



# Becoming more trustworthy as a leader

**Background Note and Agenda  
for our 13th Leadership Conversation**

From 10.30am until 4.30pm on Tuesday December 5th, 2017

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Society of Leadership Fellows, St George's House, Windsor Castle

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*“When you form a team,  
why do you try? Because  
teamwork builds trust and  
trust builds speed.”*

**Russel Honoré**

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*“Trust is the glue of life. It's the  
foundational principle that holds all  
relationships.”*

**Stephen Covey**

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*“Great companies that build an enduring brand  
have an emotional relationship with customers  
that has no barrier. And that emotional  
relationship is built on trust.”*

**Howard Schultz**

# TRUST - we all want it. But how many of us are given it by those around us at work?

Have you yet met a leader who DOESN'T want to be trusted?

Exactly! These people don't exist – not in the circles that most of us move in, anyway.

We all say that we want to be high trust leaders.

Some of us say that we trust our teams more than they trust us – and a few of us say that if **only** our people could learn to trust us more, **anything** would be possible.

Trust, trust, trust – we talk about it a lot. We especially talk about who we do – and don't – trust, and when it comes to our political leaders we're pretty unforgiving!

Whilst we enjoy the “sport” of discussing the last time we lost trust in a leader in public life, we can easily forget that ‘our people’ can enjoy the same sport when it comes to us as leaders:

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“ I really liked her, yet the way she dismissed the union claim as ‘rubbish’ was just a step too far. I’m not sure she used the word rubbish, but everyone who was at the big meeting said that’s what she really **meant** ... ”

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“ I never liked him, but I sort of trusted him and then that business over the restructure made me think that the people who said he’s just out for himself were dead right after all. That lot up there on the 5th floor aren’t going through the pain that we have to go through... next time he says ‘trust me’, I won’t know whether to laugh or cry. ”

We know this goes on, don't we - except we do our best to ignore it. We say things like "goes with the job", "I didn't become a CEO to win popularity contests".

Of course. But we also know that at times our impact as leaders **depends** on how many of our people get behind us.

If they don't trust us, they will tend to lag too far behind.

We might tell ourselves that we're leading from the front, but if most of the people who are meant to be right behind us are nowhere to be seen, what's the benefit of that?

If and when this happens, we find it easy to blame others. It's always easy to blame everyone else. But we know that we should blame ourselves.

The simple truth is that our performance as leaders is directly linked to our trustworthiness – and that is about how **we behave** more than how anyone else behaves.

If we want to be top performing leaders, we need the vast body of our people to have a good level of trust in us – and quite a few of them to trust us **a great deal**.

For quite a lot of us, that means a radical rethink of how we behave as leaders.

Precisely what this might mean in a very practical sense is what this one-day Conversation is all about.

### **The benefits of higher trust are huge**

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We are focusing on high trust leadership, because the benefits can be huge.

We quote Lieutenant General Russel Honoré, former Commander of the US Army, because trust does enable leaders to "build speed".

It also becomes the "glue of life", to use that phrase famously coined by Stephen Covey.

And it supports organisations massively in creating an "emotional relationship with customers that has no barrier", to quote Howard Schultz.

## There are **four** stages to this Conversation:

1 We explore what you see as the **barriers** to those close to you trusting you more.

This is a very personal issue, and we are only able to ask it of you because we have established a culture of really high trust in our Leadership Conversations.

So that we don't take you by surprise, we will circulate the first question round everyone joining us before you arrive in Windsor. This will give you a chance to engage with it before you share your thinking with others.

Is there one barrier that is shared by us more than any other?

It will be fascinating to see how similar your answers are to this question.

2 We then ask what you would hope to achieve through becoming a more trustworthy leader. It is really important that we each define the prize for ourselves - and have a chance to hear how others define it too.

Achieving higher trust can be a hard road to go down, requiring some of us to go a fair way beyond our comfort zone in the ways in which we engage with others.

There are tough challenges linked to trust, most notably in relation to the **transparency** of our leadership styles, our commitment to establishing a sense of **community** among our wider staff teams, as well as our commitment to encouraging **experimentation** on the part of others. We want to ask ourselves:

- How transparent **are we** as leaders?
- How **do** we promote a sense of community - some would say family - among our wider staff teams?
- And how **serious** are we when we say that we will back others who want to take a risk and experiment with a new approach?

**3** At this stage we want to ask ourselves if changes on our part might trigger similar changes on the part of key players in our top team, to enable the team as a whole to become regarded as more trustworthy.

- How do we go about encouraging team members to adopt key principles – such as transparency and receptivity and accountability – in their dealings with each other, and their own teams, in order to build their trustworthiness as leaders?

For all of us, our trustworthiness as leaders is so vitally tied up with the **standards** that we uphold in the different aspects of our leadership.

The reason why so many leaders achieve a certain measure of trustworthiness, and no more than that, is because they fail to set high enough standards in relation to, say, transparency or accountability.

This is why the challenge of modelling high trust leadership really is such a big deal.

**4** We nail ourselves down on what we each hope to achieve over the next three months.

Before we close the Conversation, we also agree a time for a video conference call among the group in three months' time, to assess progress by then and encourage each other to keep on moving forward.



# Agenda

Tuesday, December 5th 2017

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10.30am onwards	Coffee and light refreshments served in the Vicars' Hall
10.45am <i>(prompt, please)</i>	Pete Ashby, Leadership Programme Director of the House, welcomes you to our 13th Leadership Conversation and suggests a small number of groundrules for our discussions. We then break into small (standing) groups for 15 minutes to explore what we see as standing in the way of us being <b>trusted more</b> by those we seek to lead
11.15am	Back from groups, we hear your personal answers to this question and ask what lessons we draw from them
12 noon	In groups of two for 10 minutes, we ask what more you would hope to achieve through being trusted more highly as a leader
12.15pm	Back in the circle in new seats. We discuss the prizes that we would hope to gain though being more trustworthy leaders, and capture the top 3. We then break into small groups to work together over lunch and ask how we might best change our behaviours in order to win greater trust from those around us
12.45pm	<b>Lunch is served in the Vicars' Hall.</b> Groups work on the changes in behaviours that would enable us to become more trustworthy as leaders
1.30pm	We reconvene as a single group and ask if any of you achieved any breakthroughs in your thinking. If so, please capture them for us. Towards the end of this session, we prepare for our final challenge: how might we best draw on the insights that we have gained to support members of our immediate teams in developing their own trustworthiness as leaders
2.10pm	Small groups work on how you might each best <b>model your new behaviours</b> in a way that encourages others to follow suit
2.30pm	We hear the main insights from each group and draw out the wider lessons. We then move into our final round of small groups to sharpen up a small number of resolves to enable each of us to become more trustworthy as leaders
3.30pm	Our final session. In a spirit of high trust we are open to challenging each other if we feel that the resolves are unduly cautious and unlikely to achieve a significant impact by March 5 2018. In the final few minutes we agree next steps for working together in small "buddy groups" in preparation for a video conference call in three months' time (we hope to agree the time of this call before we end the session)
4.30pm	Close of the Conversation.