Good morning, everybody. Dennis Engelbrecht with Digging Deeper.

Today, I want to talk about building a house of trust within your company. You think about this house of trust. This house of trust is strong. It's got a great foundation. It works in good times and bad. What I see sometimes with organizations I work with is I see there's not enough trust, not enough trust between senior leaders, not enough trust from the bottom levels of the organization up through the top of the organization or vice versa. So, I want to talk today about how you get this house of trust, how you build this house of trust and some of the important aspects or ways you can tell whether or not you've got that house of trust.

So, when we think of trust, trust is really the belief in or reliance upon the strength or ability of a person or a thing to do what's expected of them or to deliver on what's expected of them. I give a task to somebody, and I trust that they're going to get it done. Kind of simple there. I trust that somebody will be looking out for the best interest of the organization. So, if you want to gauge how your organization's doing, think about these various aspects of your company and where the effect of trust on behaviors might be showing through.

One of the ways you can tell if you've got trust is when you want to make change in an organization or you want to launch a new program, let's just say a new software or something like that. When you launch changes in your organization, people start to get concerned about those changes. First of all, people don't like change as a general thing. But when there are changes, people start to think about motives. What's the reason behind this change? Are they trying to be more productive so they can eliminate a position? That could be a thought that goes through their head. Is this just a way to lay more responsibility on me?

A lot of people think about what we call a WIIFM. What's in it for me? So, when there's a change or something new going on in the organization, it's natural for a person to ask what's in it for me. If, as a leader, you haven't presented the change appropriately, people's thinking about that, and they're thinking about what the motives of the organization are, might get in the way of a smooth and complete implementation of whatever that change is.

The same thing occurs in policies and procedures. I've really encountered this a lot when I've helped merge a couple of organizations together in some acquisition situations. But in policies and procedures, it's natural to question who benefits. So, let's just say your insurance program quote came in, and it's going to be 22% higher than it was last year. So, we start to look for some changes. So maybe we go with a higher deductible, and it's got to... Who knows a better WellCare program or something like this? But when it goes out to the organization, they're looking at this and, again, they're questioning who does this benefit that we're changing that? Is this to save money, put more money in the owner's pockets? Is this to get me a better program? People are asking those questions.

When we merge organizations, everybody's got a different set of policies and procedures in each company. Even if you try to get the best of the two for the employees in each one, unquestionably, there will be individuals that are affected negatively, and so you've got to consider that. Again, as you look at your organization to see if you have a house of trust when you're trying to implement or change a policy and a procedure, how is that received and what kind of impact do you get? If they have trust in the organization, it's much more likely to be received well.

Teamwork and cooperation are the next thing that really rely on trust. When you're working with a team or you're trying to collaborate and cooperate, it's natural for employees to ask, "Is it safe? Is it safe for me to come forth with my ideas?

Is it safe for me to disagree? Am I going to be doing all the work?" all of these kinds of questions that happen as you put together teams and cooperation. So, look at the effectiveness of your teams.

I had one client recently tell me that they had a bunch of teams working on issues and, pretty much, nothing's come of it. Then I might go back and question, "Are we really in a house of trust if nothing's coming out of the teamwork that we have?" Then, of course, you can look at dedication and productivity. That sometimes shows itself in terms of turnover rates, people being out sick. Of course, productivity shows up in your profitability and the amount of work that you actually get done.

But where you don't have a house of trust, oftentimes, people are working to watch their backs. If they're watching their backs instead of doing the work of the organization, less is getting done. So, that dedication and that productivity and that loyalty, that goes up when you have a house of trust, and it's one of the symptoms of not having a house of trust.

The next thing is creativity. Creativity of your employees, all of your employees, you would hope would benefit the organization, and there should be a free flow of ideas. Where where there is a house of trust, you do have that free flow of ideas. Where there isn't, they get stifled. They may even get stifled within the person because they don't see the benefit of raising those. They may feel it's more likely, "I'm going to get, 'Oh, what a stupid idea,'" instead of being welcomed and rewarded for having an idea, good or bad.

So, again, you'll see those question marks where you don't have a house of trust, where people are not bringing forth those ideas a heck. In the worst-case scenario, they may be thinking about, "When I start my own company, I'm going to do this," instead of getting this implemented in their current company. So that's a worst-case scenario. So, what do you do if you don't have that full trust in your organization? How do you get this house at trust?

It's very complicated, and there are probably many nuances within the leaders and how they're acting and all of that, but a few things to think about first of all. Number one is trust needs a mutual commitment. So, if you have team members who don't trust each other, you have to come to agreement to take that risk of trusting. If you don't take the risk of trusting, a person can never earn your trust. If you don't trust and give them something, they can't earn your trust. So, it has to be a mutual thing where you take the risk of trusting. Oftentimes, this has to start with some new belief or new commitment to getting a more trusted relationship, a more open relationship and being able to call each other on it.

Back in our days of family business consulting, we used to come up with a family business rules or tenets. This was oftentimes a list of about 10 to 12 things that we agreed upon as a team as to how we were going to operate. Those were the tenets that built the house of trust. So, again, take a look at your organization. Take a look at your many organizations within the organization and assess where you do have trust and don't have trust and, if you don't have it, start putting those building blocks in place so you really can have a house of trust.

Dennis Engelbrecht. Thanks for tuning in.