



# Trust in the Workplace: Navigating Diminishing Bonds and Rebuilding Connections

## Introduction

Trust is the cornerstone of any successful employment relationship, yet it can be fragile and susceptible to various influences. In this blog post, we'll explore the top three reasons trust diminishes in employment relationships, the symptoms that result, and the pivotal roles of HR, managers, and employees in rebuilding this vital foundation. Additionally, we'll highlight tools that can assist employees in rebuilding trust at work.

## Diminishing Trust: Top 3 Reasons and Symptoms

Communication Breakdowns: Ineffective communication is a primary factor leading to trust erosion. When employees struggle to communicate effectively with a colleague, or feel uninformed or excluded in workplace processes, trust can diminish. Symptoms include misunderstandings, rumours, withdrawal and a lack of transparency, which can lead to decreased morale and engagement. When communication issues continue or escalate they can have an impact on performance or result in unacceptable and potentially harmful behaviours such as bullying, harassment or discrimination.

Lack of Consistency in Leadership Actions: Trust falters when there's inconsistency between what leaders say and what they do, or when there is a difference in how they treat various employees or similar

matters. If promises are broken, or actions contradict stated values, employees may question the sincerity of leadership. Symptoms may manifest as cynicism, disengagement, and a decline in employee loyalty.

Perceived Unfairness: Employees value fairness and equity in the workplace. When decisions related to promotions, rewards, or disciplinary actions seem arbitrary or biased, trust often suffers. Symptoms might include resentment, increased conflicts, and a decline in teamwork as employees become guarded.

### **Rebuilding Trust: Roles and Responsibilities**

HR's Role: Whether inhouse or a trusted external resource, HR and employment relations (ER) specialists can assist with setting the foundation for trust. Establishing transparent communication channels, ensuring fair and consistent HR practices, and providing resources for conflict resolution contribute to rebuilding trust. HR/ER specialists can also initiate employee feedback mechanisms to address concerns and foster an inclusive culture.

Managers' Role: Managers are at the forefront of rebuilding trust. They should prioritise open and honest communication, demonstrate consistency in their actions, and actively address issues and any perceptions of unfairness. Managers should also engage in active listening, showing empathy, and involving employees in decision-making processes to rebuild a sense of shared ownership.

Employees' Role: Employees are not passive recipients in the trust-building process. Expressing concerns openly, seeking clarification, and providing constructive feedback are essential. Being open to rebuilding trust requires a willingness to engage in honest

conversations and actively contribute to a positive workplace culture, including after any concerns have arisen.

## **Tools for Rebuilding Trust at Work**

Employee Surveys and Feedback Mechanisms: Periodic surveys provide a platform for employees to express their concerns anonymously, fostering honest communication and enabling organisations to address specific issues.

Facilitation, Mediation and Conflict Resolution Processes: Facilitated sessions to address conflicts and misunderstandings can assist. Creating a safe space for open dialogue contributes to rebuilding trust.


Training on Communication: Investing in training helps employees and managers to develop effective communication skills, clarify workplace culture, and foster understanding and empathy.

Reward and Recognition: Acknowledging and appreciating employees' contributions through a formal reward and recognition programme can contribute to a positive workplace culture, reinforce trust in leadership.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, trust is the lifeblood of successful employment relationships, and its erosion requires a concerted effort to rebuild. By addressing communication breakdowns, ensuring consistency in leadership actions, and promoting fairness, organisations can create a workplace where trust flourishes. Implementing tools and strategies for open communication, conflict resolution, and reward

and recognition further solidifies the foundation for trust in our workplaces.

 021 932 332

 [marie@toviiconsulting.co.nz](mailto:marie@toviiconsulting.co.nz)

 [www.toviiconsulting.co.nz](http://www.toviiconsulting.co.nz)