A TB LABS WHITE PAPER

Trust, Performance Under Pressure, and Team Trust

Data Collection: June 10 - July 6, 2026 | Report Date: August 18, 2026 | Sample: n=33 | Ranked breaker responses: n=33

Executive Summary

TB Labs collected 33 survey responses to understand how trust is built and broken under pressure. The survey used playoff and championship sports as a relatable context, but the findings point beyond sports to work teams, leadership, and relationships. In this directional sample, trust under pressure is not just about flawless performance. Respondents most strongly valued leaders who admit mistakes and teammates who communicate more when the stakes rise. The fastest trust breakers were blame and hidden information.

Key Outcomes

- 93.9% say leaders admitting mistakes is important for performance under pressure.
- 87.9% say performance under pressure requires more communication between teammates.
- 90.9% ranked blaming others among the top three fastest trust breakers.
- 72.7% ranked hiding information among the top three fastest trust breakers; hiding information tied blame for first-place selections.
- Only 60.6% agree that high-pressure performance itself is a sign of trustworthiness, suggesting people distinguish performance from trust-building behavior.

Key Indicators

93.9%	87.9%	90.9%	72.7%
Say leaders need to admit mistakes.	Say pressure requires more communication.	Put blaming others in top 3 breakers.	Put hiding information in top 3 breakers.

Deep Dive Contents

1. Survey snapshot	5. What breaks trust fastest
2. Strongest quantitative signal	6. Implications for leaders and teams
3. Correlation findings	7. Limitations and open questions
4. Action, Insight, and Connection lens	8. Appendix: validation and testing

Glossary & Examples

Technical term	What it means	Example from this study
Spearman rho	Shows how strongly two ordered variables move together. Positive means they rise together; negative means one falls as the other rises.	rho = 0.53 means respondents who value more communication also tend to value leaders admitting mistakes.
p-value	A quick signal for whether a pattern may be more than random noise in this sample. It does not prove causation.	p = 0.002 for communication and mistake admission suggests a meaningful relationship in this sample.
q-value	A p-value adjusted after many tests are run. Lower values are stronger after accounting for multiple comparisons.	The communication and mistake-admission relationship remained strongest after adjustment, q = 0.016.

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Production Statement

This white paper is designed to be easy to skim and focused on what matters most, using plain language. AI was used for calculations, charting support, and drafting assistance, while research interpretation and final conclusions remained human-led. TB Labs studies are practical research efforts designed to better understand trust in real-world settings. Send requests, comments, and questions to info@mytrustbuilder.com.

Framework note

The analysis is organized through the TrustBuilder framework: Action, Insight, and Connection. Action captures follow-through, ownership, reliability, and results. Insight captures communication, clarity, transparency, listening, and problem-solving. Connection captures support, respect, care, inclusion, and relational safety.

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Deep Analysis

The sections below unpack the survey pattern in more detail. The goal is to keep the main narrative understandable while preserving technical validation in the appendix.

1. The strongest quantitative signal: mistake admission and communication define trust under pressure

Two items stand out. First, 93.9% agree or strongly agree that leaders need to admit mistakes to perform under pressure. Second, 87.9% agree or strongly agree that performance under pressure requires more communication between teammates. In plain language: when pressure rises, respondents want truth, ownership, and timely information.

Survey item	Mean	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Interpretation
Leaders admit mistakes	4.61	93.9%	3.0%	3.0%	Strongest leadership signal; humility and ownership build trust.
More communication required	4.42	87.9%	9.1%	3.0%	Strongest teamwork signal; pressure increases the need for clarity.
Personal connection increases trust	4.00	68.8%	18.8%	12.5%	Connection matters, but appears more distinct from other items.
Prefer clear direction over autonomy	3.64	66.7%	15.2%	18.2%	People often want direction under pressure, but not necessarily over-control.
Performance = trustworthiness	3.61	60.6%	18.2%	21.2%	Supported, but weaker than communication and mistake ownership.

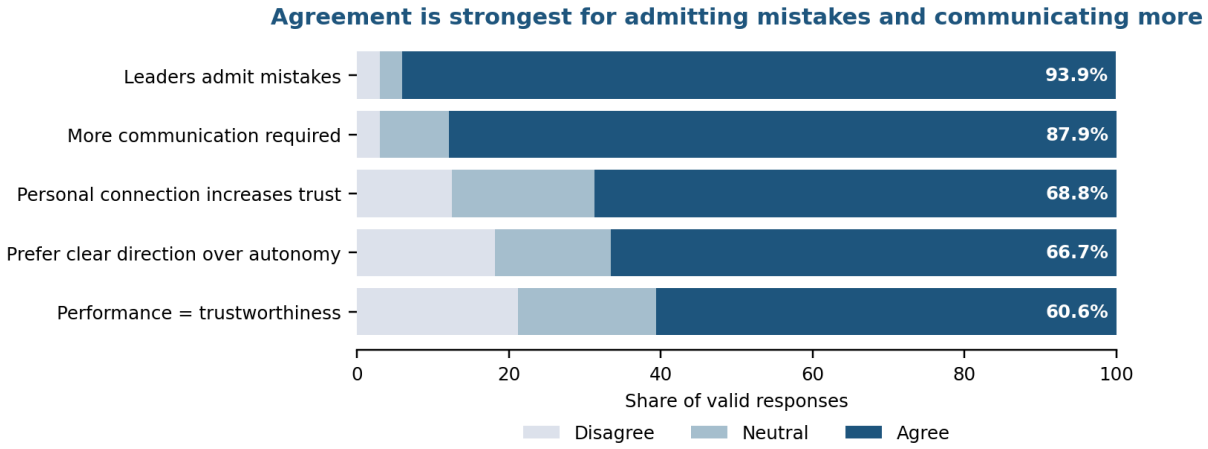


Figure 1. Agreement patterns show that admitting mistakes and communicating more are the clearest trust signals under pressure.

The performance item is important because it is more mixed. Only 60.6% agree that performance under high pressure is a sign of trustworthiness. That does not mean performance is irrelevant. It suggests respondents do not equate performance alone with trust. Trust appears to depend on how people communicate, own mistakes, and behave when things go wrong.

2. Interesting correlation findings: communication and mistake admission move together

The correlation analysis uses Spearman rho because the survey items are ordered response scales. A positive rho means respondents who score one item higher tend to score the other item higher too. The strongest relationship connects communication and mistake admission.

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Relationship	rho	p-value	q-value	Plain-language interpretation
More communication required ↔ Leaders admit mistakes	0.527	0.002	0.016	Strongest positive pattern in the sample.
Performance = trustworthiness ↔ Leaders admit mistakes	0.421	0.015	0.074	Moderate positive relationship.
Performance = trustworthiness ↔ More communication required	0.352	0.045	0.149	Moderate positive relationship.
Performance = trustworthiness ↔ Prefer clear direction	-0.199	0.267	0.668	Weak negative/non-significant relationship.
Prefer clear direction ↔ Personal connection increases trust	0.145	0.429	0.711	Weak or non-significant relationship.

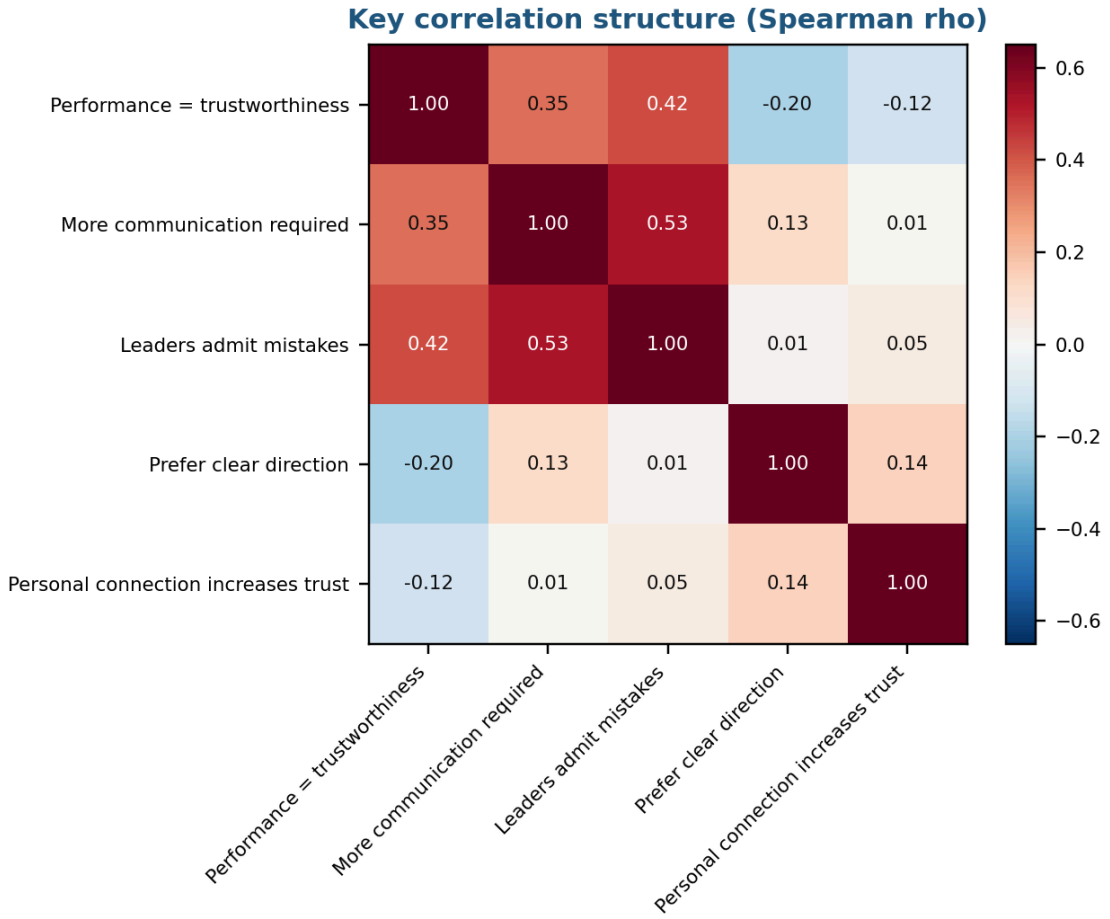


Figure 2. Spearman correlation matrix. The darkest positive non-diagonal cell is communication with leader mistake admission.

Most useful correlation headline

Respondents who believe pressure requires more communication also tend to believe leaders need to admit mistakes (rho = 0.527, p = 0.002, q = 0.016). In plain language, communication and humility appear to be part of the same trust-under-pressure pattern.

3. Action, Insight, and Connection: the TrustBuilder lens on the findings

The survey was not designed as a full TrustBuilder assessment, but the results still map clearly to the Action, Insight, and Connection framework. The strongest overall story is that pressure makes trust visible through ownership, communication, and relational safety.

Framework route	What the survey measured	Key result	What it means

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Action	Ownership, accountability, performance, follow-through	90.9% ranked blaming others in the top three trust breakers.	Under pressure, failing is less damaging than refusing to own what happened.
Insight	Communication, transparency, explanation, listening	87.9% say pressure requires more communication; 72.7% ranked hiding information in the top three trust breakers.	People want clear, honest information before and after things go wrong.
Connection	Personal bond, support, respect, safety	68.8% agree personal connection increases trust under pressure.	Connection matters, but it appears to operate differently than communication and performance beliefs.

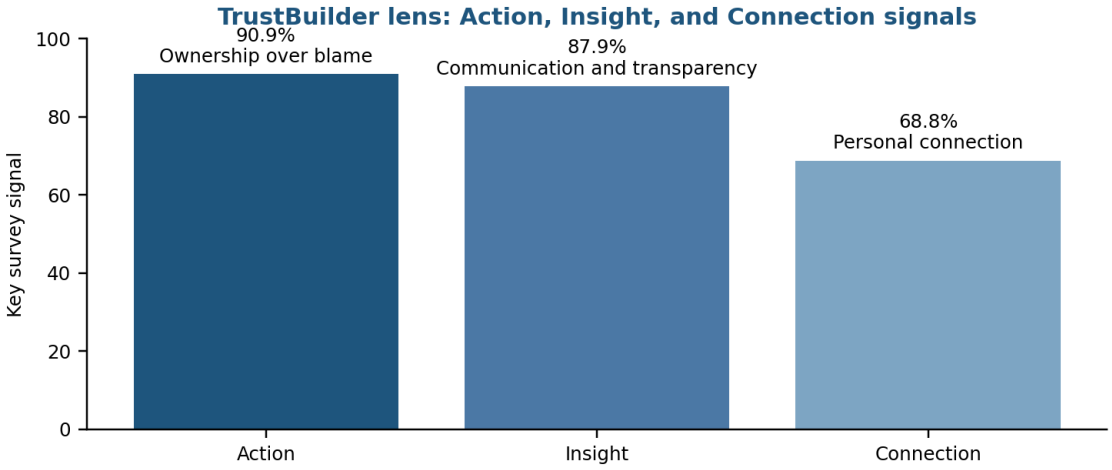


Figure 3. Framework-aligned signals: blame points to Action failure, communication points to Insight, and personal connection points to Connection.

The Connection result is especially interesting. Personal connection had a meaningful level of agreement, but it did not correlate strongly with the other quantitative items. That means it may be measuring a separate route to trust, not simply a softer version of communication or accountability.

4. What breaks trust fastest: blame and hidden information dominate

The survey included a ranked trust-breaker question. This was not a true open-text verbatim question, so the analysis below should be read as structured qualitative evidence: respondents were forced to prioritize which behaviors break trust fastest under pressure.

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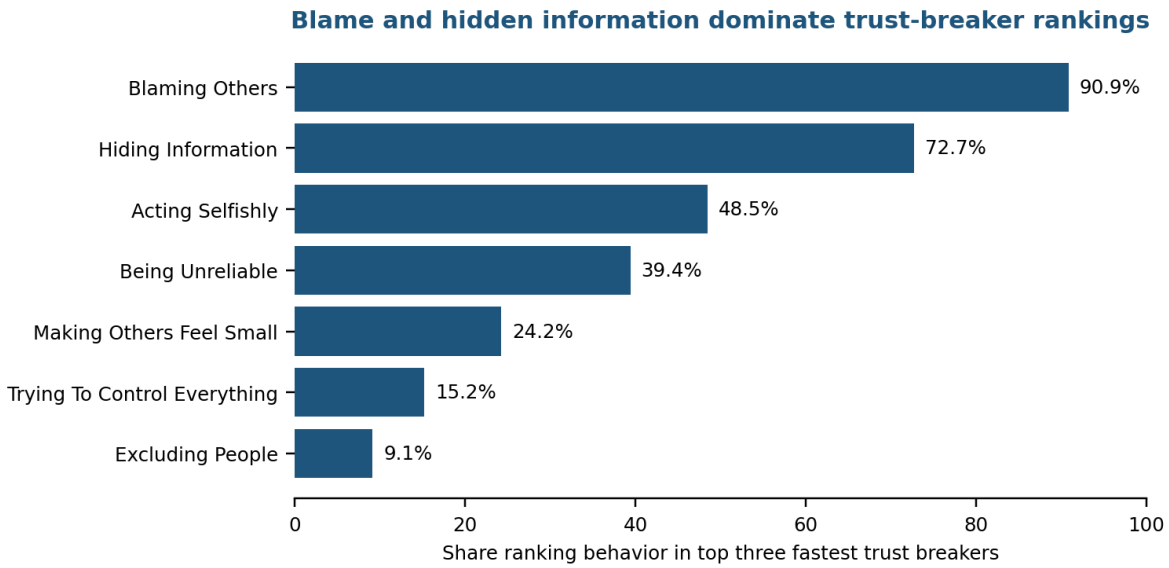


Figure 4. Blaming others and hiding information were the dominant trust-breaker themes.

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Behavior	Average rank (0=fastest)	Ranked fastest	In top 2	In top 3	Interpretation
Blaming Others	1.00	36.4%	78.8%	90.9%	Fastest trust collapse; signals lack of ownership.
Hiding Information	1.55	36.4%	54.5%	72.7%	Nearly as damaging as blame; signals lack of transparency.
Acting Selfishly	2.70	9.1%	15.2%	48.5%	Second-tier breaker; signals team interest is not protected.
Making Others Feel Small	3.06	6.1%	12.1%	24.2%	Damaging, especially as pressure becomes personal or disrespectful.
Being Unreliable	3.76	9.1%	27.3%	39.4%	Trust declines when people do not follow through.
Excluding People	4.33	3.0%	3.0%	9.1%	Lower first-choice signal in this sample, but still a Connection risk.
Trying To Control Everything	4.61	0.0%	9.1%	15.2%	Least likely to be chosen as fastest; may reflect desire for clear direction in pressure moments.

The practical insight is simple: under pressure, blame breaks trust faster than failure itself, and secrecy is close behind. That combination creates a useful leadership principle: tell the truth, take responsibility, and move the team toward the next right action.

5. Implications for leaders, teams, and trust builders

What the data suggest

- Build trust before pressure rises. Personal connection matters under pressure, but it is difficult to manufacture in the moment.
- Communicate earlier than feels necessary. Respondents strongly expect pressure to increase communication, not reduce it.
- Treat mistake admission as a leadership behavior, not a weakness. It is the strongest quantitative signal in the survey.
- Separate direction from domination. Respondents often prefer clear direction under pressure, but the trust risk is blame, secrecy, disrespect, and selfishness.
- Focus on recovery behavior. The data suggest people judge trustworthiness less by whether something goes wrong and more by what people do next.

A practical team conversation prompt

Use after a high-pressure moment

Ask: What did we do that built trust? What did we do that strained trust? Where did we need more Action, more Insight, or more Connection? This keeps the conversation behavioral instead of personal.

6. Limitations and open questions

Limitations: This dataset should be read as directional, not representative. The sample is modest, self-reported, and cross-sectional, so it can show association but not causation. The sample is also heavily weighted toward World Cup interest. In addition, the dataset did not include true open-ended verbatim responses; the qualitative section is based on a ranked trust-breaker item. One exported column also appears unreliable: the column labeled 'Under pressure I want someone who is focused on:' largely duplicated the personal-connection answers and should be corrected before future use.

7. Survey snapshot: a small, World Cup-heavy sample with a pressure-performance lens

The cleaned sample includes 33 usable responses collected from June 10 - July 6, 2026. The sample is heavily weighted toward the World Cup: 72.7% of respondents selected World Cup as the sports context they were most interested in.

Profile metric	Value

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Usable quantitative responses	33
Ranked trust-breaker responses	33
World Cup interest	24 respondents (72.7%)
Highest agreement item	Leaders admit mistakes (93.9% agree/strongly agree)
Top ranked trust breaker	Blaming others (90.9% ranked in top three)

This sample should be read as a directional signal rather than a representative measure of the broader public. Still, the pattern is useful because the strongest findings are clear and framework-aligned.

Interest area	Responses	Share
World Cup	24	72.7%
Stanley Cup Finals	4	12.1%
None of these	2	6.1%
NBA Finals	2	6.1%
Other	1	3.0%

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Appendix

This appendix collects technical and validation material so the main narrative can stay easy to read. Each section begins with a short explanation of what the table or statistic means.

Appendix A. Technical definitions and exact tests

Why this appendix matters

The main report uses a few technical summaries, such as Spearman correlations, p-values, q-values, and rank-choice scoring. This section explains those terms and lists the tests behind the key claims.

Finding	Comparison	Test statistic	p-value	q-value	Interpretation
Strongest relationship	More communication vs. leaders admit mistakes	Spearman rho = 0.527	0.002	0.016	People who value communication also value leader mistake admission.
Performance link	Performance = trustworthiness vs. leaders admit mistakes	Spearman rho = 0.421	0.015	0.074	Performance trust is tied more to leader ownership than to personal connection.
Communication link	Performance = trustworthiness vs. more communication	Spearman rho = 0.352	0.045	0.149	A weaker but still notable relationship before adjustment.
Breaker priority	Blaming others top-three share	30 of 33	-	-	Blame was the most consistent trust-breaker theme.
Insight breaker	Hiding information top-three share	24 of 33	-	-	Hidden information was almost as damaging as blame.

Appendix B. Sensitivity check and adjusted-significance summary

Why this appendix matters

Sensitivity checks show which relationships remain strongest after accounting for many comparisons. Lower q-values indicate stronger evidence after multiple-testing adjustment.

Variable A	Variable B	n	rho	p-value	q-value
More communication required	Leaders admit mistakes	33	0.527	0.002	0.016
Performance = trustworthiness	Leaders admit mistakes	33	0.421	0.015	0.074
Performance = trustworthiness	More communication required	33	0.352	0.045	0.149
Performance = trustworthiness	Prefer clear direction	33	-0.199	0.267	0.668
Prefer clear direction	Personal connection increases trust	32	0.145	0.429	0.711
More communication required	Prefer clear direction	33	0.126	0.485	0.711
Performance = trustworthiness	Personal connection increases trust	32	-0.124	0.497	0.711
Leaders admit mistakes	Personal connection increases trust	32	0.047	0.797	0.967
Leaders admit mistakes	Prefer clear direction	33	0.013	0.941	0.967
More communication required	Personal connection increases trust	32	0.008	0.967	0.967

Appendix C. Full correlation matrix - Spearman rho

How to use this table

The numbers show how strongly variables move together. Negative values mean higher scores on one variable tend to go with lower scores on another. Positive values mean they rise together. Values close to zero indicate weaker relationships.

Variable	Performance = trustworthiness	More communication required	Leaders admit mistakes	Prefer clear direction	Personal connection increases trust
Performance = trustworthiness	1.00	0.35	0.42	-0.20	-0.12

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More communication required	0.35	1.00	0.53	0.13	0.01
Leaders admit mistakes	0.42	0.53	1.00	0.01	0.05
Prefer clear direction	-0.20	0.13	0.01	1.00	0.14
Personal connection increases trust	-0.12	0.01	0.05	0.14	1.00

Appendix D. Full correlation matrix - p-values

How to use this table

Smaller p-values indicate stronger evidence that the observed relationship is unlikely to be random noise in this sample. They do not prove causation.

Variable	Performance = trustworthiness	More communication required	Leaders admit mistakes	Prefer clear direction	Personal connection increases trust
Performance = trustworthiness	<0.001	0.045	0.015	0.267	0.497
More communication required	0.045	<0.001	0.002	0.485	0.967
Leaders admit mistakes	0.015	0.002	<0.001	0.941	0.797
Prefer clear direction	0.267	0.485	0.941	<0.001	0.429
Personal connection increases trust	0.497	0.967	0.797	0.429	<0.001

Appendix E. Rank-choice trust-breaker notes

Why this appendix matters

The ranked item is the closest thing to qualitative evidence in the file. It shows relative priority, not open-ended language. A rank of 0 means the respondent placed that behavior as the fastest trust breaker.

Behavior	TrustBuilder interpretation
Blaming others	Action breaker: lack of accountability and ownership.
Hiding information	Insight breaker: lack of transparency and useful information.
Acting selfishly	Action/Connection breaker: self-interest over team interest.
Making others feel small	Connection breaker: disrespect, arrogance, or public humiliation.
Being unreliable	Action breaker: inconsistent follow-through.
Excluding people	Connection breaker: people are left out of important information or decisions.
Trying to control everything	Potential breaker when direction becomes domination; ranked lowest as fastest in this sample.

Appendix F. Data quality notes

What to fix before the next fielding

The data did not include true open-text verbatim responses. Future surveys should include one short open-ended prompt, such as: 'Think of a team you trusted under pressure. What made you trust them?' The exported column labeled 'Under pressure I want someone who is focused on:' also appears to have captured duplicate Likert answers rather than Action/Insight/Connection choices, so it should be tested before launch.

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