Cultivating Mutual Trust and Cohesion on Teams

Wade Gilbert, PhD

wgilbert@csufresno.edu

@WadeWgilbert
1. Building a Leadership Foundation: Finding Your Purpose and Core Values *(January)*

2. Finding Your Leadership Style: Athlete-Centered Approaches to *(February)*

3. Team Dynamics and Leadership: Cultivating Mutual Trust and Cohesion *(March)*
One of the reasons we go to practice is for us to find out who we can trust and not trust. You have two hours every day to earn the trust of the coaching staff and the other players.
So we go to practice every day and we try to put players into situations that will test them in ways that tell us whether or not a player can be trusted.
Just how important is trust to success in sport?
Trust and Performance

High team trust = high success rate

Low team trust = low success rate
As I entered the final years of my career, I realized that I was on the verge of identifying the most important element in building team success. Without it, there can be no journey to the top. No dynasties. No championships. But if you can harness its power, you will find your program on the way to levels of achievement that had been impossible before. The element I am speaking about is trust.
Our Purpose Today

Present strategies used by successful coaches to create a culture of team trust
Coaching Realizations

- All teams and relationships are fragile
- Trust and cohesion are in constant flux
- Trust and cohesion must be strengthened daily
I don’t have a secret receipt for pulling a team together. Sometimes it’s a constant battle throughout a season. Then in other seasons, magic happens. The quality of the team depends on the strength of player relationships.
Mutual Trust Defined

Being comfortable with exposing your vulnerabilities, fears, weaknesses, and needs, with others.
Mutual Trust Defined

Rests on assumption that moral standards and intimate details of a relationship will not be violated
Trustworthy Coach

Appear more trustworthy if:

• has a past record of modeling core values and respect (reputation)

• is currently modeling core values and respect (performance)

• demonstrates self-confidence, professionalism, and dignity (appearance)

Build a Trust Bank
Build a Trust Bank

• Becoming a coach = opening a ‘trust’ account

• Successful coaches make regular deposits

• Must counter-balance inevitable withdrawals
Common ‘Deposits’
Hinch puts psychology degree to work promoting team chemistry (Houston Chronicle, March 14, 2015)
‘Humanizing’ the Players

• Before each workout, young players Q&A:
  – Where are you from? Where did you go to school? Can you tell us a little bit about your career?

• ‘Get to know you’ homework assignments

• ‘50 questions’ and team presentation
Clubhouse culture is created on trust. It’s created on comfort that the person sitting next to you has your back and you have their back.
Mutual Trust = Collective Efficacy

- Group belief in each other
- Enhanced by, and contributes to, team cohesion
  - Teams that feel more connected to each other and team goals are more confident in team’s ability
  - Teams with high levels of collective efficacy consistently outperform teams with low levels
  - Teams with high collective efficacy report higher levels of satisfaction and effort, lower levels of anxiety and stress
One and Done

Long-term value of pre-season team building activities for nurturing mutual trust and cohesion?
When Was the Last Time You Made a Deposit?
• Frequent praise
• Coach enthusiasm
• Setting team goals
• Playful teasing and joking with players
• Motivational team oriented speeches
• Scheduling quality opponents

Trust and Cohesion Deposits

✔ Frequent and open communication

✔ Be a source of positive influence for others

✔ Resolve conflict through shared leadership
Communication trust strategies
Instructions, first person to achieve Bingo (any line) AND person with most spots filled after 10 minutes each win an award. You can only use each person once and you can use yourself once. Print name of person in the grid.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Someone who...</th>
<th>has climbed Half Dome</th>
<th>surname starts with ‘H’</th>
<th>owns a motorcycle</th>
<th>has a snake</th>
<th>is a coach</th>
<th>has attended the ‘Y’ games</th>
<th>plays a musical instrument</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>has visited Canada</td>
<td>has attended Olympic games</td>
<td>has run a marathon</td>
<td>is married</td>
<td>has visited Asia</td>
<td>has same eye color as you</td>
<td>has a horse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is a referee</td>
<td>birthday in month starting with ‘J’</td>
<td>has a daughter</td>
<td>enrolled in a different major than you</td>
<td>has a cat</td>
<td>was on the high school track team</td>
<td>has visited Europe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>played high school softball</td>
<td>has a dog</td>
<td>has visited Africa</td>
<td>has attended an MLS game</td>
<td>has a tattoo</td>
<td>has a son</td>
<td>is a first generation college student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knows how to snowboard</td>
<td>knows how to ice skate</td>
<td>has done a triathlon</td>
<td>has been born in a foreign country</td>
<td>has climbed Mt. Whitney</td>
<td>is a Fresno State athlete</td>
<td>has a brother</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has visited Australia</td>
<td>can sing (well)</td>
<td>surfs</td>
<td>can juggle</td>
<td>has attended a MLB game</td>
<td>is bilingual</td>
<td>is an out-of-state student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has at least 5 siblings</td>
<td>played high school soccer</td>
<td>has a sister</td>
<td>has visited Mexico</td>
<td>has an iTunes account</td>
<td>played high school football</td>
<td>was born in Fresno county</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Team Tuesdays

• Time set aside on Tuesdays for team building
• Athletes responsible for leading the session
• Inspirational story-telling, showing motivational movies, creating team highlight presentations, and writing team chants
Positive Touch

Positive Touch
PITCH it!

• **Productive** (emotions in control, positive, efficient)
• **Informational** (specific and relevant feedback)
• **Timed** (close to behavior or event)
• **Consistent** (alignment with core values, congruency between verbal and non-verbal language)
• **Honest** (no hidden messages or ‘mind games’)
Positive influence
trust strategies
Role Perceptions

Trust dwindles when there is:

• Role ambiguity
• Role conflict
• Role overload
• Role dissatisfaction
Clarify and Accept Roles

• What are the responsibilities of this role?
• What behaviors are necessary to fulfill this role?
• How will I be evaluated in this assigned role?
• What are consequences if I do not fulfill this role?

TRY!

• Take Responsibility Yourself
• Athletes encouraged to repeatedly ask themselves two questions:
  – What is your influence on the team?
  – What is your influence on the game?
Role Acceptance
Role Acceptance

I was determined to be a dependable teammate. I’ve had my chances to start and be a major contributor ... [late in my career] I’ve found that sometimes the best way I can be reliable is to come off the bench and encourage our starters or give the team a boost of energy.
Energy Giver Teammate
The ‘E-File’

• Teammates write 3 things they admire about each member of the team
• Place completed sheet in folder for each athlete
• Coach reviews, add own statements
• Return ‘ENTHUSIASM’ file to athletes
• Review as needed to strengthen trust & confidence
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Teammates</strong></th>
<th><strong>Complainers</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are open to change.</td>
<td>Resist change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have “can do” orientation.</td>
<td>See reasons they cannot do things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build on successes and strengths.</td>
<td>Focus on finding problems to fix.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look for the challenge in situations.</td>
<td>Are overwhelmed by problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take responsibility for their actions.</td>
<td>Avoid blame or responsibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think in terms of new possibilities.</td>
<td>Are limited by what worked in the past.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are good listeners.</td>
<td>Are poor listeners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a continuous supply of energy.</td>
<td>Run out of energy quickly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make decisions easily.</td>
<td>Wimp out in the face of tough decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel in control of their environment.</td>
<td>Feel victimized by their environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are driven to excel by challenge and risk.</td>
<td>Are afraid to take risks or face challenges.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work hard all the time.</td>
<td>Work hard only when they feel like it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoy inner calmness.</td>
<td>Suffer excessive inner stress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are present- and future-oriented.</td>
<td>Cannot let go of the past.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn and grow from mistakes.</td>
<td>Are devastated by failure.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I was so thankful that I got the chance to be around him and see how he works and approaches the game. His whole attitude -- it was really special to be a teammate of his last year.
I simply want people to remember me as a competitor and a great teammate. That’s it. Those are the two most important things.
Teammate Tribute Activity

• In pre-season, have each athlete write 1-page teammate tribute about themselves
• At the end of the season, what would my teammates would say about me?
• Revisit during the season as a reminder
Resolving conflict trust strategies
Tuckman's Group Development Stages

- **Forming**: New individuals look to leader for guidance.
- **Storming**: Idea compete for purpose & voice.
- **Norming**: Mission is defined & cliques are formed.
- **Performing**: Collaboration serves common goal.

https://lecturehub.files.wordpress.com/2013/10/tuckmans-group-development-stages.png
Shared Leadership

Montreal Canadiens to play 2014-15 season without a captain
The best teams have a critical mass of leaders and at any one time a bunch of them must demonstrate it. By having no designated captain, I believed we would get more out of the players.

Widen the Leadership Base
Team Unity Councils

- Two senior athletes from each position on the team formed the unity council.
- Responsible for bringing team issues to the coaching staff.
- Most effective when hold meetings at frequent and regular intervals (proactive).

### Resolving Conflict

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Don’t</th>
<th>Do</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do not label, accuse, or insult the person.</td>
<td>Do describe the other person’s actions and behaviors. Focus on issues and on behaviors that can be changed and not personality issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not view conflict as a win-lose situation.</td>
<td>Do view conflict as a problem to be mutually solved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not describe the other person’s action in a general way.</td>
<td>Do define the conflict and describe their behaviors in a specific and limited way as possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not expect the other person to be a mind reader.</td>
<td>Do describe your feelings and reactions to the other person’s behavior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not expect the resolution to fall only on the other person’s shoulders.</td>
<td>Do describe your actions (what you are doing and failing to do) that contribute to the conflict and what you can do to help resolve the conflict.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Build a Trust Bank

✓ Frequent and open communication
✓ Be a source of positive influence for others
✓ Resolve conflict through shared leadership
Are You a Trustworthy Coach?

- Would I want and like to play for me?
- Will I be the best that I can be under me?
- Why would I want to train under me?
Strive to be the coach you always wanted to play for.
Cultivating Mutual Trust and Cohesion on Teams

Wade Gilbert, PhD

wgilbert@csufresno.edu

@WadeWgilbert