

DTD Episode 93 Show Notes

How Full Are Your Trust Buckets?

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If you've been listening to this podcast you already know that I spend a lot of time helping people overcome their drama challenges.

Often drama between people boils down to a lack of trust. You can have little or no trust for someone based on your experience with them; they've proven with their words or actions that they should not be trusted. Or you can lack trust because you don't know them. Either way, when we don't trust someone we are more apt to assume the worst or assign mal-intent to their actions.

Of course, a history of bad behavior warrants less trust. The best predictor of future behavior is past behavior. In businesses, however, I often find that lack of trust comes from a lack of knowing. Sometimes leaders don't give their employees time to connect. And this creates negative assumptions and drama!

Over the years I've had a unique perspective into so many relationships and can say with certainty that often these assumptions are not accurate. I would even hazard to say that *rarely* are the assumptions driving these negative relationships true.

When communication and connection happen trust can build quickly. Assumptions are replaced with facts and relationships are transformed.

I worked with a group of 4 people who knew little of each other personally but had to deal with each other often to complete their work. The company called me in because the poor relationships were decreasing productivity.

I spent exactly one and a half hours with them and it that time they had many aha moments. "Oh, I thought when you were asking me that you trying to pass your work on to me!"

"No, I've already tried 4 different times to get the numbers right by the time I'm asking you to clarify some things."

“I thought you were just coming in early so that you could leave early and find things to complain about.”

“No, with the work changes I now have to come in early to get everything set up and do the inventory. I’d actually prefer not to start so early!”

On and on it went. Gaps in fact filled in with negative presumptions overcome with truth.

Each had painted a picture of the other like a paint by number gone wrong. The little assumptions all added to a perception of co-workers trying to avoid work, get each other in trouble and wreak havoc. Recent changes in roles and workflow had put them all together feeling uncertain and wary.

They needed to work together but had had no opportunity to build trust.

I am very visual so I almost always end up describing concepts with physical items.

I started using the term Trust Bucket to describe the level of trust we have with others. It’s just a nice visual.

So, an empty trust bucket means little trust.

A full trust bucket is like a full bank account of trust.

A full trust bucket and we are assuming the best of each other. If my co-worker of 10 years is late and I have assigned a full trust bucket to her I will assume she got held up. An empty trust bucket and I’m assuming the worst. “He doesn’t value my time or is disrespecting me.”

I find that people assign empty or full trust buckets to new people in different ways.

Some people tend to start new relationships with a full trust bucket. “I will trust you unless you give me good cause not to.” At that point, they will have an empty trust bucket.

Others are more cautious and begin relationships with an empty trust bucket. “I need to see who you are first. Prove that you deserve my trust. You have to earn it. Then I will fill the trust bucket.”

At work it is so important to bring employees together so they have an opportunity to know each other as people and fill those trust buckets!

Drama happens when trust buckets are low. As I often say, in the absence of fact, for some reason humans fill in the blanks with negative assumptions. A process falls apart and the first instinct is for employees to blame co-workers they don't trust, "they're just trying to make my job harder!"

Bring those employees together and give them the chance to know one another and trust will develop. They will assume the best of each other instead.

So, a few thoughts and action items for you today.

1. How full are your trust buckets with people? Do you start with a full bucket and empty with negative experiences or do you start empty and make them work their way to trust?
2. Are there people in your life or work with empty trust buckets out of assumption rather than fact? How can you get to know them to learn their true character?
3. If you are a leader, where do team members have empty trust buckets? How can you bring them together to meet, connect and build trust?

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