

# You need to trust me!

THOUGHT PAPER

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## Over the last two weeks, the key theme at two of my coaching conversations has been **‘Pistanthrophobia’**. Yes, it’s an actual phobia, which means the fear of trust.

Both sessions involved the founders of two very different companies – both of whom are passionate, focused, driven, and completely hands-on individuals running their growing firms.

### Coaching session 1

My coachee runs an established firm with a workforce of ~2000. The firm has onboarded a new COO 6 months back. The COO is an industry veteran with great pedigree, experience, and is completely hands-on in his leadership style.

Coachee: “I am not sure if I have hired the right person as the COO. We thought he would take on a lot of my day-to-day work and drive the organization towards greater excellence. But during my daily connects with his direct reports, I have started getting a mixed bag of feedback.”

Me: “Did you do all the necessary background and reference checks while hiring him?”

Coachee: “We did, and all his references talked highly of him, and his background/experience matched the requirement perfectly!”

Me: “It’s just been six months. Don’t you think you should be giving him a little bit more time?”

Coachee: “I agree. But his direct reports are not giving me the right signals.”

Me: “Why are you meeting his direct reports daily?”

Coachee: “I am running a firm here. I need to know what’s happening and if there are any challenges that the operations team is facing.”

Me: “Don’t you think the COO should be updating you on that?”

Coachee: “He does. But I need to be sure if he is giving me the right information.”

Me: “Do you trust him?”

Coachee: “Shouldn’t he be building the trust with me by proving himself?”



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### Coaching session 2

The coachee runs a startup. They have hired an HR Manager, three months back to head, and set-up their HR function.

Coachee: “I am facing an issue with my time management. I am overworked and don’t know how to manage it. Can you help?”

Me: “Which activity do you believe is taking up most of your time?”

Coachee: “Recruiting for my leadership team.”

Me: “Why? Isn’t that the job of your HR Manager?”

Coachee: “No way. I don’t want her to know who we are evaluating and at what compensation.”

Me: “But why?”

Coachee: “She might leak the information. She might also use the compensation data to her advantage.”

Me: “Don’t you trust her?”

Coachee: “It’s just been three months. She needs to spend some more time before I start trusting her with confidential information.”

But is trust so important for us to talk about? Most people think that trust is a nice to have, soft, social virtue, but few understand the true impact it has on business results.

- Trust fosters stronger relationships and removes politics and silos from the workplace

- It provides people with a sense of safety and creates a cohesive environment for innovation and productivity.
- Trust helps teams/organizations to be more nimble, more efficient, and more effective - it's like oxygen for a successful team.

So if it is so important, then why is it that trusting someone is so difficult? Based on my experience, I think the following two are the most common reasons:

- One has had some bad experience(s) in the past and therefore does not want to go through the pain again
- One is insecure – about the lack of their skills/abilities and consequently a loss of face/control

The ability to build and maintain trust in an organization starts at the top and is fostered through the organization. If you, as a leader, are not trusting your team, especially when they are new to the organization, you are surely setting them up for failure. You need to create space to let them perform and an environment where people in their teams can begin trusting them and collaboratively work towards success.

So how can you, as a leader, build trust?

- Think in terms of long term relationship building and not short term successes
  - Consider individuals as partners in your success.
- Build a connect
  - Take the first step. Open up. Demonstrate and communicate your trust. As Ken Blanchard says, “When you open up and share about yourself, you demonstrate a vulnerability that engenders trust.”
  - Tell and listen to individual stories. We are all humans first and the job titles later. Spend time with each other – work, play, and have fun together.
- Do not interfere
  - Avoid too frequent skip-levels
  - Delegate and monitor effectively

Remember, trust generates commitment; commitment fosters teamwork, and teamwork delivers results. When people trust their team members, they not only work harder, but they work harder for the good of the team.

So, wave the magic wand of trust around you and turn off your cell phone, laptop, and tablets, and make that two-week vacation that you deservedly yearning for, possible. It will help. Trust me :-)

## About the author



Mainak brings over 20 years of experience spanning business and HR roles across geographies. This has given him a unique understanding of the link between HR and business strategy. He also holds a patent for HR capability development.

Mainak's experience includes human capital strategy, culture, talent development (performance, leadership development, career pathing, competency, learning, engagement, diversity), and talent acquisition (including on-boarding and background check). He has also implemented HRIS platform and HR metrics to improve performance.

Recently he has been helping startups set up efficient and effective HR teams and processes. In addition, Mainak is a recognized Executive Coach and Leadership Development expert.

Mainak's previous work experience includes stints/projects with Accenture (Consulting and HR), Hewitt Associates, AbsolutData, Heidrick & Struggles, Evalueserve, Sterlite Technologies, and Upstox.

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