The Trust Equation

Rate one relationship. Pick one thing to change.

Trust = (**Credibility** WORDS + **Reliability** ACTIONS + **Intimacy** SAFETY) / **Self-Orientation**

FOCUS · DIVIDES EVERYTHING ABOVE THE LINE

Three things add up. One thing divides them all.

CREDIBILITY · ABOUT WORDS

Do I believe what this person tells me?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

1 · Not at all — Completely · 10

RELIABILITY · ABOUT ACTIONS

Can I predict what this person will do?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

1 · Not at all — Every time · 10

INTIMACY · ABOUT SAFETY

Can I tell this person something that makes me look bad?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

1 · Never — Easily · 10

DIVIDED BY

SELF-ORIENTATION · ABOUT FOCUS

Is this person in it for me, or for themselves?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

1 · For me — For themselves · 10

The one I will work on:

What I will do this week:

There is no trust score, on purpose. Dividing these numbers gives an unbounded figure that means nothing on its own and invites comparing people. Take your lowest rating above the line and start there. A high Self-Orientation is worth acting on whatever the rest say, because it divides everything above it.

The Trust Equation was introduced by David Maister, Charles Green and Robert Galford in The Trusted Advisor (Free Press, 2000). We credit it to them and recommend the book.

The definitions, the questions and all commentary here are Team Dynamic Labs-'s own words. This is a thinking framework for conversation, not a validated psychometric instrument, and your ratings are not a measurement.

Free to copy for your own team session.