The Director's Link

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"…the first job of any leader is to inspire trust. It's to bring out the best in people by entrusting them with meaningful stewardships, and to create an environment in which high trust inspires creativity and possibility."

– Stephen R. Covey

The Power of Trust

Paula Steffen

Trust is a powerful form of motivation and inspiration. People want to be trusted. They respond and thrive on trust. As leaders in the field of early care and education, it is important to establish, nurture, and sustain trusting relationships—not as a way to manipulate people, but as the most effective way of working with others and getting results.

So, how do we do this? First, we need to understand the components of trust. Think of trust as comprised of two equally important parts—*character* and *competence*. Character relates to a person's integrity, motives, and intent when working with other people. It is an essential ingredient in all trusting relationships.

The second component of trust, one that is less often mentioned, is competence. Competence is a person's skills, results, and track record of behavior. When making decisions as a director, you usually give important responsibilities to those people whom you feel are most competent because you trust that they will achieve the results you want. So, competence is situational and depends on what is required in specific instances.

Both character and competence are vital to trust. Noted author Stephen Covey has identified thirteen specific behaviors associated with them.

Behavior #1: Talk Straight

Straight talk means communicating so clearly that you cannot be misunderstood. It is "honesty in action." Straight talk is telling an employee whose job performance is slipping, the specific things he or she needs to do to remedy the situation. Although hard to deliver, straight, unambiguous messages make your expectations clear to employees.

There are several things you might do to improve your skill at talking straight. First, recognize what prevents you from talking straight. Is it fear of hurting someone's feelings? Next, become more fully aware of all the dimensions of your conversations. As you are talking, mentally stop and check yourself—are you putting a spin on the conversation? What are your motives? Are you skirting the issue, afraid to get to the point? Are you talking too much? Sometimes, less is more.

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Behavior #2: Demonstrate Respect

Demonstrating respect means treating employees as valued colleagues. It is behaving in ways that show genuine respect, care, and concern. The little things we do ***are*** the big things. To improve your ability to demonstrate respect, apply both the golden and platinum rules—treat others the way you want to be treated and treat them the way they want to be treated. Also, do specific things to show others you care. This can be as simple as a verbal acknowledgement, sending an e-mail of concern, or writing a heartfelt note of thanks.

Behavior #3: Create Transparency

Being transparent is about being open, real, and genuine. It is taking the risk to be vulnerable. If we want our staff to trust us, then we must first demonstrate our trust in them. To create transparency, occasionally ask yourself if you are withholding information that others should be aware of. If so, why? Operate from the premise that there are no hidden agendas and you have nothing to hide.

Behavior #4: Right Wrongs

To right wrongs is more than apologizing. It includes doing what you can to correct a mistake plus a little more. It's going the extra mile to express regret. There are several things you can do to improve your ability to right wrongs. Accompany a sincere apology with a thoughtful gesture. Pay attention to your response the next time you make a mistake. Do you ignore it, justify it, or admit it and do what you can to correct it? And finally, be quick to forgive the next time someone "wrongs" you.

Behavior #5: Show Loyalty

Showing loyalty is demonstrated by giving credit to others and speaking about people as though they were present. Giving credit to others affirms a person's value as well as creates an environment where people feel free to share ideas. To show loyalty, there are several behaviors you can practice. First, consider your options when you are in a conversation in which another person (who is not present) is being talked about in a negative way. Do you participate? Leave? Stay, but don't talk? Suggest that if there is a concern they go to the person directly? Each situation will be different, so decide what is best and then do it.

Behavior #6: Deliver Results

Delivering results gives you instant credibility and trust. It demonstrates that you are valuable, have contributions to make, and can perform. It means you don't over-promise and under-deliver. To practice delivering results, before you make a commitment, ask yourself if it is realistic. Also, make sure you understand what is expected of you. What you think are good results and what the person to whom you are delivering results thinks may be two different things.

Behavior #7: Get Better

Getting better means continuously improving. When people see you and your program as continually improving, they are more confident of your ability to adapt to a rapidly changing environment. Consider sending out a short survey to your staff, board, or parents. Ask them these three questions:

- What is one thing we are doing now that you are certain we should continue doing?
- What is one thing we are doing now that you think we should stop doing?
- What is one thing we are not doing that you think we should begin doing?

Behavior #8: Confront Reality

Confronting reality means tackling the tough issues head-on. It's sharing the good and bad news, discussing the hard-to-talk-about issues, and dealing with the proverbial elephant in the room. To confront reality, the next time you are reluctant to do so, explore why you are hesitant. Reframe your attitude toward those involved and see them as mature adults who can handle the circumstances as they are.

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Our Mission
The McCormick Tribune Center for Early Childhood Leadership is dedicated to enhancing the management skills, professional orientation, and leadership capacity of early childhood administrators. The activities of the Center encompass four areas: training and technical assistance, program evaluation, research, and public awareness.

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The Director's Toolbox

Asking Nonthreatening Questions

Directors can foster greater trust by asking nonthreatening questions at staff meetings that encourage individuals to express their views and opinions on different issues. Here are some suggestions for asking nonthreatening questions at your meetings.

- Begin by asking a question of your entire team rather than singling out an individual and putting that person on the spot.

  Example: "What are the possible reasons why the children are having problems with transitions at lunch?" (Do *not* say, "Jane, what are the possible reasons the children are having problems with transitions?")

- Don't be afraid of silence. Some directors become anxious if a question does not elicit an immediate response. If this happens to you, relax; your teachers are thinking.

- If a teacher responds, acknowledge the remark and explore the response further if possible. For example,

  Teacher: "One of the reasons we are having problems with transitions at lunch is that the new cook brings in the food cart and just leaves it by the door."

  Director: "Why is leaving the food cart by the door contributing to the transition problem at lunch?"

  Teacher: "Well, before, the cook put the food on the table while we got the kids washed and ready. Now, one of us has to get the food on the table, leaving only one person to supervise handwashing."

- If no one responds in a reasonable amount of time, look for nonverbal signals from a staff member who wants to be involved (e.g., eye contact, a forward lean, an uplifted eyebrow.) Then, call on that person by name.

  Example: "Letitia, you look as if you have something to offer here. Can you help us out? In your opinion, what are the possible reasons the children are having transition problems at lunch?"

- If no one responds to a question, consider rewording the question or asking if the question needs clarification.

  Example: "Have I explained this clearly?" (rather than, "Do you understand?")

- Ask questions that are not biased.

  Example: "What may be causing the problem?" (Do not say, "Is the problem caused by rushing the children?" The problem may be caused by more than one factor.)

- Avoid too many yes/no questions. These have the effect of limiting discussion.

  Example: "Is the transition problem caused by understaffing?" (You will probably get "yes" or "no" answers, but little discussion.)

- Pose questions that do not put your teachers on the defensive.

  Example: "Is the lunch routine overwhelming?" (rather than, "Bonnie, why is there a lot of crying in your classroom at lunch time?")

- Even if people are not being attentive, do not ask "by name" questions to get their attention or embarrass them for not paying attention. Such actions can cause resentment and further noninvolvement.

- Be careful not to dish out too much praise or respond to participants with words such as, "That's a good question" or "What a great idea." Other staff members not receiving such praise may interpret their questions or responses as being less valued.

Adapted from Martin, C., & Hackett, D. (1993). *Facilitation skills for team leaders* (pp. 20-21). Palo Alto, CA: Crisp Publications.

Planning Ahead

Professional Development Opportunities

Technology Training—Packing Power into Presentations

Friday, January 30, 2009

Take your presentations to the next level. Learn the potential for creating winning presentations with Microsoft® Office PowerPoint® 2007 and how to select a multimedia projector for your center. Become familiar with best practices for integrating technology into presentations. The workshop will be held from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Participants will receive a certificate of attendance documenting 6 clock hours of training for use towards the Illinois Director Credential (IDC).

Location: College of Lake County, Grayslake Campus

Fee: $45

Technology Training—Intermediate Course

Fridays, February 27, March 6, 13, 27 and April 3, 2009

This course provides intermediate instruction to computer technology as an administrative tool in the management of child care programs. Lab sessions will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Topics include: Creating electronic forms with Microsoft® Word 2007; constructing complex spreadsheets with Microsoft® Excel 2007; designing flyers and brochures with Microsoft® Publisher 2007; and building databases with Microsoft® Access 2007. Additional content and activities will be delivered online. Participants successfully finishing the course will receive a certificate of completion documenting 30 clock hours of training for use towards the Illinois Director Credential (IDC). Individuals may also earn two semester hours of graduate credit from National-Louis University (ECE535, Technology in Child Care Administration II) by paying an additional fee.

Location: National-Louis University, Chicago Campus

Fee: $75, includes textbook, flashdrive, and all handouts

Family Child Care Institute—Indoor and Outdoor Environments

February 28 and May 16, 2009

Meeting the needs of infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and school-age children is one of the biggest challenges faced by family child care providers. During this institute participants will learn how the environment affects every facet of the program from morning arrival until evening departure. The essentials of design and space utilization, as well as healthy and safety considerations, will be covered. Featured presenters are Shirley Flath, Liliam Perez, and Migdalia Young.

Funded by the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), this institute will be conducted over two days. The first day will focus on indoor environments and will be held at the Center's Wheeling campus. This session will be presented in both English and Spanish. The second day will focus on outdoor environments and will be held in conjunction with the Center's Leadership Connections conference at the Westin Chicago North Shore in Wheeling. Participants who complete the training are eligible for 9 clock hours of Child Development Associate (CDA) credit upon request at no additional charge.

The registration fee is due by February 15, 2009 and includes texts, handouts, and meals. Participants may also earn two semester hours of graduate credit (ECE 544, Early Childhood Environments) by paying an additional fee, completing a project, and engaging in an online discussion.

Location: McCormick Tribune Center for Early Childhood Leadership, National-Louis University, Wheeling Campus Annex

Fee: $75 for one day or $120 for both days, includes texts, handouts, and meals (breakfast and lunch)

Program Administration Scale—Assessor Reliability Training

March 2-5, 2009 or September 14-17, 2009

The *Program Administration Scale* (PAS) measures leadership and management practices of center-based early care and education programs. Assessor Reliability Training includes an overview of the instrument, how to rate indicators and score items, the protocol for interviewing and collecting data, and procedures for verifying documentation. Individuals who successfully complete the training are eligible to become certified PAS assessors. This four-day training is designed for technical assistance specialists, quality monitors, management consultants, researchers, and other professionals interested in using the PAS to reliably assess early childhood leadership and management practices.

Hotel accommodations are available at the Candlewood Suites, adjacent to the Center. To make a reservation, call (847) 520-1684. Participants may earn two semester hours of graduate credit (ECE582C, Early Childhood Program Evaluation) by paying an additional fee.

Location: McCormick Tribune Center for Early Childhood Leadership, National-Louis University, Wheeling Campus Annex

Fee: $850, includes all texts, materials, and meals

For more information about these professional development opportunities, please contact Debra Trude-Suter at (800) 443-5522, ext. 5056 or debra.trudesuter@nl.edu. You can also visit us online at http://cecl.nl.edu.

Children's Savings Accounts (CSA) Task Force Update

In August 2007, Governor Blagojevich signed into law legislation that creates a task force charged with developing a Children's Savings Accounts program in Illinois. Public Act 950358 requires the Task Force to review and make recommendations about children's savings account program options and to develop a strategic implementation plan for providing a savings account at birth for every Illinois child.

The goal of the CSA program is to raise the level of financial literacy and increase the number of children in Illinois who own assets for use in attending post-secondary education or training, purchasing a home, or opening a small business. The law directs the Task Force to consider the following factors in its recommendations for the design of the program:

- Return on investment, safety of the investment and insurance for the account, ease of managing the account, and ease of making various forms of deposits;
- Impact on eligibility for student financial aid, public assistance, and other public benefits, and taxation of the account earnings and distributions;
- Provision of financial education to children and families, access to additional financial services;
- Restrictions on the withdrawal or distribution prior to the child reaching 18, portability of the account, limits on permissible uses of the account;
- Revenue sources for the initial deposit and any savings match for deposits for children in low-income families; and,
- Data collection and tracking.

Increasing the number of Illinois families saving for their children will increase the number of children who can actively pursue their dream of attaining higher education, purchasing a home, or starting a small business. These activities will generate a more prepared and competitive workforce, more savings and investment, stronger communities, and contribute to a thriving state economy.

The Task Force will hold at least four public meetings at a variety of geographic locations throughout the state to gather information from community residents and institutions, families with children, financial education providers, schools, and local financial services providers. The Task Force will produce a written report of its findings and recommendations to be presented to the Governor, the General Assembly, and be made available to the public.

For more information please contact Debra Trude-Suter at (800) 443-5522, ext. 5056 or debra.trudesuter@nl.edu.

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Behavior #9: Clarify Expectations

Clarifying expectations means describing what is expected of employees. It means creating a shared vision and achieving agreement upfront about what is to be done. To practice clarifying expectations, the next time you are in a conversation with someone, ask them what they understood you to say. Also, if the conversation is regarding a work project, ask what they see as their next steps on the project.

Behavior #10: Practice Accountability

Practicing accountability means holding both yourself and others accountable. Practicing accountability means being clear when you communicate how you are doing and how others are doing. It means not shirking responsibility and not pointing fingers when things go wrong. To become better at practicing accountability, listen to your language and your thoughts. When things go wrong, don't blame others—take responsibility.

Behavior #11: Listen First

Listening first is harder to do than it sounds. It means really listening to understand a person's thoughts before you try to formulate an answer. To practice listening first, the next time you are in a conversation ask yourself if you really listened to the other person. Make it a practice to really understand the other person's point of view before sharing your own.

Behavior #12: Keep Commitments

Keeping commitments, as implied, is about keeping your word and following through by doing what you say you will do. Keeping commitments is essential for building trust. Not doing so is the quickest way to destroy trust. To practice keeping commitments, pay attention to your language. Make sure your commitments are realistic. For example, if you have to miss a deadline, try to renegotiate as early as possible; don't ignore it and be late.

Behavior #13: Extend Trust

Extending trust is about believing in people. By trusting people you will be cultivating trust in return. This is not to say you should be gullible or extend trust unwisely. You extend trust to those who have earned your trust. To practice extending trust, learn how to appropriately trust others based on the situation, risk, and credibility of the people involved.

As a director, no doubt many of these behaviors are already part of your leadership repertoire. As you review them again, do a quick self-check to see if there are some areas you might want to strengthen. Select one behavior to focus on each day during the next couple of weeks. Be mindful of your thoughts and actions and make a mental note to help you evaluate the behavior you are practicing.

For further reading: Covey, S. (2006). *The speed of trust*. New York: Free Press.

Paula Steffen is a training and technical assistance specialist for the McCormick Tribune Center for Early Childhood Leadership.

LEADERSHIP
Connections
May 14-16, 2009

Westin Chicago North Shore

Join us at the luxurious Westin Chicago North Shore for this highly acclaimed professional development opportunity especially designed for center directors, lead teachers and supervisors, trainers and consultants, technical assistance specialists, and family child care providers. Three stimulating days of training, exhibits, networking, and fun! Meet and learn from national experts in leadership and program management. Total conference package is only $375 before February 1, 2009.

This includes:

- *Thursday:* Opening Luncheon and Keynote, Public Policy Forum, Networking Reception and Marketplace, Spotlight on Best Practices, and Pamper Yourself Activities
- *Friday:* Continental Breakfast, Skill-Building Clinics, Box Lunch, Marketplace, Meet the Authors, and Afternoon Ice Cream Treat
- *Saturday:* Continental Breakfast, Seminars, and Closing Luncheon and Keynote
- *Plus:* Great conference bag, Yellow Pages of Professional Resources, and LOTS of Raffle Prizes and Gifts

Some great preconference activities are also available on Wednesday, May 13, 2009. Pre-registration and an additional fee are required.

- *Brookfield Zoo tour highlighting the Hamill Family Play Zoo workshop: How to connect nature to children's learning*
- *Hands-on technology training*
- *Tour of the Chicago Child Care Society Center and Field Museum Crown Family Play Lab*
- *Program Administration Scale training*

For more information including sponsorship opportunities, contact Donna Jonas at (800) 443-5522, ext.5058 or donna.jonas@nl.edu.

SAVE THE DATES!

GATEWAYS TO OPPORTUNITY

Gateways to Opportunity is the statewide support network designed to provide guidance and recognition to individuals and programs that serve young children and their families in Illinois. A goal of Gateways to Opportunity is to increase access to resources and opportunities for professional development.

As a service of Gateways to Opportunity, Professional Development Advisors are available statewide to assist individuals with determining which credentials, certificates, and programs will help further their career. Their services are free and are available today by calling (888) 548-8080.

To view updated information about the Early Childhood Credential, Infant-Toddler Credential, and the Illinois Director Credential, visit INCCRRA's Gateways to Opportunity Web site at www.ilgateways.com.