

SAMPLE

FOREWORD BY MARK SANBORN
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TRUST•OL•O•GY

THE ART AND SCIENCE OF
LEADING HIGH-TRUST TEAMS

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WISEGUYS
PRESS

FOREWORD

What one thing most determines the success of teams, businesses, leaders, and personal relationships?

The answer is trust.

From the years I've spent working with and developing leaders around the world, I can testify that many of the problems facing organizations today can be traced back to a lack of trust. It disrupts and destroys personal relationships, teams, and entire companies. Trust is one of the most relevant issues in business and in life, and unfortunately one of the least considered and understood.

We don't need research studies to show us the costs of low trust, because we witness them every day. But consider the benefits of high trust, which opens a world of possibilities: we accomplish more, love what we do, and enjoy the people we do it with.

How do we create high levels of trust?

Enter *Trustology*. This book is full of stick-with-you principles to help you take ownership of trust. It confronts our culture's entitlement mentality, shows why trust is worth the risk, and outlines exactly how to build trust with others. Finally, it leaves readers with a simple process to develop a high-trust culture in their teams.

Richard's message is timely and needed. His style is straightforward and he has a gift for making complicated subjects simple and leaving readers with tools they can immediately put to work. He concisely communicates many of the principles I most deeply believe in, such as servant leadership, personal responsibility, and

intentionality. Any leader, team member, or individual who wants strong, successful relationships needs to read this book.

I believe that everyone has the opportunity to lead, every day. Anyone at any level can influence the world around them. The same goes for trust. It doesn't matter what your position is, how long you've been at your job, or whether you run a family business, a PTA committee, or a billion-dollar company. You can choose to lead trust. It's not about a to-do list; it's about a mindset—one of great courage, commitment, and initiative. If you are willing to change your mindset, you are ready for *Trustology*. You will learn to be a high-trust leader and show others how to do the same.

Mark Sanborn

Founder, Sanborn & Associates, Inc.

Bestselling author of *The Fred Factor* and *You Don't Need a Title to Be a Leader*

NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

I don't know what brings you to this book. Maybe you want to see your team achieve greater synergy and cooperation. Maybe your organization has experienced a lot of change, and you want to reestablish high levels of trust between your executives, managers, and employees. Maybe you have a relationship where low trust causes misunderstandings, hurt, and drained energy. Maybe your boss made you read it.

Whatever your starting place, building high-trust relationships is doable and worth it. It won't be easy, but I want to help make it simple.

This book is not a 350-page academic textbook full of studies and statistics. You wouldn't read half of it, you'd remember even less, and you'd probably have little idea how to apply it in your daily life. Instead, it's a field guide for the trenches of trust, the day-in, day-out challenges of building trust between flawed human beings. It's not for the faint of heart, not for those who want to point their fingers and shift responsibility to the other guy. It's for the leader who is tired of the status quo and willing to try something new for the sake of a future that's worth having.

I've worked with hundreds of businesses and thousands of individuals on this topic, and the principles I am about to share are not just big ideas and empty philosophy. These are tested and proven techniques that have helped change the face of businesses and reclaim relationships.

My hope is that this book is more than a temporary dose of motivation or entertainment. I hope that it offers you a new mindset on a common topic, a fresh vision for the future, and greatly enriched relationships, both personal and professional.

Richard Fagerlin
President, Peak Solutions

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TRUSTOLOGY: AN INTRODUCTION

Of the thousands of books published each year on leadership, management, self-help, and motivation, very few offer practical tools and solutions to the number one challenge in business (and in most of our personal lives): trust.

With trust, our relationships flourish, our productivity rises, and we have high personal and professional satisfaction. A trust-filled atmosphere lets people take risks, allowing innovation and creativity to thrive. Your team's collective sense of self-worth and purpose becomes a beacon of light for others to follow. The healthy, dynamic atmosphere is contagious, and it raises the bar for your entire organization. Higher productivity and lower turnover creates a more profitable business. High trust is the currency of greatness.

High-performance teams are tight-knit groups of skilled individuals closely focused on a common goal and willing to overcome all obstacles to achieve it. They out-perform their peers in quality, speed, and a positive working atmosphere. This type of team cannot exist without trust.

Without trust, on the other hand, we protect our own interests, productivity plummets, and our personal satisfaction and professional engagement hit all-time lows. Low trust is the highest predictor of re-work—wasted time spent redoing a task. When trust is lacking, we spend so much time and energy covering our bases, protecting our turf, and creating alliances that we can't do anything effectively.

Over the last twelve years I have worked with business and community leaders all around the world. Some have formal titles, while others simply lead from the pack. But no matter what type of organization they're from, all our clients want the same thing from our firm: help creating a powerful vision and strategy for

Trust isn't what we "do"—it's what results from what we do.

the future, and making that vision a reality. The solutions are diverse, but the problems we see along the way are painfully similar. Almost all of them are rooted in an issue of trust.

Our firm doesn't specialize in "trust building." We are not fans of climbing on rocks and ropes to mysteriously become a great team and have high trust. We won't ask our clients to climb on a table and fall into each other's hands. Trust isn't what we "do"—it's what results from what we do.

Trust is the single most important factor in determining whether a group of individuals will become a high-functioning,

high-performance team. With all of that at stake, it's time to be intentional about trust.

In this book, we're going to address questions like:

- What is trust?
- Is trust earned?
- Who is responsible for trust?
- How do you grow trust with others?
- What does it mean to be trustworthy?
- How can I lead my team to be a high-trust team?
- How do I find out how much trust my team has now?
- How can team members hold each other accountable for high-trust behavior?

Any high-trust relationship involves at least two people, so there are always two things to think about regarding trust: Do you trust them? Do they trust you? The premise of this book is that both are your responsibility.

In *Trustology 101*, we'll look at the first part of that equation, your choice to trust. We'll examine a popular myth about trust and where it falls short, compare the risks and rewards of trust, and talk about practical ways to show that you trust someone.

In *Trustology 202*, we'll move on to how you show yourself trustworthy so that you can increase your Trust Factor with others.

A high-trust relationship requires that you trust the other person and that they trust you back. The premise of this book is that both are your responsibility.

And in Trustology 303, we'll look at how you can develop a high-trust team.

Ready for Trustology 101?

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TRUSTOLOGY 101:

**TRUST
STARTS HERE**

TRUST'S BIG LIE

As we embark on our informal study of trust, it's worth noting that no one comes to this discussion empty-handed. We all have strong feelings about trust. We know how it feels when it is misused, betrayed, or withheld. Our perspectives have been informed by a lifetime of valid personal experiences, but sometimes the conclusions we've drawn from those experiences don't help us. In fact, they can hold us hostage.

Over the years that I've spent helping teams work through interpersonal trust dynamics, I've come to a surprising conclusion: our most popular theories about trust are often untrue and almost always unhelpful.

Before we go any further, I should warn you. Some of the things I'm about to say might go against everything you've ever heard about trust. Whenever I speak to a group on this topic, I start by asking them to set aside their preconceptions and objections for a few minutes so they can join me as we look at trust from a fresh perspective. Would you do the same? Would you be willing to put aside your experiences and beliefs about trust for a little

while? If you still think I'm crazy by the end of this book, you are most certainly entitled to continue believing as you choose. But if you, like me, begin to feel the inadequacy of the old theories, we can leave them behind and find a better way.

Of all the flawed theories flying around about trust, there is one that is more prevalent, more seemingly intuitive, and more damaging than any other:

Trust's Big Lie: Trust is something that is *earned*.

The Truth on Trust: Trust can't be earned. It can only be *given*.

When we're deciding how much to trust people, we usually ask ourselves whether they have earned our trust. That seems like the smart thing to do. Until they earn it, we withhold trust to protect ourselves. We put defensive policies in place. We micromanage to maintain control.

But the truth is, trust can never be earned. Trust can only be given.

Trust is the responsibility of the person who wants high trust. Presumably, you. If you are committed to giving and building trust, and determined to overcome any obstacles that stand in your way, you will win high trust. If you work patiently and with perseverance to lead your team towards a high-trust, high-performance culture, you can see it happen.

The ten most powerful two-letter words in the English language are *if it is to be, it is up to me*.

If you are to have high trust in your relationships, it starts and ends with you.

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SURRENDER THE SCORECARD

So why doesn't it work for trust to be earned? Surely that's the safer route, right? If trust could be earned, someone would have to be keeping score. I imagine that everyone who operates out of this belief has a huge internal scorecard for all their relationships. If someone does something trustworthy, they get two ticker marks. But if they do something untrustworthy, they are at risk of losing the last two ticker marks and perhaps three or four more.

According to British anthropologist Robin Dunbar, the number of human beings with whom a person can maintain stable social relationships is remarkably consistent from person to person. The Dunbar number, as it is called, is proposed to be somewhere between 100 and 230, with 150 as the commonly used average. In other words, the average person has about 150 social relationships,

not necessarily including casual acquaintances, former friends, or distant connections on social media.

With so many legitimate human interactions to manage, how on earth can we accurately keep track of how much trust each person has earned? That kind of scorekeeping is bound to be inaccurate, and it's definitely complicated and confusing. Do you like the feeling of being constantly evaluated? Neither does anyone else.

In a business context, keeping score is even less practical. A business's success depends on productivity, efficiency, and high morale, and scorekeeping drains those things dry. If companies had to start out every new client or employee at zero trust until they proved themselves, it would cripple the team's ability to operate efficiently or to take risks. The more high-performing the team, the more it requires the safety of unconditional trust.

Wikipedia describes the high-performance team as a group of people with complementary talents, roles, and skills, aligned with and committed to a common purpose, who consistently show high levels of collaboration and innovation and produce superior results. Or, as I like to define it, a group where every individual is a contributing partner to the success of the team. Team members are tight-knit and focused, so devoted to their purpose that they will surmount any barrier to achieve the team's goals.

Now imagine that kind of a team withholding trust, guarding their own backs, and keeping track of each other's failures and

The more high-performance a team, the more it requires the safety of unconditional trust.

successes. It wouldn't work for a second. Teams who want high efficiency and morale must be proactive about giving trust.

Trust cannot be earned; it can only be given. When we insist on keeping score, everyone loses.

QUIT YOUR JOB: YOU ARE NOT THE TRUST REF

Since it's impossible to keep score, it's time to submit your resignation letter as the referee of your relationships. Time to stop keeping tabs of who is ahead in thoughtful, trust-earning behavior. If you are like me, this won't be easy. I trust ref my friends, I trust ref my colleagues, and I even trust ref my wife.

As we study trust in the context of organizational teams, we can learn a lot by taking a minute to think about how trust works in other relationships, such as in a marriage. Now, I'm not saying we have the same kind of trust with colleagues as we do with our spouses, but similar principles are at work across the board.

**I trust ref my friends,
my colleagues, and
even my wife.**

I love my wife very much. We have been married for more than fifteen years, have four wonderful children together, and are truly best friends. But I still struggle with quitting my job as the trust ref on a daily basis.

I want nothing more than to see my wife thrive. To see her vibrant and doing what she loves. I want her to be encouraged and loved in a deep way—and then I become a bonehead. I find myself counting up my good deeds and her not-so-good deeds. I hope that you can't identify with this, but, chances are, you can identify a great deal. Giving trust without keeping a record of rights and wrongs isn't easy, but it is essential to win the war for relationships.

Marriages start out with weddings: blissful days where every detail has been thoughtfully arranged and everyone is on their best behavior. The couple vows their love and undying commitment. But then what happens? Half of today's marriages end, with tremendous costs to society. Many who have experienced divorce can give good reasons for it, but few would say they went into the relationship expecting it to fail. So how did they get there? What led from the hopefulness of the wedding day to such a deep level of relational dysfunction? I suggest that it is usually a breakdown in trust.

At the wedding of my good friend's son, the pastor said something to the bride and groom that has stuck with me ever since. He said, "Your goal is to take second place. You are to see that the other gets first place. You are to sacrifice for them, love them, and make sure that you don't keep a record of right or wrong."

That phrase comes from a common reading at wedding ceremonies, a Bible passage from 1 Corinthians 13:

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps

no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.”

What if the word *love* was replaced by *trust*?

Trust is patient, trust is kind. Trust does not envy, trust does not boast, trust is not proud. Trust does not dishonor others, trust is not self-seeking, trust is not easily angered, trust keeps no record of wrongs. Trust does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. Trust always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Trust keeps no record of wrongs. Once you’ve made a decision to trust someone, once you’ve decided that winning at that relationship is non-negotiable, you have to stop keeping score—and this is true whether the relationship is with a spouse or a colleague.

Stop keeping track of their good and bad deeds, of whether they’ve had as many good ideas as you or worked through as many lunches.

Not keeping a record of wrongs doesn’t mean ignoring a bad situation. Address genuine problems head-on—but don’t make trust conditional upon a person’s good score. Trust them. If conflict does need to happen, it will go much better when it happens from a place of trust.

**Don’t make trust
conditional upon a
person’s good score.**

NOT SAFE, BUT GOOD

The number one reason why trust cannot be earned is that even if we could find a perfect way to keep score of the performance of every one of our team members, no one could do enough good things to guarantee that they wouldn't disappoint us in the future.

Trust has never existed in a risk-free environment. No matter how well you know someone, given enough opportunities, everyone will fall short in some way or another. High-trust teams are strong, but it's a strength that comes through mutual vulnerability. If you are not willing to accept the fundamental vulnerability of high-trust teams, you'll never have one. At some point, each of the parties involved will have to take the risk of giving trust.

In C. S. Lewis's children's book *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe*, the Pevensie children are quite nervous when they find out that Aslan, the king of Narnia, is not a man but a lion. Susan, the eldest, asks,

“Is he—quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion.”

“That you will, dearie, and no mistake,” said Mrs. Beaver; “if there's anyone who can appear before Aslan without their knees knocking, they're either braver than most or else just silly.”

“Then he isn't safe?” said Lucy.

“Safe?” said Mr. Beaver; “don't you hear what Mrs. Beaver tells you? Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good.”

Giving trust is not safe. But it's good. It's always a risk, but it's always worth it.

If you are not willing to accept the fundamental vulnerability of high-trust teams, you'll never have one.

PLAY THE ODDS

Even though trust is not “safe,” it can still be a wise investment. The question is, do the rewards outweigh the risks?

Everyone will eventually disappoint you in small ways. (And guess what? You’ll disappoint them, too.) A few people may betray you outright. But consider for a moment how many people we’re really talking about. How many people, of all those in your life, are really going to take advantage of you if you offer trust before it is earned? Twenty percent? Ten? Two?

I guess that, on average, the number is closer to two percent than it is to twenty. Yes, a few people may abuse your trust.

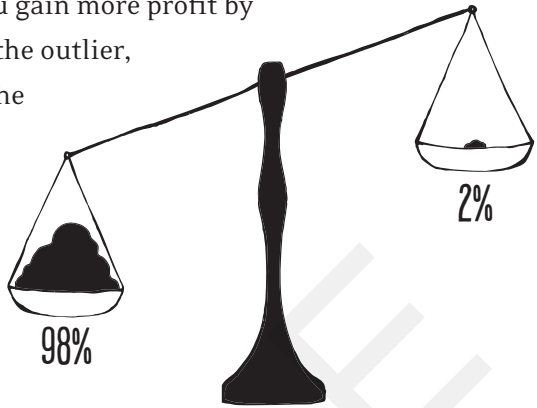
But do you want to live and act for the two percent or the ninety-eight percent?

Do you want to live and act for the two percent or the ninety-eight percent?

Imagine a weights and measures scale. Put the risk of the two percent on one side, and the benefit of a trusting, generous relationship with the ninety-eight percent on the other. Which is heavier?

In a business, would you gain more profit by fortifying yourself against the outlier, or by being generous with the vast majority of your customers?

I contend that you win a great deal more by giving trust than you would benefit from never being burned.



A DISCLAIMER

I know many of you are sitting there thinking of all the situations where giving unearned trust doesn't make sense. Keep two things in mind:

First, I'm assuming the relationships in question are ones where you actually want to win, where you have a vested interest in the relationship being the best it can be, and where collaboration is critical. If that's the case, let's apply these ideas. If not, you don't need to invest time or energy into building trust.

Second, I am not speaking to the extremes. If you have experienced a betrayal of trust amounting to psychological or physical abuse, address it appropriately. Ask a friend for help, get a counselor, talk to a mentor, or read one of the many great books out there that address healing and boundaries on a personal level.

This book is not a one-stop-shop for rebuilding shattered trust.

But most of life should not be a crisis. I want to speak to the rest of the time, to normal person-to-person

**Most of life should not
be a crisis.**

interactions. I want to address the boss who wants a strong team.
The employee who wants to be trusted with more opportunities.
The person who wants to increase trust in a relationship. If that's
you, welcome. Let's explore these ideas together.

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EYES WIDE OPEN

Trust must be given, not earned, but I'm not advocating blind trust.

My wife and I have four boys: Christian, Preston, Jackson, and Lincoln. When they were little, the street in front of our house was completely off-limits. The risk was too great. But if they were still afraid to cross the street as thirteen-year-olds, or twenty-year-olds, we'd have a problem. I want my boys to wisely take risks that are worth taking, and not to live in fear. But I don't want them to walk across the street with their eyes closed. I want them to have their eyes wide open and look both ways. And then to walk forward.

In the same way, I'm not asking you to plunge ahead foolishly, but to make a mature, calculated, thoughtful decision to trust because you've decided the benefits outweigh the risks.

By all means, be aware of red flags when you sense that someone isn't trustworthy. Red flags don't necessarily mean that there's no way forward, but you should ask where they are coming from, be more careful in the steps that you take, and set appropriate boundaries. You should make difficult judgment calls when your

role requires it, and not turn a blind eye to systemic issues. But even if you've experienced a breakdown in trust in the past, don't let that take away your choice to trust as you move forward.

Not blind trust. Eyes-wide-open trust.

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RELEASE YOUR HOSTAGES

The idea that trust is given, not earned, is a big mind-shift for most of us. It requires that we quit keeping score and become willing to give trust even when we don't receive anything in return. This may feel a bit uncomfortable. The truth is, this shift brings freedom. Freedom from carrying around another person's failures. Freedom to give yourself and the other person a fresh start. Freedom to allow yourself to forgive and let go.

The old score-keeping mindset, where we are counting up our team members' trustworthy behavior so we can add more ticker marks to our scorecard, holds them and us hostage.

"Really, Richard?" you might say. "Isn't 'hostage' a little extreme?" I don't think so. You may not be throwing your

colleagues into a dungeon full of rats, but they certainly aren't living their best, at least not in their relationship with you.

When we choose to be judge and jury in our relationships, we don't publicize our rules and guidelines. We judge the other person's words, actions, and intentions by our own past experiences. How do we expect the other person to win our game when they don't even know the rules?

One of the most important ways that we can give unearned trust is to assume the best about people's intentions and give them a chance to explain their perspective.

When we don't, we hold them hostage to our assumptions.

When you stand back evaluating the other person's every move and marking pluses and minuses on your scorecard, you hold them hostage to your eternal evaluation. When you punish them by making them feel your hurt until you think they feel sufficiently guilty, you hold them hostage to your pain.

My dad once said, "Peace and unity are at risk when questions and debate are limited." Next time you find yourself so angry that you stop caring to hear the other person's point of view, ask yourself if you are holding them hostage to your own resentment. If you are, stop, apologize, and ask the other person to share their perspective. Say something like, "This is how what you did made me feel, although I don't believe you meant to hurt me. Can you tell me where you're coming from?"

When you punish others by making them feel your hurt until they feel sufficiently guilty, you hold them hostage.

Simply offering people the chance to speak for themselves gives them the benefit of the doubt and is one step forward in giving trust.

QUIT DRINKING POISON

Does the idea of releasing people from the ways they have disappointed you, or giving trust to someone who hasn't earned it, seem like condoning bad behavior? Sometimes we hold people hostage as a way of protesting their irresponsible or unfair actions. We think we're teaching them a lesson, but the problem is that we're holding ourselves hostage as well. When we withhold forgiveness, we keep ourselves stuck in a place of mistrust and suspicion.

A very wise person once said, "Resentment is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die." Unforgiveness

harms us far more than it hurts the other person, and usually far more than the original offense itself. It colors how we see people. It keeps us from assuming the best about others, even those who had nothing to do with the initial violation. It infects us like a virus, eating up innocence and leaving cynicism and bitterness behind. It's not the original offense that makes anyone bitter. It's when we hold on to it, plant it deep in our hearts, and water it with every fresh offense.

If we hold on to unforgiveness, we won't be able to have high trust with the person who wronged us or with anyone else.

Resentment is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die.

Forgiveness is not about excusing bad behavior. Forgiveness is simply about letting yourself move on. Forgiveness is saying to the other person, "You don't owe me." It doesn't mean that what they did was okay, but it does mean that you surrender your right to be their judge and jury.

You relinquish your right to be their debt collector.

If we want to have high trust in our relationships and within our teams, we need to embrace the idea that we are not our own avengers. Life is not about achieving fairness for ourselves. If life isn't about fairness, then it has to be about freedom. And if it's about freedom, then we have to forgive. And when we do, we release ourselves, too. From that moment, we are no longer stuck.

Is there anyone you need to forgive to set yourself free? Is there an old offense that creeps into every new disagreement, or someone you blame, even in a small way, for the way your life or career has turned out? Is there anyone with whom past frustrations have

reduced down to a murky, indefinable bad taste in your mouth whenever you have to work with them?

Becoming willing to forgive can be hard, but the actual moment of forgiveness is incredibly easy. It's as easy as letting a heavy backpack you've been carrying drop to the floor. You might realize ten minutes later you've picked the backpack back up and have to set it down all over again. That's okay. Just keep letting it go. This isn't a sprint. It's a marathon. Just keep taking one step at a time in the direction you want to go.

Are you ready to quit drinking the poison? You will be glad you did.