

ADDRESSING THE LOSS OF TEAMWORK IDENTIFYING, MEASURING AND MINIMIZING TRUST-DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIORS

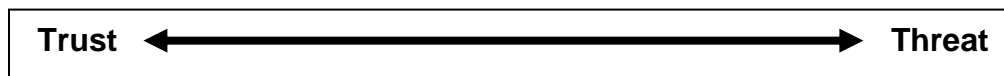
Introduction

A top-ten American corporation recently conducted a survey evaluating their efforts to create and sustain effective teamwork within their organization. They were very unhappy with the results and asked the Center for Aggression Management¹ if there was a relationship between aggression and teamwork. The Center for Aggression Management's expertise is not in the building of teamwork but rather, in the assessment and measurement of threat. Threatening behaviors undermines trust and disables teamwork. By removing threatening behaviors you permit and encourage the natural qualities that underlie successfully functioning teams.

The Center for Aggression Management provides a system of measurable indicators of threat and their corresponding effects on trust. These concrete indicators enable clients to effectively monitor, engage and diffuse trust-harmful behaviors. These "trust-destructive behaviors" are the core culprits in the demise of effective teamwork, leadership and loyalty. It is incumbent upon us to better understand how to identify trust-destructive behaviors and thereby engage and diffuse it.

Trust-Destructive Behaviors Are the Underlying Culprits of Ineffectual Teamwork

Research is very explicit; successful teams must establish and maintain *trusting* interpersonal relationships if they are to function effectively and sustain success. Trust may be thought of as an individual's expression of confidence or optimistic expectation in the intentions and motives of others. Patrick Lencioni² states the first and foremost team dysfunction is the *absence of trust*. Teammates must get comfortable being vulnerable with one another. Lacking this trust, relationships may be altered into adversarial attitudes: "me" versus "you," "us" versus "them." Rather than goodwill, there are often deep and hidden animosities.



The antithesis of trust is *threat* and threat is the genesis of aggression. Dr. Archibald D. Hart³ states when an individual feels threatened, trust is lost, the fight or flight mechanism is activated, adrenaline is produced and often the result is aggression. Dr. Hart's "threat mechanism" begets aggression, and aggression begets more aggression; creating a dynamic that over time can disable any organization, no matter the size. You may think the term "aggressor" as harsh for your organization; however, the verb "to threaten" means a declaration of an intention to aggress or commit the first act of hostility. The loss of trust due to threatening behaviors, which implies aggression – either covertly or overtly – is inexorably connected and illustrated in the Center for Aggression Management's Cognitive Aggression Continuum⁴. This Continuum will help explain how otherwise inexplicable aggressive incidents escalate.

The building of teams can develop naturally. Human-social structure developed when humans realized gathering with others who shared common purposes and goals was *safer* and more productive than venturing out in sole pursuit. Humans with common purpose *naturally* coalesced into teams and from this coalescing, leaders evolve, loyalty is engendered and productivity – and profitability – are gained.

So what impairs this progression? The undermining of the single most essential component to teamwork: **trust**.

The Center for Aggression Management **provides a system of measurable indicators of threat**. Exhaustive research behind the Center for Aggression Management System is based on four key findings:

First, threatening behaviors undermines trust, essential to teamwork. Threatening behavior is “aggressive” (not assertive); it can be harmful and often causes victims’ aggressive reactions. **Secondly, it is not instinctual for one human to aggressively attack another human. An aggressor must disconnect from his victim⁵.** **Thirdly,** as you observe an individual disconnecting from their intended victim of trust-destructive behaviors, you will observe body language and behaviors demonstrating this harmful aggressive or trust-destructive behaviors. **The greater there is a perceived threat to an objective or a goal, the greater certainty of the corresponding loss of trust⁶.** **Fourthly,** you realize there are two types of aggression – (1) adrenaline-driven or Primal Aggression™ and (2) intent-driven or Cognitive Aggression™. Trust-harmful behaviors are intent-driven with nine measurable levels of clearly defined aggression or trust-harmful behaviors found in the Cognitive Aggression Continuum™.

Removing threatening behaviors enables requisite teamwork qualities to flourish.

Employees intuitively determine whether they can trust their co-workers or colleagues. Utilizing the universal axiom, “When you can measure it, you can manage it,” in order to discourage trust-destructive behaviors, you must first be able to measure it. This capability provides a three-way template that enhances natural trust building within any organization by reducing the elements that impede trust. The *first* template will assist managers in changing trust-harmful behaviors in those around them. Because the escalation of trust-harmful behaviors is measured, the right amount of resolution can be applied; maximizing the result. The *second* template will motivate managers themselves away from trust-harmful behaviors. The *third* template will provide measurable indicators – body language, behavior and communication indicators – that can stand the scrutiny of cross-examination; legal defensibility is becoming an increasing need for every employer.

Often subjective language is used to describe the building blocks of teamwork. Words like “caring” and “feelings” are applied. Frequently “caring” to one person can easily be interpreted by another as “meddling.” Dr. Joseph LeDoux⁷ states, “Feelings are ‘red herrings’, products of the conscious mind, labels given to unconscious emotions.” While these subjective terms are important, even compelling, they are obstacles for anyone who desires to “measure, manage and subsequently document threatening behaviors.”

Lost-Trust effects on Leadership

Dr. Ralph Shrader (Booz Allen Chairman & Chief Executive Officer) said

Those of us in leadership roles in industry and government have a professional — as well as personal — responsibility to be trustworthy. An article in the Wall Street Journal last month began: ‘A deep cynicism has settled over corporate America as many employees wonder how much, if at all, they can trust their bosses.’ There are many dimensions to leadership, but I like to focus on the element of trust, which I believe is a key to Leadership in an Age of Uncertainty.

HL Arledge, a leadership expert defined leadership with four “Ts”: trust, truth, team and transparency. Trust is a cornerstone to leadership, the development of loyalty and teamwork. According to Dr. Shrader, any individual who has a leadership role must exhibit character, ability, strength and truth to those within their realm of influence if they wish to be successful. Without trust none of these qualities are available⁸. Removing threatening behaviors, which undermines trust, enables leadership qualities to flourish naturally.

Lost-Trust effects on Loyalty

Let’s say you are the manager of a department that includes one hundred individuals, including supervisors and employees. How many of those individuals would you expect to be loyal to you and your organization? How many of those individuals would you estimate are headed out the door? The *2007 Walker Loyalty Report for Loyalty in the Workplace* states “just 34% of employees are staying while another 36% are about to walk. That leaves 30% who either haven’t made up their minds or are just going with the flow.” The Walker Report assesses loyalty five ways. Of these five elements, the single most important is trust. Walker informs us that, “Trust, as the core culprit, is an operative driver.” According to Walker, “only one-third of the individuals are with you, therefore two-thirds are either on the fence or going against you.” If you wish to boost loyalty, focusing on *trust* may be the critical leverage point. Until now it has been the most difficult to measure.

Lost-Trust effects on Teamwork

A survey by the American Society for Quality Control and the Gallup Organization found that more than 80% of the individuals surveyed reported participating in team activity. Today, organizations of all types are turning to an even more flexible organizational form to structure their operations, the “virtual team.” Noted teaming experts Jessica Lipnack and Jeffrey Stamps define a virtual team as “a group of individuals who work interdependently with a shared purpose across space, time, and organization boundaries using technology.” They explain that trust emerges as the issue central to successful teaming⁹.

Deception is a cardinal tenet of trust-destructive behavior. Often emotions and attitudes are contagious. Someone deceiving others is potentially setting a foundation of deception that will undermine trust and malign any attempt to build and sustain productive teamwork.

Cost of Lost-Trust

There are a tremendous potential costs due to trust-destructive behaviors, lack of teamwork, absence of leadership and lost loyalty. Individuals who are unhappy with workplace behaviors do not want to be at work and tend to come in late, go home early, and stay longer at lunch. Those who feel threatened by the lack of trust would rather call in sick than face a contentious workplace where suspicion and cynicism prevail. The term used today is “presenteeism,” which refers to those who may be at work but are so distracted by others’ threatening behaviors that they might as well be absent. There are direct costs associated with these behaviors.

What about those due back from a Workers’ Compensation claim who realize they will be the brunt of harassment (aggression) from those who were forced into significant overtime to make up for their absences; now decide to claim additional days to put off the agony. How many sick days – or Workers’ Comp days – do you have in your organization? What is this costing your organization? The Center for Aggression Management – by offering employees anonymity – can quickly identify these costs of tardiness and absenteeism resulting from trust-destructive behaviors.

The Center for Aggression Management offers evaluation, analysis and education that enables any organization the opportunity to identify and diminish potentially threatening behaviors that could be damaging the teambuilding efforts your organization has been investing in for years. For more information, contact Dr. John Byrnes at 407-718-5637 or DrJohnByrnes@AggressionManagement.com.

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¹ Aggression Management® is a registered trademark and may not be replicated without the expressed and written permission of the Center for Aggression Management.

² *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable*, Peer-reviewed, accepted, and sanctioned by the National Council of the Professors of Educational Administration

³ *Adrenaline and Stress, the Exciting New Breakthrough that Helps You Overcome Stress Damage*

⁴ The Cognitive Aggression Continuum is trademarked and its methodologies proprietary and may not be used without the expressed and written approval of the Center for Aggression Management®

⁵ Pulitzer nominated author, Lt. Col. Dave Grossman, *On Killing, the Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society*

⁶ Pierce Howard, PhD, *The Owner’s Manual for the Brain: Everyday Applications from Mind-Brain Research. Second Edition*

⁷ Dr. Joseph LeDoux, author of *The Emotional Brain*

⁸ Dr. Ralph Shrader (Booz Allen Chairman & Chief Executive Officer)

⁹ Jessica Lipnack and Jeffrey Stamps, authors of *Virtual Teams*