



The Great Place To Work[®] *Effect*

PLAYBOOK

How *trust* fuels growth by unlocking
agility, productivity, and innovation



Build *trust*, drive performance

Your Action Guide to build a high-trust culture that drives results

Great Place To Work research shows that when employees are empowered to experiment, collaborate across teams, and connect to a shared vision, they're significantly more agile and innovative.

A consistent approach to fostering these behaviors is key to navigating change and unlocking new ideas at every level of your organization.

Your Trust Index survey data can help you identify the barriers to agility, innovation, and productivity – and take targeted action to build a more adaptive, future-ready workforce.

What business outcomes are you trying to drive?

Trust is not just a culture word. It drives business performance.

This guide helps you connect the outcomes your organization cares about with the trust-building behaviors that make them possible.

Start by naming two or three outcomes your team or organization is trying to improve. Some of the most common include:

- Agility or change readiness
- Innovation or idea flow
- Productivity
- Employee retention
- Customer satisfaction
- Team collaboration

This guide focuses on innovation, agility, and discretionary effort. Trust also supports retention, collaboration, and customer satisfaction – often through different leadership behaviors.

As you move through this guide, you will start to see how trust, when built intentionally, helps unlock each of these outcomes.

Think it through

Not sure how trust connects to outcomes?
That’s okay. Use these prompts.

Your turn

As you think about your current business goals and challenges, where could your workforce be more innovative, agile, or productive?

Focus area

Agility

Ask yourself

When change needs to happen for micro or macro reasons, do people adapt quickly and pull together to collaborate to solve problems and create change? Or hesitate, question the plan, and wait for direction?

Innovation

Are bold ideas encouraged and acknowledged to ensure your customers are satisfied on an ongoing basis? Or, do people play it safe and stay quiet?

Productivity

Are people equipped to focus and follow through with the clarity, tools, and trust they need? Am I creating an environment where my team feels so trusted and valued that they are inspired to consistently go above and beyond expectations?

Chose one focus area and reflect

What’s getting in the way today, and how could stronger trust help unlock that potential?

Reflect on culture and leadership

Connect your business goals to the culture you’re creating, and your leadership role in shaping it

High-trust behaviors that drive business outcomes

Outcome	What people need	What leaders can do
Agility	Clarity, psychological safety, and the freedom to act – especially when conditions change.	Communicate vision often. Celebrate experimentation. Involve people and support their needs inside and outside of work.
Innovation	Safety to share bold ideas, take smart risks, and feel heard.	Be transparent, involve people in decisions, develop talent, and celebrate effort – not just outcomes.
Productivity	Meaningful work, fair recognition, and a culture of support and shared success.	Coach instead of command. Align people to purpose, reward contributions fairly, and build a culture of mutual effort.

As you reflect on how trust is working across your business (and where your leadership can help it grow), it’s worth remembering that trust influences more than just agility, innovation, and productivity. It’s also a powerful driver of outcomes like retention, team collaboration, and customer satisfaction.

That’s because trust shows up in the everyday interactions that shape how people experience work. Trust drives business performance when it shows up in three key relationships: trust in leadership, pride in your work, and camaraderie with your team.

These three relationships are central to how motivated people feel every day to achieve what the business requires of them. The [Trust Index Survey](#) is designed to measure these experiences with precision, helping you pinpoint where trust is thriving and where it needs attention.

While you may not be using the Trust Index just yet, this guide offers a starting point. Use the prompts below to begin reflecting on your team’s experience and start building the insights that the Trust Index will later validate and expand.

01

Trust in leadership

Leaders who communicate, care, and inspire

02

Pride in your work

Work that feels meaningful and purpose-driven

03

Camaraderie with your team

People who support each other, share wins, and show up with kindness

Reflect on culture and leadership

Reflection prompt

Where does your team need leadership most – pride in their work, camaraderie with teammates, or trust in you as a leader?

Focus area

Trust in leadership

Ask yourself

How do people experience me as a leader? Am I consistent and transparent, even when things are uncertain? Am I clear and kind in how I speak and give feedback?

Your notes

Write about one way you could model vulnerability, invite feedback, or improve how you share direction with the team.

Pride in your work

Do my people understand how their work connects to our purpose? When was the last time I helped someone feel proud of what they do?

Write about one conversation you could have, or one story you could share, to help people feel more connected to why their work matters.

Camaraderie with colleagues

How well do people on my team know and support each other? What’s getting in the way of healthy connection or collaboration?

Write about one ritual, recognition moment, or collaboration opportunity you could create to help people feel more like a team.

Pro tip:

Pick one relationship to focus on each month. Trust grows when you lead intentionally.

The *nine* leadership behaviors that build trust

Translate the behaviors into action

High-trust cultures aren't a mystery. They're the result of specific, repeatable leadership behaviors practiced consistently over time.

Here are the nine behaviors that fuel the Great Place To Work Effect, plus ways to activate each, starting this week.

Want the full definitions the nine high-trust leadership behaviors?

[Click here](#)

Behavior

- 01 Listening
- 02 Speaking
- 03 Thanking
- 04 Developing
- 05 Caring
- 06 Sharing
- 07 Celebrating
- 08 Inspiring
- 09 Hiring & welcoming

Do this today

- Ask one open-ended question in your next 1:1 – then ask three follow-ups. No solving, just learning.
- Share a key update before the grapevine does and explain how it affects your team.
- Name one person to thank today and link their effort to a bigger goal or value.
- Ask: “What’s one skill you want to grow this quarter?” Then offer support.
- Check in on someone’s well-being – not just their workload.
- Explain how performance connects to compensation or recognition.
- Recognize someone who lived your values and tell the story in a meeting or email.
- Tell a customer story that shows your team’s impact.
- Make sure your next new hire feels expected and celebrated before day one.

Pro tip:
“Listening is the behavior that unlocks the rest. It’s how leaders discover what’s getting in the way of performance — and what to do about it. It turns employee experience into action.”

Marcus Erb
VP of Data Science & Innovation,
Great Place To Work



Trust isn't one thing. It's the *whole system*.

Great work. You've started connecting trust to outcomes like agility, innovation, and retention, but this action guide is just the starting point.

Let's talk about the next steps in your journey.

I'm ready for a demo



The **Trust Index** helps you measure where trust is strong and where it's blocking performance.

Measure where trust is strong and where it is breaking down.

Understand how trust affects agility, innovation, productivity, and more.

Pinpoint how experiences differ across teams, roles, and identity gaps.

Know which leadership behaviors will drive the greatest impact.