The topic for this month’s **Inspire 10X10** (ten tips, ten resources) is **Establishing Trust in the Workplace**. The tips and resources presented in Inspire 10X10s are taken from the topics and resources available in *Inspire*, a Web-based tool that empowers employees to take ownership of their leadership development by enabling them to build, drive and track their own leadership development plan.

Using *Inspire*, employees are able to quickly and easily identify strengths and weaknesses, create relevant and useful development plans and engage in meaningful discussion with their manager about leadership development. In short, *Inspire* connects employees with targeted activities and resources for learning, giving them the tools and information they need to drive their own professional development. To learn more about Inspire and sign up for a free 30-day trial, please visit our [Web site](http://www.realtimeperformance.com).

This Inspire 10X10 provides 10 tips and 10 specific resources for **establishing trust in the workplace** and gives leaders specific but short, and easily digestible, tips for on-the-job development activities for building trust with their team members.
Trust is the foundation of all healthy relationships. The most important activity for any leader is to establish trust with the people they work with. But what is trust exactly? Trust is a bit like oxygen; when it is available, things run smoothly and you hardly notice it, but when you remove it, you can’t get anything done.

At its most basic level, trust is the confidence people have that you will predictably act in their best interest, never knowingly committing actions that might harm them. There is no single activity that will build trust; rather, you establish trust over time by consistently exhibiting a number of behaviors and values. This 10X10 provides insight into the 10 most important things you can do to build trust, and the 10 best resources where you can learn more about it.

Be Accountable for Your Actions

Accountability involves claiming your own power and marshalling your internal resources to achieve better results. Accountability asks, “What can I do to make a difference?” Accountable behavior enables you to take charge of your thoughts, feelings and actions. Be aware of the following tricks that people adopt when trying to avoid accountability: “I’ll Try” – This toxic phrase creates confusion and tension in relationships. Don’t say you will “try” to do something; just do it. People would much rather hear a definite “no” so they have time to request help from someone else. “It’s not my job” – Poor service results from over-use of this phrase, especially in the travel and retail industries. Companies who take the opposite approach offer gold-standard service that customers remember, such as Nordstrom, Honda, and Ritz-Carlton hotels. “I don’t know” – While use of this phrase can be legitimate, meaning a lack of certain knowledge, it is often a clever substitute for “That’s not my problem.” Repeatedly choosing not to know is non-accountable behavior that causes enormous frustration and, frequently, higher costs. To “not know” is to admit you are ignorant. It’s better to say, “I will find out!”

Establishing Trust in the Workplace

TIP 2 Act Consistently with Your Words

People will pick up immediately when you espouse one value with your words but demonstrate the opposite of that value through your actions. This will undermine your credibility as a leader and erode trust. By always seeking to act in a manner consistent with your words you not only lead by example but you build trust. This often referred to as “walking the talk,” the act of living out your values through daily actions and decisions.


TIP 3 Live Your Values and Communicate Them Regularly

Review the primary values that allow you to inspire trust in others: honesty, responsibility, respect, fairness and compassion. First, ask yourself how often and how clearly you communicate and share these values with others. When facing a difficult situation, openly refer to these values and draw on them to make the best decision. Next, assess how well you live out these values in your daily routine and in your interactions with others. Is there any part of your job, or any decision you make, that might be perceived as hypocritical when it comes to the core values? Assess such situations carefully. Is there anything you can do differently to align your actions more clearly with your stated values? Or, you may need to more fully explain your actions to avoid any perception of hypocrisy.

### Admit Mistakes and Take Blame

We all make mistakes at work, and the negative consequences usually spill over and impact others. To maintain the respect and trust of coworkers, your boss, customers, vendors, and suppliers, don’t hesitate to own your mistakes. Contact the affected parties as soon as possible to apologize and offer solutions for possible corrective actions. Acknowledge the pain or disruption that your mistake may have caused. Communicate the lessons you have learned from this experience and share your possible remedies to ensure that the mistake is not repeated. Invite others to offer advice and provide you with their perspective on the situation.

**Resource (blog):**


### Listen for Understanding

The very act of listening can build trust. By taking the time to listen and really seek to understand the opinion of others, you are demonstrating respect and acknowledging their unique perspective. The act of being heard and understood is very important. People trust leaders who acknowledge and understand their ideas and opinions. Listening for understanding does not mean that you must agree with others, but it does require that you truly want to hear what others have to say and are open to their ideas. In today’s business world, with hundreds of emails daily and constant alerts and overwhelming schedules, it can be difficult to find the time to listen. And then, if we do find ourselves on the receiving end of an important conversation, our minds are easily distracted. To effectively listen, be sure to turn off the email and phone, and clear the mental space to give people your full attention and focus.

**Resource (book):**

**Act with Integrity and Ethics**

The most important action you can take to build trust in the workplace is to be honest and ethical. When speaking and communicating with others, tell the truth. Be transparent and open with your intentions and your decision-making process. Hold yourself and others to a high level of ethics. If you’re facing a difficult situation or ethical gray area, ask yourself how you would decide the issue if your actions were known to everyone.

*Resource (book):*
*The Speed of Trust, Covey, Stephen M.R, Free Press, 2006.*

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**Be an Advocate for a Fear-Free Culture**

Warren Bennis of the University of Southern California discovered in his research that effective leaders build trust by being consistent and predictable in their behavior, and attempting to truly listen and understand the perspective of others. Interacting with others openly and directly is not only more respectful of your coworkers, but it also builds trust and commitment to the team. An open and direct style of interaction demonstrates respect for everyone’s perspective and opinion. His research suggests that you can interact openly, directly, and respectfully by: a) being open about both positive and negative news; b) realizing that non-verbs convey attitude--check your posture, gestures, facial expression and vocal tone to make sure they convey what you intend; c) communicating messages consistently and clearly; d) staying focused on the issue at hand, not personalities or past incidences; e) listening to truly understand what others are attempting to communicate; f) demonstrating a willingness to learn from others.

*Resource (book):*
### Face Reality

In our conversations with others, we would all like to tell the truth as part of doing business, tackling new challenges, or resolving hard issues. However, the task can be difficult, as we often fear that a difficult conversation will turn into an angry confrontation, stirring up emotions and causing a distraction. “Why wreck another meeting with a disruptive conversation?” we wonder, or “Why try to resolve a tough issue when we can put it off another day?” Success in life and work requires that we be responsive to reality. When a conversation is real, our relationships develop and we establish an environment of honesty and truth. If our conversations always avoid difficult subjects, the quality of our relationships suffer, as do the opportunities for growth and success. Each conversation we have either enhances relationships, flattens them, or takes them backwards. Make sure you are tackling the difficult conversations with your direct reports. In turn, ask yourself how well each of your direct reports is confronting reality with their teams.

### Provide Honest Feedback

One of the primary responsibilities of a leader is to provide feedback to others, especially the people who report directly to you. The act of providing feedback can help establish trust, but only if you have the courage to be honest. Clearly communicate your expectations and give people clear and consistent feedback on how well they are meeting your expectations.

**Resource (article):**

*Level 5 Leadership: The Triumph of Humility and Fierce Resolve*, Jim Collins.

**Resource (book):**

## Building Trust with Openness

The common, initial reaction to a mistake is to blame someone else. However, even apparently random errors occur due to the convergence of multiple contributing factors; sometimes the cause is people, sometimes the cause is the work process itself. You will never be able to discover true causes for problems unless you have a fear-free culture. Blaming individuals causes people to shut down their communication and limits their willingness to communicate the facts honestly. This, in turn, limits your ability to look realistically at the facts resulting from a problem. As a senior leader, your actions influence others. People will look to you when there is a problem or challenge. Be open to new information, avoid assigning personal blame to problems, and encourage everyone to participate in the solution. As you coach and develop your direct reports, encourage the same behaviors and provide honest feedback. It's important that you share your expectation for a fear-free culture and open dialogue amongst your team. By asking trusted colleagues for feedback in these areas, you will increase your ability to interact consistently and predictably in an open and honest manner.

### Resource (article):
We hope you enjoyed this month’s 10X10 from RealTime Performance. Stay tuned for next month’s 10X10, where we’ll cover tips for acting with integrity.

More About Inspire

Organizations that implement Inspire from RealTime Performance:
• Improve the quality of development plans for employees.
• Reduce the time spent creating development plans.
• Eliminate the frustration traditionally felt by some employees when asked to create a plan “from scratch.”
• Increase the adoption, participation and implementation rate of development plans.
• Drive specific actionable on-the-job development activities.
• Better align development plans with business goals and strategies.
• Leverage the investment your company has already made in learning resources.
• Improve the communication between managers and direct reports regarding leadership development and career advancement.
• Leverage the tool as a means to catalog and track selected areas of improvement.

Who’s using Inspire?
Johnson & Johnson, FedEx, Nordstrom, Starbucks and Lockheed Martin.

How can I learn more about Inspire?
Contact: Sean Murray, 206.749.9000 x21, seanm@realtimeperformance.com.

About RealTime Performance: Founded in 1999, RealTime Performance delivers online training products to develop company leaders. The products enable companies to cost-effectively assess leadership skills, make targeted recommendations for performance improvement and empower employees to create and share development plans to achieve business goals. The company’s flagship Web-based training product, Inspire, provides a self-directed means for employees to manage their career development, giving them access to knowledge and skills at the “point of need.” Visit www.realtimeperformance.com for more information.