

Building trust at every level

(A conversation, not a presentation)

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Content Strategy Seattle

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INTRO

I'm Bill

(he/they)

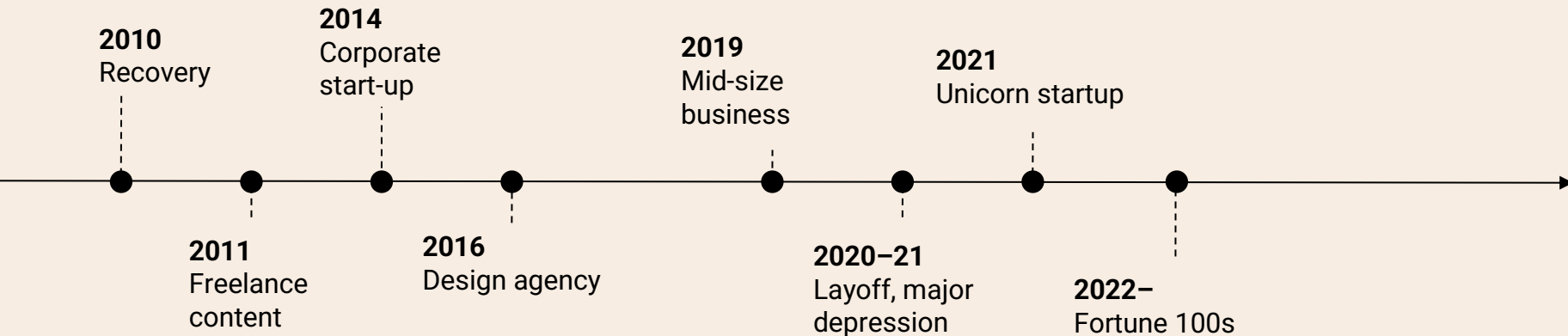
I have shaggy brown hair and I'm wearing a heather grey hoodie with the LA Raiders logo altered to celebrate Steve Albini.

15+ years in brand strategy and UX design, which all started in content writing.

BACKGROUND

My journey

A (very) late bloomer to taking (some) ownership over my career.



REPUTATION

Creating community



Erin Williams
Head of Design
McDonald's

"Bill is a natural design leader who cares equally for craft and community, resulting in higher-performing, happier teams."



Ava DeVoe
Design Director
Realtor.com

"Bill is an incredible thought partner who truly values the people he works with."



Kiran Mascarenhas
Sr. Manager, Design
T-Mobile

"As a leader, Bill earns trust by delivering excellence consistently, and creates a productive, caring, fun work culture by example."

GAME THEORY

Principles for collaboration

What game theory taught me about
successfully building community.



Nice

Easy to get along and find
common ground with.



Clear

Expressive of predictable
needs and boundaries.



Provokable

Willing to respond to
exploitation without abuse.



Forgiving

Able to move on from
conflict with positive intent.

MY THEORY

Our job isn't our job

Building a reputation through our work
and behavior throughout our career is.



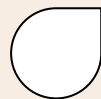
Boss+

Anticipate their needs and
make them look good.



Peers

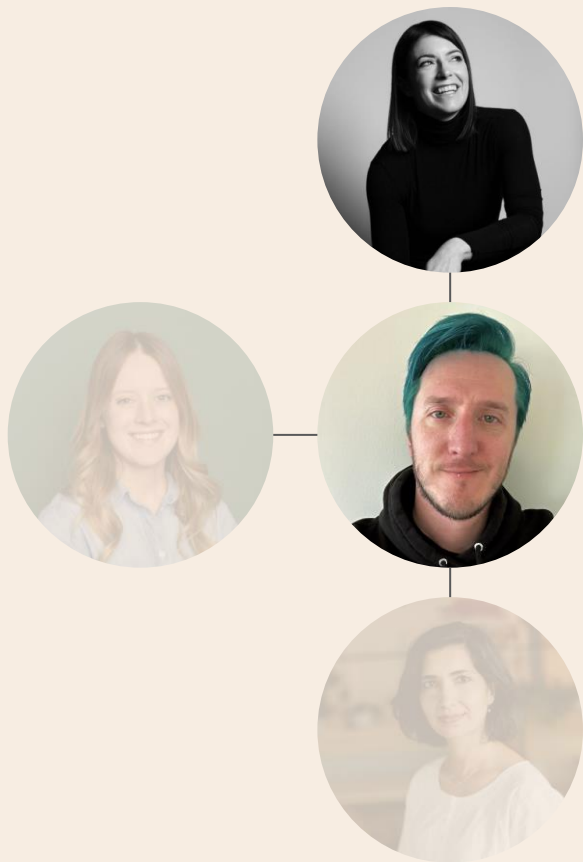
Offer help and only
promise what you can
deliver.



Direct reports

Give them a manageable
amount of autonomy.

Boss+



BOSS+

Experience

Great bosses have been the co-conspirators behind my greatest successes.

Horrible bosses have been the source of my hardest struggles.

When I'm lucky enough to find a leader who has what I want and is willing to share, I prioritize that relationship.

BOSS+

Tips to build trust

Anticipate their needs and make them look good.



Support them

Understand their goals and help them succeed.



Delight them

Find inventive ways to make their day easier.



NEVER surprise them

Wild-card behavior erodes trust and is really hard to repair.

BOSS+

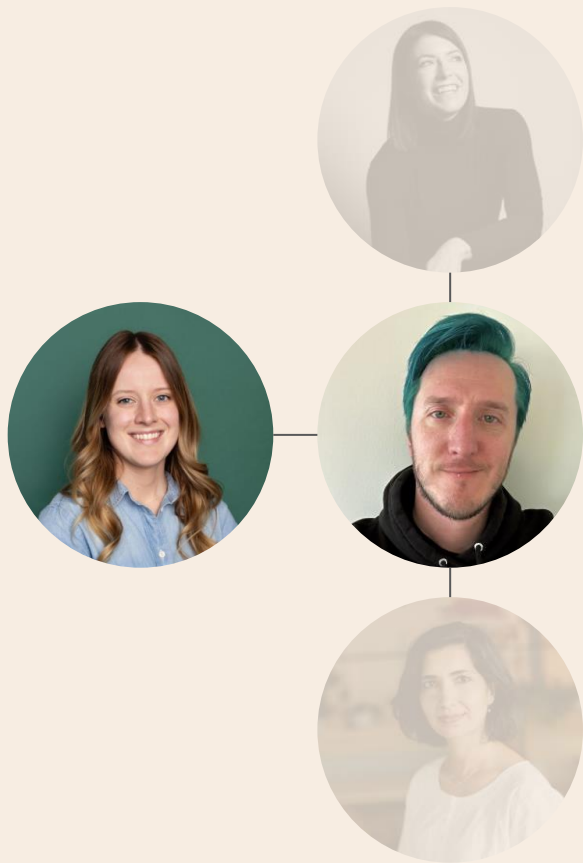
Discussion

How have you built trust with a difficult boss?
Was it worth it?

What about building trust with executives? Do
these tips apply?

How can I “find” a great boss? Any signals I
should look out for, good or bad?

Peers



PEERS

Experience

Whether within the same discipline or in another function, my “First Team” of peers are often the people with whom the greatest conflict and camaraderie happens.

PEERS

Tips to build trust

Offer help and only promise what you can deliver.



Share wins

Position your peers and co-owners of successes.



Own mistakes

Take ownership of misses, but don't dwell on them.



Let them vent

Everyone needs a space to let off steam. Give them one.

PEERS

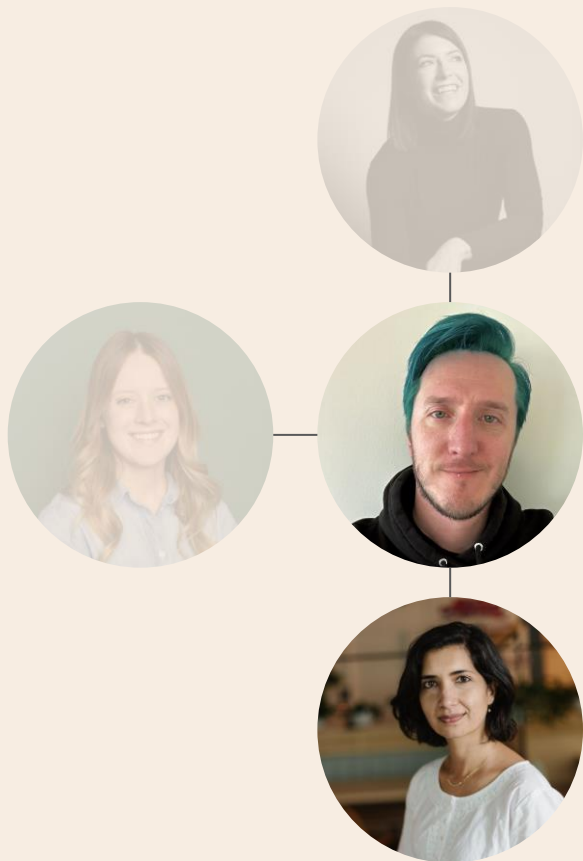
Discussion

How have you built trust with partners you find difficult to deal with?

What actions can you take when someone acts out of perceived ill intent?

How can I manage conflicting motivations and rewards across functions?

Direct reports



DIRECT REPORTS

Experience

Being a people manager has been both incredibly rewarding and extremely challenging.

Kindness has been the key for me. Ruinous empathy has been my Kryptonite.

DIRECT REPORTS

Tips to build trust

Give them a manageable amount of autonomy.



Cultivate candor

Show them how to have healthy disagreements.



Know their metaphor

Take an interest in their interests.



Timebox gripes

Set clear boundaries for venting vs. obsessing.

DIRECT REPORTS

Discussion

How have you built trust with someone who's skeptical of you?

What happens to trust after a bad performance review? Can it be restored?

Have you ever been unable to improve performance??

Thank you!