

Better Together™

Uncertain times call for High-Trust Cultures



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Place
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Work®

To be discussed

We are operating in a different context – the crisis changed today's reality, but also that of tomorrow. During these challenging times we are faced with you are probably looking for ways to differentiate your organisation and to come out stronger and better together on the other side of it?



1. Importance of a strong company culture



2. High trust is key



3. Communication



Importance of a strong company culture

"Bad companies are destroyed by crisis, good companies survive them, great companies are improved by them."

- Andy Grove -

Our compass, as organisations, during good times and bad, is our own company culture. **This DNA of an organisation steers how we deal with situations, how we react to them.** Now more than ever, company culture can be a competitive advantage. It can give your employees a foundation, it can stimulate a feeling of togetherness and pride. But how do you ensure that your company culture is strongly felt, without people being physically present at the same location? Think about your approach, how you can make a difference, how your actions can impact your employees' feelings, what stories they share about your organisation, ...

The **role of organisational culture extends beyond driving and supporting technological advancements** in a crisis-struck environment, such as the current situation. An organisation echoes its culture through **resonant leadership**. Employees are now looking up to the executive teams and the management to take actions that will help secure them and the business. Reading about high-performance companies and their culture is important but what matters most is **the relevant application** of these cultural traits, and how the **value of these traits is truly magnified** in a crisis.

Great workplaces already realised the importance of promoting teamwork and encouraging cross-collaboration already before the crisis. Of course, this gives them an advantage during these turbulent times. They know it's important to recognise the accomplishments of individuals who go above and beyond, the best organisations to work for succeed by bringing people together to accomplish things together in an environment of trust.

Here are some of the ways our Best Workplaces™ and Great Place to Work®-Certified organisations create a culture of collaboration.

1. **Creating personal connections**

Effective collaboration is rooted in a sense of trust and care for one another, and great workplaces put effort into connecting people with one another to form strong teams and social networks. Forming bonds with colleagues, especially across the company, means employees will feel more comfortable reaching out for help or input on their projects. Ultimate Software's, a best workplace in the US, already organised virtual coffee-breaks in 2018, a practice many organisations only discovered about 2 months ago.

2. **Bringing people together to solve problems**

Creating opportunities for cross-functional collaboration creates value for not only employees, who will expand their internal networks, but can help organisations solve tough challenges facing the business. In recent years, more and more companies have assembled teams that bring people from across the organisation together to brainstorm on issues and leverage their diverse perspectives to come up with new ideas that will benefit the business. Also today we find that this flexibility is a useful tool for our Best Workplaces. During Covid-19, Protime felt that some teams were overflowing with work while other teams struggled to keep everyone busy. Because they strongly believe in 'solidarity'



they started a Marketplace concept specifically oriented to spread the workload between the Protime teams. Teams would define projects that would need some helping hands. Other teams who were searching for useful work could look at this list and match people with the right skills to this project. This way Protime took the corona period as an opportunity to increase cross team collaboration.

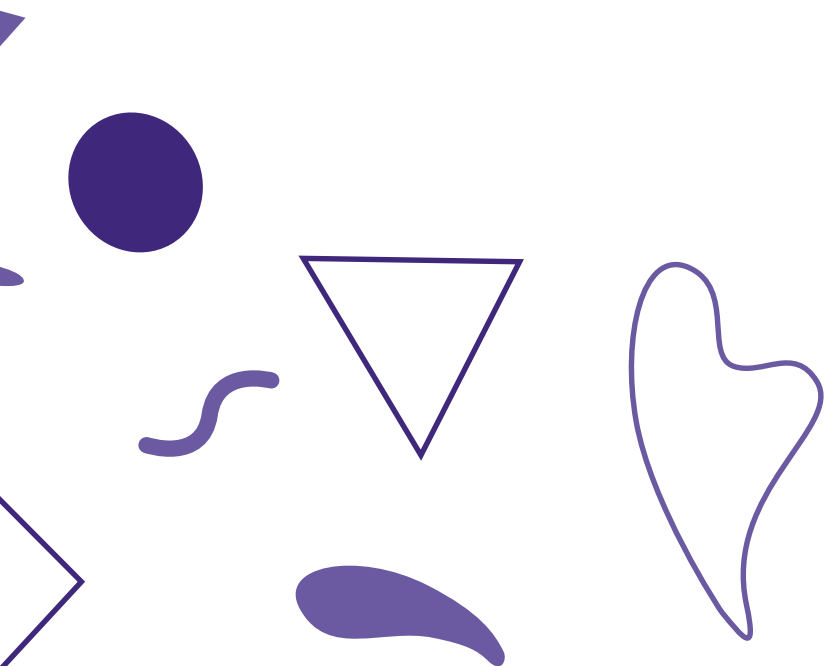
3. Platforms where people connect

Cultures of collaboration are rooted in trust and building relationships. While collaboration platforms are on the rise, the Best Workplaces have had digital spaces to connect and share information for many years – the actual platforms they use may have changed over time, but the concept of giving people an accessible place to gather and connect has remained the same.

Many of our great workplaces leverage the use of discussion boards where people across the organisation can connect around shared interests (personal and professional), as well as hosting idea-sharing platforms, where people can make suggestions and others can upvote and comment on these ideas.

4. It all comes down to Trust

Collaboration hinges on employees' willingness to come together and achieve goals together, which can only happen in an environment of trust, pride and camaraderie. People need to feel safe to give and receive genuinely constructive feedback, be inspired by a common goal, and have the tools and opportunities to connect with one another. Silos form when people don't see the value in involving others in their work – diverse perspectives are crucial to coming up with creative solutions. Best Workplaces have many different practices and programs that promote collaboration, but what they have in common is that they believe in the power of coming together to achieve great things as a team. And let it be that belief that gives them an advantage in uncertain times.





High-Trust is key

"Trust is like the air we breathe, nobody really notices, but when it's absent, everybody notices."

- Warren Buffet -

Looking back at the 'corona-times' is only confirmation that **Trust is key, and even more important now than ever before.** Workplaces that have focused on building their trust levels in the past, will find it that bit easier to navigate their way through these difficult times. Crises provides unique opportunities to deepen trust with employees in ways that increase your people's well-being and position you for business success when the crisis is over.

All relationships are based on mutual trust. It is the fundamental condition for cooperation, collaboration and partnership. Trust is the belief we have in another person or in an institution. It is the core of the relationship. Experience can reinforce trust however false promises not only undermine but destroy trust.

The benefits of a high-trust culture can always be felt, but certainly in times of crisis:

1. Continuous improvement

If your organisation fails to invest in or listen to its staff and customers, there is little likelihood that you will be on the road to improvement. If you are not moving forward, you are probably falling back and not benefitting from the contributions of the people you employ. Trust is the platform to grow culture change through innovative continuous improvement. There is little hope for innovative change if people do not feel that their managers support them in this activity.

2. Adapting to change

'High Trust' organisations are able to implement changes much faster than their counterparts. Staff having management teams that they can trust makes uncertainty in business and the future an opportunity, rather than a challenge. Knowing 'we are all in this together', people will feel empowered to take thoughtful risks, try new ways of working, and examining better ways of delivering to their external customer or end user.

3. Team work and cooperation

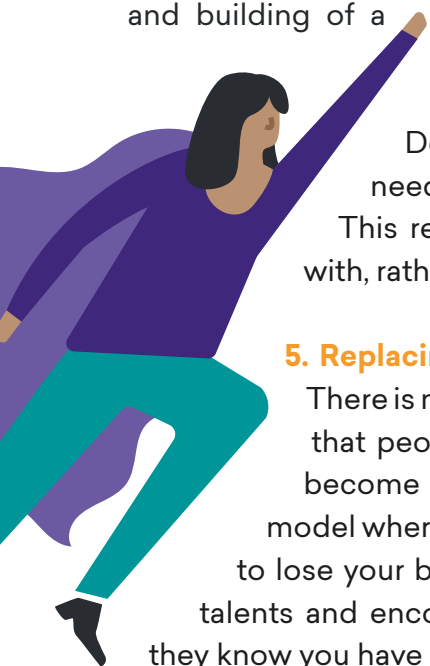
When people trust each other, they move away from the silo mentality and start working together across boundaries. Building a 'High Trust' culture erodes the barriers that separate people by their specialism and starts to knock down the walls that sometimes exist between departments and specialisms. We know that trust encourages successful inter team co-operation, teamwork and building of a strong internal supply chain supporting those who consume our services.

4. Motivation and people management

Developing a culture of trust allows managers to 'let go' of their perceived need to over-manage, instead to encourage staff to form self-managed teams. This results in teams adopting their own self motivating practise and working with, rather than in spite of, each other.

5. Replacing control with trust

There is no longer a need for performance management to be a process for checking that people are doing what we need them to do. Performance management can become so much more positive and expansive and can develop a vision to KPI's model where talents can be developed and retained in the business, reducing the need to lose your best people to competition. 'High Trust' organisations retain more of their talents and encourage likeminded individuals to choose employment with you because they know you have created a culture that fits with their values.



6. Stock market returns two to three times greater than the market average.

Investing in a high-trust culture is better for your business, now and in the years to come. Because the Great Place to Work® Institute has been collecting data for over 30 years, we've had the chance to study the last recession and what we learned was that Trust Index® results predict clear winners and losers following severe economic downturns. During the great recession the S&P 500 declined almost 36 percent while companies whose key employee groups had very positive experiences on the Trust Index® posted a remarkable 14.4 percent gain – going on to long-term recovery that was 4 times stronger than the market.

7. Turnover rates approximately 50% lower than industry competitors.

What if you could cut your staff turnover in half? Across industries we've found that a high-trust culture correlates to employee loyalty. **At the companies with the highest levels of trust, an average of 87% say they “want to work here for a**

long time.” Why? Trusting your people to work autonomously creates a sense of community and helps build a healthy team spirit. Our research also shows that in high-trust work environments, people feel confident in themselves and each other.

They create and innovate, and know that if they make a mistake, their team members will support them and see the situation as an opportunity for growth. These are all qualities that make employees want to stick.

There is no doubt that we live in times of high uncertainty. This is the time that we need to follow our leaders be they our family leaders (at home -family), our corporate leaders or our political leaders. This is the time when we need to change to the extent that we have never seen before. We do it as followers only when we have trustworthy leaders. Trusting parents will provide the safety and security that children need, trusting our health professionals will provide the confidence in placing ourselves in their competent hands, and trusting our political leaders is critical in changing behaviours such as social distancing, having a protective mask, or staying at home.



Your leadership and example at this moment are incredibly powerful. A solid foundation of trust will be essential for the changing of work patterns, new ideas, and adaptability to new ways of working from your employees. How you respond over the coming weeks and months is also a key opportunity to build robust, lasting trust with your teams.

We are heartened now as we see many great leaders doing amazing things—both small and large—and we know that this story is not yet fully written. We believe that purpose-driven organisations are prioritizing their people and their communities, and we hope to be able to grow this movement.



Communication

Make it clear 'we care!'

"Communication leads to community, that is, to understanding, intimacy and mutual valuing."

- Rollo May -

Particularly when a change in circumstances occurs, such as the Covid-19 crisis, **a timely and all-inclusive communication strategy is essential** to ensure that employee perceptions of leadership credibility remain high.

Quality communication at this junction will have a lasting **impact on an organisational culture built on trust**, a factor which will aid in the formulation of new ideas, new ways of thinking, and a collective spirit in adapting to change, now and in the future.

The good news is that the fundamental tools of effective communication still work. **Define and point to long-term goals, listen to and understand your stakeholders, and create openings for dialogue.** Be proactive. But do not stop there. In this crisis leaders can draw on a wealth of research, precedent, and experience to build organisational resilience through an extended period of uncertainty, and even turn a crisis into a catalyst for positive change.
Superior crisis communicators tend to do five things well:

1. Give people what they need when they need it

People's information needs evolve in a crisis. So should a good communicator's messaging. Different forms of information can help listeners to stay safe, cope mentally, and connect to a deeper sense of purpose and stability.

2. Communicate clearly, simply, frequently

A crisis limits people's capacity to absorb information in the early days. Focus on keeping listeners safe and healthy. Then repeat, repeat, repeat.



3. Choose candour over charisma

Trust is never more important than in a crisis. Leaders trying to help employees adjust after trauma need a reservoir of trust. Those who fail to build trust quickly in crisis lose their employees' confidence. People expect credible and relevant information; when stakeholders believe they are being misled or that risks are being downplayed, they lose confidence. To build trust, leaders should focus on facts, be transparent, demonstrate vulnerability, involve their audience and mind what they model (Say what you do AND do what you say)

4. Revitalize resilience

As the health crisis metastasizes into an economic crisis, accentuate the positive and strengthen communal bonds to restore confidence.

5. Distil meaning from chaos

The crisis will end. Help people make sense of all that has happened. Establish a clear vision, or mantra, for how the organisation and its people will emerge.

Relying on these practices, will help carry your organisation through the pandemic with a renewed sense of purpose and trust.

Listen! Communication is a two-way street

The COVID-19 pandemic places us in extraordinary times. While this is not the first global crisis that organisations have faced, the nature of this uncertainty is different. It involves health and wellbeing; it is far more personal and far less predictable. This is a time when compassion and careful listening are at their most necessary. In times of crisis, employees want to be heard.

Surveys provide the opportunity to learn about their concerns and about their concerns, to show that the leadership cares about their well-being and that you want to understand how to help reduce anxiety and build trust. This is a highly uncertain time, but it is not the time to stop listening to your employees. In fact, quite the opposite. During times of uncertainty and challenge, it is critical to understand what your employees are experiencing—perhaps even more important than ever before.





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