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TRUST = CONFIDENCE + VULNERABILITY
THE ROLE OF THE LEADER

Effective relationships are those that rely on trust. Trust has been described as the glue that sticks relationships together, or the oil that keeps them running smoothly. However, some relationships are more significant for trust than others, such as those with a senior or line manager.

VULNERABILITY IS TAXING

Trust involves two distinct facets: confidence in the other party, and a willingness to make oneself vulnerable. While a great deal of prior attention has focused on understanding the components of confidence, far less attention has been paid to the vulnerability involved in trusting the other party where there might be little means to control or monitor their behaviour. Feeling vulnerable diverts cognitive resources toward mitigating the perceived threat the other party poses. At its most extreme, where perceived risks outweigh the benefits, it can lead to the relationship being curtailed. Efforts to mitigate vulnerability raise the need for controls, which carry time and financial costs , but also divert effort from task performance into monitoring the other party's actions and compliance.

An indirect consequence of vulnerability is the introduction of additional stress and strain , which over time can further deplete the resources of the trusting party. This stress can introduce unintended errors into the individual's work, creating further costs and unintended security consequences for the organisation. Indeed, the trusting party may not be aware of the impacts of additional cognitive burdens on their decisions and actions – only realising after making a mistake.

THE CRITICAL ROLE OF LEADERS

Our CREST-funded study of trust in a high-security context showed that leaders play a critical role in trust, in part by shaping felt vulnerability. Leaders act as powerful role models who anchor others' behaviour. In this way, they influence how much confidence a person has in others' competence, their adherence to moral principles, and their care and respect for others' needs (i.e., the confidence facet of trust). The behaviours they promote also shape how much vulnerability a person experiences. We found that leaders who were immoral promoted vulnerability, reduced trust and increased security risks, while leaders who were moral mitigated these effects.

RULE-BREAKING AND MISCONDUCT

Our work showed that rule-breaking by leaders was associated with wide-ranging counterproductive work behaviours. Rule-breaking removed a leader's moral authority, allowing subordinates to perceive that they could do similar, creating the start of collective moral disengagement about rules and to whom they apply. This process undermined coherence

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within the team, significantly reducing their capacity to contain wrongdoing through social sanction. In cases where team members were more pervasive and wide-ranging in their misconducts, vulnerability within the team increased and new stresses were created. For those not engaging in misconduct, they could either stay silent, exit the organisation or join in.

Collectively these deleterious processes reduce the performance of the team, replacing organisational interests with more self-serving goals. More critically, they re-shape local and organisational norms, creating a form of 'frog-boiling' as collective moral disengagement becomes normalised.

This effectively diminishes the means of social sanction and emboldens those engaged in misconduct and the leader in further self-serving antics. As feelings of vulnerability escalate within the team, a pernicious erosion of trust occurs. More concerned members start to quit, only to be replaced with self-serving individuals who are increasingly attracted to the team. In this way, the organisation can start to rot from within, with the means of self-correction diminishing rapidly. It is here that security risks are greatest.

ETHICAL LEADERS

In contrast, ethical leaders offer a means to build and sustain teams and organisations that are resilient to security risks. These leaders are principled, honest and caring (thus building the confidence facet of trust) and operate by clear ethical standards, which they communicate to their followers. Ethical leaders discourage subordinates from regarding rules as things that are imposed on them as a means to control behaviour (i.e., to gain a reward or avoid punishment), but instead use these to enforce ethical standards. Ethical leaders encourage subordinates to model their behaviour in novel situations to determine for themselves what is right.

The efforts of an ethical leader diminish feelings of vulnerability as subordinates can understand the basis for their leader's decisions and actions, freeing them to concentrate on the task at hand, rather than being diverted to self-protection. They provide adherence to and development of effective systems, and challenge those that are not effective. These leaders build trust not only with their followers, but more widely outside of their team. It is therefore an important style of leadership offering important assurances to external stakeholders, that enhance the viability and resilience of the organisation, especially during times of crisis.

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