



## LEADING with TRUST

By Susan Williams  
The Village Business Institute Trainer



If you Google “traits of a leader,” you’ll have no shortage of good reading material. *The Top 10 Qualities of a Great Leader, 17 Traits of Effective Leadership, 11 Leadership Traits to Help You Rise to the Top, Top 7 Keys to Successful Leadership, 6 Characteristics of a Good Leader...*

While there is certainly a fair amount of overlap between these lists, let’s pretend, at least for the length of this article, that every link took you to The One. The one trait, the one characteristic, the one quality every leader has to have to be effective and get the most out of her people. What would it be? What’s your #1?

I’ve had a number of supervisors/managers in my career, and for the most part they were all good. Some better than others, for sure, but they all had most of the qualities that show up on the lists: strategic thinkers, good delegators, effective communicators, forward-thinking, passionate, cared about me, confident, competent... These are all important, but when I dig deeper and try to determine what makes my really great bosses different from the pretty good ones, what is it about these leaders that I am a better employee when I work for them, that I am more innovative and an excellent team member, that I love my job and do really good work... the single quality they all have is trust. I trust them.

And it’s not just me. According to a study in **Harvard Business Review**, when employees trust their leaders they report fewer sick days and less stress and burnout. More significantly, they have more energy at work, higher productivity, more engagement, more satisfaction with their lives, and not just the work setting!

So how do you get your people to trust you? You have to be trustworthy. Being “the boss” doesn’t do it... How you be the boss is the key. Here are some places to start:

**Be Respectful.** Always, in every situation, with every person, every day.

**Be Reliable.** Do what you say you’ll do, even when it’s hard. Especially when it’s hard. Be willing to have difficult conversations and hold people accountable when they aren’t meeting your expectations. This doesn’t mean calling them out, it means helping them get better.

**Be Vulnerable.** Admit when you’re wrong, acknowledge you don’t have all the answers, and ask for help when you need it. Be ok with mistakes and share them as learning opportunities.

**Be Transparent.** Provide as much information as you can about decisions that are being made, especially when those decisions are unpopular.

Trust is the essential quality that sets exceptional leaders apart. By embodying respect, reliability, vulnerability, and transparency, leaders can earn the trust of their team. With trust, employees thrive, experiencing reduced stress, increased engagement, and higher productivity. Trust is the key to unlocking the full potential of individuals and teams, driving remarkable success. When your people trust you, most of the other items on the “traits of a leader” lists fall into place.