

# **Commentary: Outline of building a climate of trust**

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**JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO-LACKLAND, Texas** – Trust & Transparency are among those principles our leadership views as essential to include among AFIMSC's stated Values. We are driven to earn trust through transparent processes and services to enable the force to deliver lethality anytime, anywhere.

Trust within an organization, most importantly, within AFIMSC, is what oil is to an engine in a car. Trust keeps all of the moving parts of an engine from seizing up and stopping forward motion. Trust that needs to be in place for anyone to be successful in an organization is not something you can take for granted. If there is distrust within an organization, it normally takes months even years to build what has been broken.

Some individuals seem to have a talent for creating trust. When they speak, others take them at their word. When they are absent, people speak well of them. Even when they make a mistake from time to time, others will give them the benefit of the doubt. There are four steps an organization can take, none of which are easy, when building or rebuilding trust among the workforce.

**Step 1 – Keep Your Word:** When we speak of integrity and ethical behavior, keeping your word is where we should start. Individuals will need to learn they can count on each other to deliver on promises. Additionally, it is important to follow up with people, and try not to give excuses for why they are not able to follow through. If for whatever reason someone is not able to follow through with what they say, be proactive and let

the other person know. This step is crucial to the success of building continuous and collaborative relationships within AFIMSC and the Air Force at large.

**Step 2 – Tell the Truth:** This step is much harder for many people than it sounds. Most of us like to think of ourselves as truth-tellers. It is easy to round the numbers up, spin the facts, or conveniently leave out the evidence that doesn't support our position. In order to build trust within AFIMSC, it is important for each of us to commit ourselves to telling the truth even when it is painful or embarrassing. Most of the time, people are more forgiving if you are upfront and honest in the beginning. Usually, individuals do not expect you to be perfect. However, they do expect you to acknowledge your mistakes and to come clean when you make them.

**Step 3 – Be Transparent:** Most people will not trust you unless you learn to share yourself, warts and all. It is essential to take a risk by being vulnerable. This creates rapport, and rapport helps to build trust. However, it is important to be mindful not to use this as a gimmick or a technique. If you do, people will see straight through you, as you are trying to manipulate them and cover up what you're true ambitions are. Instead, you will want to carry yourself to be authentic. The reason for being authentic is that it will build trust, because you are demonstrating trust. It shows that you are taking the initiative to go first. In essence, what you are saying to others is, "I can trust you, and I am willing to show you who I am. Some of it isn't very attractive, but I am willing to take that risk because I trust that you will accept me for who I am." This kind of self-revelation almost always gives the other person the courage to take off their mask as well. Being transparent is not always easy, but being vulnerable builds trust.

Taking this in to consideration, the relationship between leadership and employees within AFIMSC are deepened and eventually will lead to a new level of understanding and respect.

**Step 4 – Give Without Any Strings Attached:** Nothing builds trust like love. You may ask, what does love have to do with the workplace? Step three as discussed earlier will roll over into step four, just because of the need for the current step to be transparent. One can utilize their past experiences throughout their career by sharing their knowledge of similar situations in other environments, and provide a solution rather than concentrate on the problem. Compassion for individuals within the AFIMSC workforce that have been affected by past negative or positive conditions will have credible information that is essential for each other's success. Keeping this in mind, while collecting this information through a variety of surveys, we must not expect anything in return. The more we take the initiative to give to others, the easier it will be to build trust. If we are willing to give of ourselves, it will let others know that it's not all about just one person, it is about the team. From this, people will learn they can trust individuals because they know everyone has their best interest at heart. In order to help others understand that we are not merely looking out for ourselves, we are thinking and taking into consideration others interests too.

In closing, like being transparent, all employees within AFIMSC, will need to be careful how they give. Otherwise, it may be perceived as manipulation. Individuals will need to make sure everyone knows their motives are pure, and they do not expect anything in return. Ultimately, trust can always be rebuilt. Although, as stated earlier, in

some situations, it can take years, even months to rebuild trust within an organization.

It takes doing the right things over an extended period of time. In most cases, it

doesn't take very long, as long as you are truthful and transparent.