

Good morning, everybody. Dennis Engelbrecht with The Family Business Institute, Digging Deeper.

Today, I want to talk about a study that I read. Comes from the University of Notre Dame Center for Ethical Leadership. The article is about building high trust teams in a low touch world. Well, the low touch world, of course, in our new pandemic workplace, we have more people with their doors closed or working remotely. And it does seem to be certainly more challenging trying to keep high trust in your workplace and high trust teams in this lower touch world. I mean, even the handshake, which we talked about a couple of blogs ago, Dr. Fauci has said that the handshake may be a part of our past. Well, we hope not. But the point is that we are possibly living in a lower touch world, more Zoom meetings, less in-person meetings, all of those things.

And it may be more challenging to build high trust in that thing, in that kind of world. So, what are the keys to building high trust, both in a normal world, but in a lower touch world? Well, first being vulnerable. Boy, the power of vulnerability, I just see it so often, particularly in our peer meetings. We had one a few weeks ago where we hit a touchy subject, which dealt with communication with spouses and family about what's going on with work and how much you do communicate, don't communicate. And we had a couple of folks just talk about the sensitivity of this issue and getting really vulnerable. And an amazing thing happens when somebody gets vulnerable. It's like the dam burst, and all of a sudden, you're hearing these other stories from other people. It just seems to go a lot deeper.

And the learning that comes, it turns exceptional. It just ratchets up several notches as soon as somebody's vulnerable. And vulnerability is really a key to trust and closeness with your employees, with your teams. The more you're willing to share embarrassing stories, particularly versus sharing proud moments, what this study found is that there's just a lot more to be gained from sharing issues and problems from the past than there is by bragging about all the great stuff you did. What they found is once people do that, there's better ideas come out. There's a freer flow of ideas. And you really open a connection and establish a trust that isn't there before. So be vulnerable. That's number one for building high trust.

Number two, practice generosity. Right? So, what do I mean by that? One of the words they used was uncalculated cooperation. Right? Uncalculated, meaning there's no quid pro quo. You do this for me, I do this for you. You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours. Instead, uncalculated operation is offering yourself for no return. How can I help you with this? Coming forward with an idea, not expecting anything back. Again, think about this on a job site. You're having a team meeting, a job site meeting between subcontractors and contractors, and somebody's got an issue. And you just offer to help him out instead of asking for something back or something in return or something first before you help them out. If you do this for me, I'll do this for you. But rather just helping them out. So, this practicing of generosity, it turns out, has tremendous benefits in generating trust.

One sideline on this. If you're looking for employees, it's recommended you scour their resumes for true volunteer activity, activities where they are giving of themselves. It might be coaching minor league baseball, or a soup kitchen, or something like that. There may be other community activities like being a member of the rotary or an industry thing where there's a clear benefit for the participant. But look for those true volunteer activities. And what they found was those people will be better employees and better teammates. So, the practice in generosity, something for you to do, but also look to build your team around people who practice generosity. And then the third area they came up with for building high trust teams is to acknowledge emotions. All right.

So, what does that mean? That means you notice somebody's upset about something, for example. And instead of downplaying that or trying to push it aside or keep it out of the meeting, recognize it. "You seem upset. What can we do with that? How can we help you with that?" Or "You seem troubled by this." By recognizing emotions, you bring that person back in and a trust gets established again. So, one of the great ways of establishing trust is simply acknowledging emotions. And by the way, you don't have to get it right. You don't have to be a psychologist and be asking just the right

question or giving them so solution. It's really about the trust comes from the fact that you devoted your time, energy, and attention to the fact that somebody is troubled. So, think about that. Three things: be vulnerable, practice generosity, and acknowledging emotions. And I think you'll be a long way toward establishing high trust teams.

Again, Dennis Engelbrecht. Thanks for tuning in.