

BOOKS A book on trust was recently published in The Netherlands, written by Tica Peeman, General Manager of VIStrainingen, a training company. The book aims to describe why times are ripe for so called high-trust organizations and why 'traditional' organizations fail to meet the challenges of the modern world.

In trust we trust

Why do we choose to belittle employees in organizations? Often, there are all kinds of ridiculous rules on how employees should act and behave. It is as if they were children, but they are not. They are competent, innovative, responsible adults when they are treated as such. We need to trust each other. This is Tica Peeman's belief, as expressed in the introduction of 'I Trust U', a comprehensive and clear-sighted book on trust written by the General Manager of a Dutch training company VIStrainingen.

The author starts with a question: "Why do we put a lot of emphasis on trust in our private lives and this seems to be the reverse for organizations?" Maybe it is because, traditional 'planning and control' organizations are too conservative, inflexible and most of all do not inspire employees, she argues.

Why are high-trust organizations a far better alternative? It is because control is less and less possible in our modern world, while employees more and more want to work for companies they trust. This, argues Peeman, will become even more important as the new 'Generation Einstein*' enters the work place. 'Generation Einstein' refers to the those born after 1991, which, in contrast to so-called generations X and Y before them, has a collectivist rather than individualistic mindset.

Tica Peeman outlines three indicators of trust through involvement, influence and transparency. To build high-trust organizations, the author argues, we have to redesign our organizations dramatically in four ways: structural, cultural, managerial, and being transparent.

THE CELL

The book suggests that a high-trust organization has to be divided into small independent units or teams. The reason being, that trust can only grow between people who know each other well and in places where employees have a lot of influence on their work. To connect all the mini-companies, that is cells and teams, you have to build a strong culture, which, permeates the organization and reflects the way people act, think and dream in this organization.

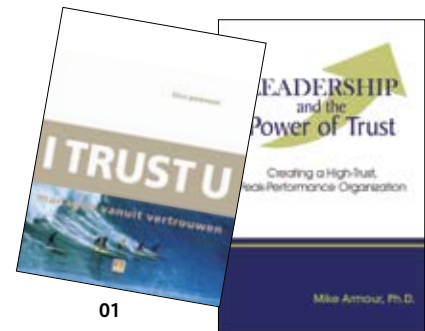
An organisation also needs to dramatically change the way managers have to perform in order to build high-trust. First, they have to understand that the company does not serve them, but that employees are the core of organizations and have to be treated as such. Managers are facilitators. As we have traditionally selected

dominant persons for position of manager, explains Peeman, we now have to select managers who are capable of facilitating, coaching and restraining their own egos. Managers have an important role to play however, Peeman argues, in introducing trust as the dominant organizational choice, building a strong culture and being role models in trustworthiness themselves.

Transparency is also needed in a high-trust organization, namely transparency in information and communication that has to be active, speedy and intentional. Peeman then proposes a five-stage program to build lasting trust in organizations. ●



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- 01 Tica Peeman, *I Trust U*, Nederlands, Pearson Education Uitgeverij (2009), 212 pp., € 22.95

Mike Armour, *Leadership and the Power of Trust: Creating a High-Trust, Peak-Performance Organization*, LifeThemes Press (2008), 207 pp., € 12,67 (image 02)

The last decade of corporate, government, and institutional scandals has led to widespread distrust of those in positions of leadership. Dozens of independent studies confirm that corporate America is running a serious trust deficit. It's as glaring as our trade deficit and no less damaging to the bottom line. The antidote to this trust crisis, the author believes, is Trust-Centered Leadership. He illustrates eight basic principles of Trust-Centered Leadership by drawing on his own experience as president of a financially-troubled college.

* Generation Einstein is the title of a book introducing of a new name for the generation born after 1991. In contradiction with previous Generation X, G. Einstein does not have a individualistic, but a collectivistic mindset.