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Christian Schools Australia

Trusting your Principal



It's a question of Trust

- Trust is about the clarity of expectations and delivery in relationship
- Building trust is critical to success as a leader – for Principals both trust of staff and trust of the Board
- How do we maximise trust in a Board/Principal relationship ?



Types of Trust

- Intrinsic Trust
- Basic Human Empathy Trust
- Trust in members of a Team
- Trust in another's professional integrity
- Personal Trust based on relationship



Characteristics of Trust

- Each type of Trust has the following common characteristics:
 - Confidence in each other
 - Reliance on each other
 - Vulnerability – we trust because we need to
- So why is it hard for Boards to trust their Principals?



Why is trusting the Principal hard?

- Board lack of confidence in its own power and authority when compared with the expertise and knowledge of the professional staff:
 - Because of their voluntary, part time nature , when compared with the full-time commitment of the Principal; and
 - Often Board members are often drawn from other fields than schools / education.



Signs there is no trust....

- Every decision, however small, has to be ratified
- No correspondence occurs without prior Board approval
- No cheques are signed by the Principal
- No staff negotiations take place with external parties, no contracts are entered into



Signs there is no trust...

- No staff are engaged, unless the Board engages them
- Effectively the Principal's job ceases to exist.



Where there is trust you see...

- Empathy
- Co-operation
- Confidence in the respective roles each plays
 - Absence of turf wars
 - The right balance between conformance and performance
 - Optimising their combined power



Empathy behaviours

- The Principal understanding of the constraints of Committee process and dynamics, respecting the voluntary nature of the commitment, and assisting with induction of new Board members
- Board understanding that it can be lonely at the top for the Principal, understanding the range of relationships the Principal has to manage



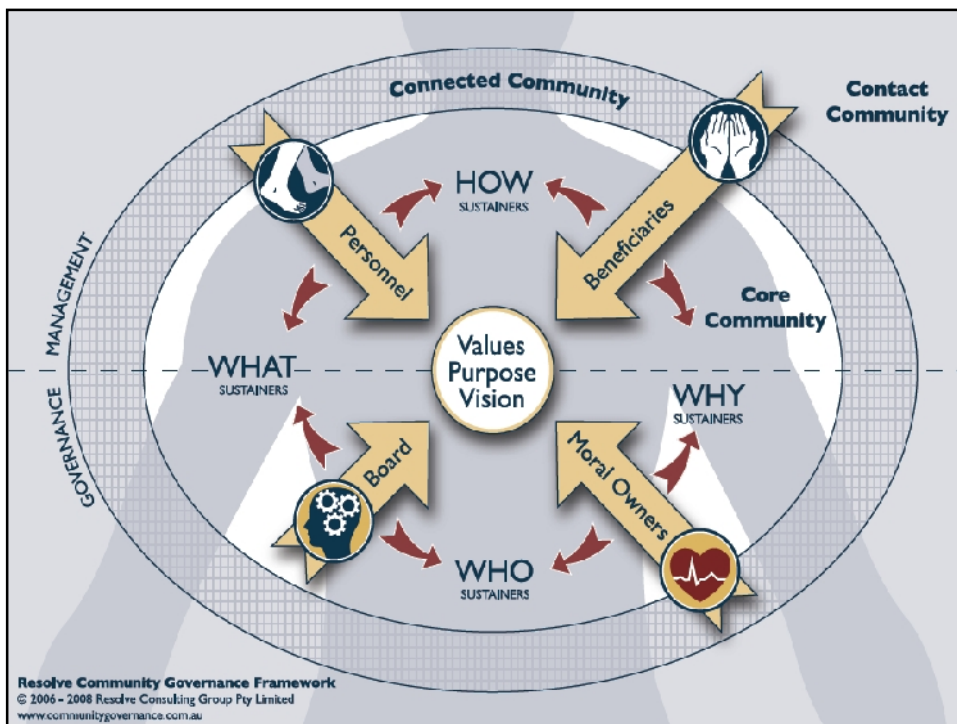
Co-operation behaviours

- Principal valuing the larger team, harnessing the energy of allies, encouraging by example positive relationships and cooperation throughout the organisation
- Board seeking rational, efficient linkage between Board needs and daily operational processes and demands, sharing and participating in the process of strategic planning



Confidence in respective roles

- Principal aware of the difference between management and governance roles, valuing both for the health of the organisation, respecting the Board's right to take key decisions
- Board aware of the difference between management and governance roles, valuing both for the health of the organisation, respecting the authority of the Principal



Absence of turf wars

- Principal assertive, but avoiding defensive responses where there are confusions, negotiating the territory, Principal is the staff leader and Chair is the Board leader
- Board avoiding micromanagement, respecting protocols in communications with staff, adjusting to the strengths and weaknesses of the Principal



Balance between conformance and performance

- Principal accepting the Board's responsibility to monitor, providing helpful and timely information, encouraging strategic thinking
- Board understanding the different levels of monitoring and evaluation, avoiding onerous reporting requirements, enhancing individual and collective strategic thinking



Optimising their combined power

- Principal putting 'the organisation comes first' into practice
- Board putting 'the organisation comes first' into practice



Summary

“The role of the Board is to appoint the Principal, set the parameters of their position and hold them accountable to the vision, mission and core values of the organisation. The Principal needs to be focussed on results while the Board needs to be focussed on strategic direction. The Board needs to be a sounding board for the Principal.”

(Peter King, World Vision)



So how do we build Trust?

- What damages Trust ?
- Preconditions for Trust
- Board and Principal Obligations in relationship
- 3 steps for building Trust
- A 5 point plan to get you started



What damages Trust

- On the Board's part:
 - hands-on role, intrusiveness (micro-managing)
 - bringing volunteer working/knowledge into the Board room (role blurring)
 - conflicting instructions from the Board to Principal (inconsistency)
 - lack of resources allocated by the Board to achieve its objectives (i.e. unrealistic demands or targets)



What damages Trust

- On the Principal's part:
 - failure to provide information (abuse of knowledge or power)
 - incompetence
 - failure to deliver on agreed tasks



Preconditions for Trust

- Clarity of Board function: the Board must have a common understanding of its own role in the organisation
- Clarity of Principal role and responsibilities: both Board and Principal need to be clear on the purpose of the Principal's position, based on discussion and reflected in an up-to-date duty statement



Preconditions for Trust

- a mutually agreed strategic plan, or at least a set of agreed key objectives for the organisation
- regular communication and co-ordination between Chair and Principal – somewhere between daily and monthly according to current demands
- a recognition of the different frameworks within which Board and Principal operate (the behaviours described earlier)



Preconditions for Trust

- appropriate observance of protocol in Board members' dealings with staff (other than the Principal)
- fulfilment of the mutual obligations which bind the Principal and Board in common cause (expressed clearly in policy and employment conditions)



Board obligations to the Principal

- compensation, benefits, and a working atmosphere that make the Principal's position attractive
- a clear duty statement, performance goals through a strategic plan and clear policy boundaries
- regular formal performance reviews
- constructive informal feedback on job performance



Board obligations to the Principal

- recognition for tasks well done
- respect for the Principal's authority over staff
- prompt and thoughtful response to requests for guidance or assistance



Principal's obligations to Board

- Commitment to the organisation's mission and policies, and sensitivity to the communities it serves
- Responsible performance of fundamental organisational and administrative tasks
- An administrative structure and decision-making mechanism that promotes a productive working atmosphere and effective staff relations



Principal's obligations to Board

- Thorough and timely communication with the Board on financial and operational matters
- Effective representation of the organisation in the community and commitment to enhancing its public image
- Prompt and thoughtful response to Board requests for information (other than individual or maverick requests)



3 Steps for building Trust

1. Develop a set of ground rules to build trust – a code of conduct or statement of principles as to how we will deal with each other
2. Develop a set of measurements (e.g. Policies, the clarity with which roles are defined)
3. Have an annual monitoring game plan (e.g. are we following the rules, do we discuss them with new Board members)



Suggested 5 point plan

1. Invest time in confirming and clarifying the respective roles of Principal and Board and Board policy development
2. Ensure the Chair and Principal adopt a coordination plan, and review it annually (or when one of the post-holders changes)
3. Be open, direct, honest with each other
4. Remember, the organisation comes first
5. Work together through thorny problems, strategic planning and big decisions



Remember

- A baby's trust in a mother can be taken for granted
- A client's trust in a qualified professional can be reasonably assumed
- A Board's trust in a Principal and a Principal's trust in a Board has to be earned



Thank you

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