Individuals feel more confident about themselves and their team members, they are focused, efficient and productive.

Conversely, as Stephen Covey wrote in his [book](#) 'The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People' "without trust we don't truly collaborate, we merely coordinate or at best cooperate...". In a team that lacks trust, individuals spend time on protecting themselves and their own interests. In the [book](#) 'The Five Dysfunctions of a Team', Patrick Lencioni states where trust is lacking the team "conceals their weaknesses and mistakes from others". Instead of focusing on the job in hand, typically there are battles over responsibilities, information isn't always freely shared, and more time is spent double checking what others have or haven't done.

## Trust is a predictor of team performance

A [meta-analysis](#), undertaken by Bart de Jong in 2016, examined 112 studies which represented over 7,700 teams. He found that trust relates to how willing we are to be vulnerable. And it's the basis for how we expect others will behave towards us.

His analysis showed that when there was trust in a team, the team were more likely to work through their differences and share their perspectives. The result was an increase in the quality of work. The conclusion of the study indicates that there's a positive relationship between team performance and trust.

## Building trust

Trust is earned. It is not automatically given based on position and/or title. There are lots of articles and a number of courses which proclaim to help you build trust across your team.

The common denominators are:

- Sincerity or transparency
- Vulnerability
- Consistency
- Accountability
- Constructive feedback
- Respect

Managers and teams are encouraged to establish open communication, be willing to give and receive feedback as well as welcome innovative ideas. Why is this effective sometimes but not others? Is the process being hijacked?

## The unconscious saboteurs

In his [book](#) 'What we may be', Piero Ferrucci writes that "each of us is a crowd". We are all made up of sub-personalities. They are parts

of us that we created in the past, typically during our childhood, for our self-protection. In many cases, people aren't aware of their different sub-personalities. For example, the Rebel, the Judge, the Perfectionist, the Victim, the Critic. Although hidden deep inside, these sub-personalities are still alive and can be triggered in a person's reality now. More often than not, the change of personality occurs without conscious control. For instance, starting a new project may trigger John's Perfectionist. He becomes more demanding, setting the bar high for success, feeling that there's no room for error.

As Veerle de Bock [explains](#) in 'Become what is changing', sub-personalities have their "unique capabilities to trust in their unique fluent way in which they present their essence". But there are parts of the sub-personality that can invalidate that capability to trust. Maybe this is why trust in teams isn't always constant?

Depending on the situation, sub-personalities might unconsciously undermine the trust dynamic in the team. For instance: a throw-away comment from an internal stakeholder to Bas, awoke his frightened inner child which is now questioning the manager's real motives. Or Gemma's inner critic has been poked. When the inner critic is dominant, she finds it difficult to trust as she doubts herself.

This unconscious switching between sub-personalities undoubtedly adds an extra dimension to the challenge of building trust in a team.

## Getting to know the hidden team members

Trust is what people most want and need at work. And from an organizational perspective it's beneficial too: more motivated and productive teams. But what can you do, if despite trying to create a team environment to build trust that it remains elusive?

One option is to bring the theory of psychoanalytic models such as Transactional Analysis and Sub-Personalities alive through practical exercises or role plays. Such exercises have multiple benefits for an individual and organization. For the person, they experience what is happening inside them and gain deeper insight into the triggers. Such exercises unlock an appreciation about the workings of 'self'. This helps you recognize what pushes your buttons and understand why you react the way you do. Only then, can you take responsibility for your behaviour which results in a sustained positive change. This is not only beneficial in a professional environment but also in your personal life!

From an organizational perspective, recognizing, coaching and supporting your employees to grow will pay dividends. As the 2016 de Jong meta-analysis showed, trust delivers real improvements in team performance.

Yes, this approach is different. But if you're willing to try, the result will be phenomenal!



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