SHARING INFORMATION

Most of us have heard the saying "Information is power" at some point in our working lives. Employees may utter the phrase in frustration when they feel their leaders or managers are withholding information in order to keep a hold on their power. Or it can explain why, when you ask for information, the other person suddenly becomes reluctant to share. It also affirms why so many companies have entered the information discovery and sharing business—information is powerful, valuable, and useful.

Games of hide-and-seek inside organizations in which information is the bait are some of the most destructive and least successful corporate practices, given the radical shifts in access to information that have occurred over the past decade. They consume significant amounts of time and energy, divert people from their collective contributions to the organization, and cause great harm to a leader seeking to be seen as trustworthy.

Given the benefits of sharing information in the right way and the drawbacks of withholding it, it stands to reason that leaders who want

to be seen as trustworthy *must* figure out effective ways of sharing information. Two-way communication—sharing information, receiving feedback, and sharing information again—is absolutely critical to the development of trust.

Many of the practical tools used for sharing information—such as newsletters, staff meetings, and email blasts—can be easily identified and implemented within most organizations. Sharing information with people via email or bulletins posted on company notice boards, for example, is easy and practical. Yet precisely because whipping out that email and sending it to 150 people simultaneously is so easy, the tactic can be overused.

A few years ago on a consulting assignment, I was waiting with a group of employees to begin a focus group interview. The conversation turned to people's displeasure with the volume of email announcements they were all getting. One woman looked up at the group with a sly smile and said, "That used to be a problem for me, but I've figured out a great way to take care of that." Curious to know her approach, her coworkers waited to hear more. "It's easy," she said. "Anything I haven't gotten to by the end of the day on Friday just gets deleted! Yep, I just zip up that whole bunch of emails, announcements, meeting reports, important reminders, and it all goes in the trash. And I make sure I empty the trash right then. It feels really great to leave for the weekend knowing that when I come in on Monday morning, my inbox will be empty!" Everyone around the table cheered.

Clearly all the people who had been sending this woman email had taken advantage of one of the practical tools available for information sharing. Yet too much information was being shared, and the woman receiving it, because of the sheer volume of what she received, had lost her attachment to anything in it that might have been useful.

Trustworthy Leaders use a more profound set of tools to create two-way communication as they seek not only to provide information to people but also to share it in ways that enable people to use it. These tools are more powerful in their impact, yet harder to see. And they make all the difference in great workplaces.

As a Trustworthy Leader, you must go beyond the practical tools like mass email and tap into the profound. And what that means is tapping into *why* you want to share the information in the first place. Which takes you back to the Virtuous Circle—to your sense of honor, inclusion, and followership.

Humility, reciprocity, and position awareness—the hallmarks of leading with honor—guide your openness and transparent sharing of information. As a Trustworthy Leader who is honored by your followers, you will be less likely to experience the insecurities that might drive a less Trustworthy Leader to hoard information. The mutual respect at the base of feeling honored creates a strong commitment to share information with people who you know will use that information wisely.

A commitment to inclusion is also an important tool when sharing information. It helps you to create a place in the sharing process for question and answer time, feedback, and evaluations of the message content. Inclusion affirms your appreciation of others' need for the information, and by openly sharing, you ensure that everyone has been fully included in the process.

Finally, engaging followers serves as a profound tool because Trustworthy Leaders who value their followers know that in order for those followers to be successful, they need information. As described in Chapter Four, an important step in establishing a trust-based leader-follower relationship comes from acknowledging that a person's choice to follow is made not from an expectation of compliance with an edict or job requirement. And a well-informed person will be in a better position to make the positive choice to follow you than would a poorly informed person. Sharing information is a critical part of the invitation for someone to make that choice.

Information sharing practices that rest on a leader's sense of honor, practice of inclusion, and respect for followership distinguish the greater success of Trustworthy Leaders from those leaders who simply stop at doing what is practical, like sending out lots of email or posting an abundance of company notices. The use of the practical combined with the profound always fuels the actions of Trustworthy Leaders. It creates

the unique mix of activity that binds giver and receiver in an overlay of trust.

There are three distinct concepts that I see in the approach that Trustworthy Leaders take to sharing information.

The first concept involves sharing information to *promote understanding*—of the organization's work and its mission, and of how an individual's work fits into the larger picture. Importantly, understanding needs to be approached from the recipient's point of view. Though this may seem obvious, all too often information is shared from the perspective of the one who has the more complete story. When that happens, information-sharing can actually result in *less* understanding, rather than *more*.

The second concept concerns sharing information in ways that *enhance participation*. Practically speaking, this means ensuring that people have a mechanism for asking questions, that multiple access points are available for the shared information, and that people are asked to evaluate the effectiveness of the information sharing. Each of these actions gives people a way to participate in information sharing. Yet more can be done to actually invite participation by creating an atmosphere in which people are comfortable asking questions, know enough to be well-informed, and are asked to give feedback to continually improve the process. An invitation to participate enhances all forms of information sharing and creates an expectation that people are always welcome to contribute.

The third concept involves sharing information in such a way that it *extends influence* to people. This is the most challenging, yet it is the most critical to truly developing trust with people. When people are given the opportunity to influence the outcome of an activity, their desire to understand and the dynamics of their participation change. People feel that they have a stake in the outcome. Your job as a Trustworthy Leader is to ensure that the feeling of having a stake in the outcome is based in reality—that people really can influence the outcome of a situation. This requires some practical steps, such as inviting workers to participate in meetings in which outcome decisions will

be made and making sure they are well-informed so that they understand the issues. Beyond that, extending influence requires that you let go of your position power, and that you deeply listen to what other people have to say, as an indication of your openness to being influenced.

These three concepts—promoting understanding, enhancing participation, and extending influence—are combined in the information sharing practices of great leaders and serve as one more way of showing people that you are trustworthy. In the rest of this chapter, you'll see how you can create your own combinations of practical and profound practices as you share information with others.

PROMOTING UNDERSTANDING

Understanding does not come from simply hearing information or from receiving an email in your inbox. There is always a necessary additional phase after the information comes in: time for questions and answers, time to ensure that people understand the information shared. This loop—whether it happens through a feedback session, Q&A, or discussion—is a critical part of the process of information sharing that promotes understanding. This should also all be based on what I would characterize as a philosophy about information sharing: an approach based in both the value of information and the value of people.

At Scripps Health Care, Vic Buzachero—corporate senior vice president of Innovation, Human Resources, and Performance Management—has a rich appreciation for the importance of information sharing. He calls his approach to the task one of "communication and alignment"—one in which he seeks to share information with people in their own "language," on their own terms, so that they can use it. Buzachero wants to ensure that as many people as possible both receive information and understand it. His approach at Scripps Health serves as a valuable example for any leader seeking to take this first step.

"If you are the finance officer," he explains, "you don't jump up in the middle of a meeting and say, 'Okay, we are going to put together a budget where the capital plan is going to have a capital asset pricing model in it, and we are going to have the following hurdle rates for capital,' etc. People's eyes will glaze over." The operations people in the meeting, he warns, will be worried about how production is going and what supplies they need and how to keep the business running. The finance officer's pronouncements will just slide by. "So what does a good finance person do?" he asks. "Translates all the financial information to create value for the operating people so that they can sit down and go through the information together. In my area of human resources, we have our own responsibility to translate all the people information for others to ensure that leaders can use it to guide their actions. We need to step out of our own language as well and speak to others so they can understand us." Much of Buzachero's work is in HR, but this need for translating is universal. *All leaders*, no matter the department, need to take the particular information related to their area of expertise and translate it so that it can be understood by others. Only then will it have the potential to be useful.

Even well-intentioned managers can diminish their impact when they don't spend the time necessary to translate their message. Buzachero posits that this happens because they're too busy either defending their work or feeling insulted that people don't get what they're saying. "Well, no, they won't get it initially," said Buzachero; hence the need to be multilingual. "Your role is to translate your expertise to the board members and senior executives, and to all levels, to simplify and clarify it as much as possible. And you have to translate it on their terms, not your terms." It's the job of any leader who wants to be understood, and is not a question of dumbing down or simplifying to the point that a four-year-old would understand it, which would be insulting. Yet it is absolutely critical to take the information you have and move it out of the special language that often develops within a profession or practice area—to translate.

Not that doing so is easy. It's very natural to talk to others from your own vantage point. "I have gone through the mistakes of translating things on my terms and then thought, 'Why don't you get it? That's the way we do it in HR.'" The reality, Buzachero has realized, is that the audience doesn't care about his special language. What they do care about is how the information can create value for them. Translating it takes time, and energy, but the reward is a new level of understanding.

"That's where leaders should spend their time," Buzachero said. "Making intelligence and knowledge actionable. Because that's what people want: to be able to take action and contribute to the benefit of the organization. And they can best do that if they understand what's being asked of them and what's being shared with them." Leaders need to make sure that all employees have the information necessary to do their work, and that they see the connection of their work to the larger goals of the organization. "More than other things, communication that is aligned with the mission and values of the organization is critical," Buzachero said. "One way to get the best talent to come together and deliver outstanding patient care is to have people understand how their work fits into the whole system. People will be more engaged and will trust their leaders if we help them to understand."

Once you've approached the issue from the recipient's point of view and made sure time has been allotted for clarification, you're still not done. Understanding also involves making sure the communication is in alignment with the company's actions, and Buzachero gives a great deal of attention to this. If an administrator takes the time and effort to tell employees they are

> I think we have an absolutely wonderful clinic, and the leadership has had all to do with that because they are approachable, they are not behind closed doors where you can't get to them. If you have a complaint or something good or a new idea, they are always there to support you. I think the more they give, the more their employees give. It's just great. Really great.
> —*Scripps employee*

important, for example, but then won't share information about business results with them, then there is a lack of alignment between what is said and what is done. When such a breach happens, it's very difficult—if not impossible—to realign and earn back the lost trust. To complicate the subject further, sometimes the lack of alignment is the result not of a person, but of a system.

"Many times," Buzachero said, "when you look at some of the processes and systems in our organizations today, it looks like the customer is the audit department, or compliance, or the IRS. Well, they are not our customer. The customer is our patient, our staff, and our managers. We have to do everything in a compliant way, but we do not build a system for compliance; we build a system for our customer. That system can get out of alignment very easily, given all the pressures we face."

In other words, though people may be told their purpose is all about the patient, that message may seem disingenuous if you spend your entire day working to please the audit department or some other oversight body. In a health care setting, as a Trustworthy Leader, you need to make the connection clear, to ensure that everyone understands how compliance *is* connected to the patient, staff, and managers, and to also keep the focus on the true customer.

Finally, sharing information so that people can understand involves a high level of transparency. "Effective communication requires eliminating barriers and being transparent. To be transparent you need to share information," Buzachero said. "Why do some decisions look out of alignment? Is management not walking its talk? Maybe people don't have all the information and management really *is* walking its talk. We always have to ask 'How can you share that information and become more transparent?'" Buzachero has shared quite a bit of information in order to be transparent, including placing himself in the hot seat at large meetings and allowing employees to ask him any question, then answering them honestly. Board members and others have expressed concern about this level of openness, fearing the release of trade secrets. But Buzachero feels that usually no one betrays the trust. "After you

say, 'We trust you,' and you show that you can be trustworthy," he said, "people really appreciate the honesty."

Ultimately, it boils down to a very simple premise: if people don't understand what is going on, their ability to trust you will be compromised. If they do understand, they will be open to trusting you deeply. And that level of trust that you develop over time will make it possible to fulfill your mission quickly and effectively. Following Buzachero's example by sharing information that creates understanding will also help you to move on to the next step in the process: enabling people's ability to participate.

> For me, I think one of the best words that people are using is *transparency*. I think that is a big one for us, when you ask your manager: "When are we going to have money for this equipment?" or whatever we need, and having that person say, "I don't know" or "Not until next year," being honest is a really important thing. I think people respect the manager, even if it is bad news. A lot of other businesses do not foster a trust environment, but our leaders are very honest about what's going on.
>
> —*Scripps employee*

ENHANCING PARTICIPATION

People at Hoar Construction, a real estate contracting and construction firm, often describe themselves by what they are not. They are not bashful, they are not shy to speak up, and they are not passive if something has happened that they disagree with. In part because of what they are not, what they *are* is part of a very successful company with a strength of character and depth of reserve that is now propelling the company forward as the construction market—dismal in the global recession that began in 2008—begins to pick up steam.

Hoar Construction has been recognized as one of the Best Small & Medium Companies to Work For since 2007. Leaders there invite people to participate in the life of the organization, just as they do at

Scripps—by first helping people to understand. Communication at the company, which is based in Birmingham, Alabama, has been characterized by openness since its founding in 1940. In the last several years that openness has been heightened, as more opportunities have been created for people to see and talk with their leaders. This brings with it a certain level of vulnerability for leaders, because decisions can be challenged directly. Yet at Hoar, leaders believe that they—and the company—are better off if they hear people out, and they use the compliments and the criticism to make the business stronger.

At a base level, Hoar uses the same practical communication techniques many leaders do: they send out newsletters and emails, go on site visits, and join in team meetings. They do it vigilantly, and it's effective. One employee, Stacy, says, "I feel like one of the things that our upper management does is they keep an open line of communication with everyone. The economy is not great right now. I am in the Tennessee division. I'm not in Birmingham all the time, but we always feel like we know what's going on down here because we have regular updates from the president of our company, and state of the economy updates. We know what big jobs have been awarded down here. I feel they do a very good job of keeping everybody in the know."

Yet there is also something more that happens at Hoar, something that goes beyond the base level and underscores leaders' willingness to share considerable information and answer innumerable questions. Namely, the Trustworthy Leaders at Hoar want people to understand the information being shared, and they want people to *use* it—to ask more questions, pursue a new idea, or find inspiration to take action. Leaders take the time to visit with employees, to find out what they're doing, to answer questions and ask questions of their own. They promote participation by example. So the leaders are not only sending the emails and messages Stacy finds so valuable but also sharing those messages in person. As another employee, Frank, says, "Being a construction company, we have many job sites that are out of state or out of the county. Our upper management travels to those sites to keep in touch. Not only do they invite you to come in and talk to them, but

they come to keep in touch with the field. It's not unusual to look up and see [CEO] Rob Burton at your side or [COO] Steve McCord. They come down and they keep in touch with what's going on."

All this contact with leaders who make it a point to visit with people, ask questions, and involve themselves in discussions with employees at job sites inspires those same employees, in turn, to participate in other discussions and activities. Participation is said to be essential to the success of the organization; it supports the development of trust between employees and managers, leaders, and followers. To this end, I share two specific examples that illustrate the effectiveness of the invitations that come from the Trustworthy Leaders at Hoar and the benefits that the company is able to reap from people's participation.

The first is a simple act: the publication and widespread distribution of "Lessons Learned" memos to all employees. These memos are prepared after an individual or a project team addresses a difficult situation. The memos are created by the people involved in resolving the challenge, and they are posted on the intranet for everyone to see. The people involved may also be asked to teach a class at Hoar University (the company's internal resource for all training and development courses) to address the very problems they faced, so that others might avoid such problems in the future.

"Lessons Learned" is a step more formal than the question-and-answer sessions that happen regularly on job sites and in staff meetings, yet the memos take their inspiration from the same source: the belief that people at Hoar want to do good work and always want to get better. Leaders share a deep respect for people's ability to absorb information and turn it into useful knowledge. "Lessons Learned" offers a very practical example of a way that information is shared and people are invited to participate. It also affirms the profound respect that leaders have for everyone in the business. Leaders trust that people will use the information provided to them wisely, and they make multiple efforts to invite people into the process of information sharing.

A second example is more expansive; it involves Hoar's ongoing training programs. The company takes a broad view of training, sharing

information not only about how to pour cement and other technicalities of their work but also about *how to participate effectively* in the life of the organization. There are very clear strategic reasons for this emphasis. "If you think about what you do on a construction job site," says the company's vice president, Douglas Eckert, "at times we've got twenty partners and subcontractors, many of them new. We don't know them. We have to all get along, and we have to all build this building that's never been built before and figure it out. You have to be incredibly optimistic, and you have to be very well-trained. But one of the things you have to do is, you have to be able to deal with people and problems that come up."

To this end, Hoar trains people on conflict management and on leadership skills. And then they take it even further, getting rid of any obstacle blocking the road to full participation. "We say that our people are going to perform best if everything in their lives is going well," Eckert explains. "What does that mean? Negotiation, for instance, is very important in business. But it's also important for people in their families. Those things really matter to people, so we train them to negotiate. If they can balance their own checkbook and do a great job with that, they're going to be a lot happier. So let's give them financial assistance. Let's get experts in here to help them be able to balance their checkbook and keep their family well taken care of. We do everything we can to develop the whole person. So, at the end of that experience, they are going to know how to put concrete in, they're going to know how to go to a new community and deal with people they haven't ever dealt with before, and when they get home at night, they're going to have a better relationship with their family. We take a very broad view of our responsibility and our opportunity here."

Hoar walks their talk. Not only do the leaders tell people that they want them to participate, but they also share information that teaches them how to do it. And then the leaders clear clutter from the path so that people can participate.

You can see the positive benefits of this effort clearly when challenging times come up and workers step forward. The construction

industry has faced some difficult conditions, and when everyone works together to overcome the obstacles, it's richly rewarding. "Because we live in this culture and because we've succeeded together," says CEO Rob Burton, "people are also more willing to go through difficult times together. I think people are more likely to rally together, and say, 'Yeah, we understand it's difficult. What can we do to help?' I've been totally blown away with their willingness to do whatever we ask and their understanding of the difficulties in front of us."

When you share information in ways that invite participation, and when people's participation is acknowledged and respected, you continue to strengthen your Virtuous Circle of Trustworthy Leadership. Next, a leader must enable people to have influence. When added to understanding and participation, the combination is spectacular.

> One of the things about working with our managers is that none of them are unapproachable. There is an open-door policy here that I can go to the CEO of this company down to a laborer of this company, and everyone is approachable from every angle any time, whatever. That makes for a good relationship when I know that I'm welcome in the CEO's office. That's good.
> —*Hoar employee*

EXTENDING INFLUENCE

Being able to influence a situation—whether by simply being able to vote for one or more choices, or by actively arguing your point of view—raises your personal stake in the outcome. Your ideas become active during the discussion or presentation, and what comes next, the outcome, will be shaped by your contribution. Sharing information in such a way that you extend influence to people is akin to sharing power, which takes us back to the adage that "information is power." Information can be turned into knowledge—which is what gets created

when people are able to work together with shared information. And knowledge is like rocket fuel.

It should come as no surprise that the folks at Google spend a lot of time sharing information, as that is a primary platform of their business: to find information and distribute it in ways that will make it accessible to the most people as quickly and easily as possible. Yet what happens externally for an organization isn't always what happens internally. Google's leaders might just as easily have come from the old-school "information is power" camp that holds on to all the power by keeping internal information hidden. Luckily for everyone who works there, that's not the case. Google's leaders are from the *new*-school "information is power" camp. They choose to share power by actively seeking ways to make information available to all, increasing every Googler's ability to influence the activities of the organization.

At Google, influence is extended as part of the culture of creating great things *together*. To ensure that people have the information they need to influence the outcome of events, Google's founders committed early on to creating an organization in which openness and transparency would be commonplace. People who succeed at Google are able to do so in part because of their ability to take in the information that is available and use it—to influence their own work, influence other projects, and influence how they interact with others and what questions they ask. When Google's leaders share information, they expect that people will be influenced by it and that they will do something, think something, or share something. In other words, information will enable people to extend their influence back to the organization.

Leaders at Google have often said that they'd rather people learn about important information from someone inside the company than from an external source. When information is shared internally, the person who shares it can be asked for more details and is held responsible for clarifying anything that might be confusing. This holds for department managers as well as for the two founders, who regularly present at the Friday afternoon TGIF gatherings. These weekly gather-

ings, to which everyone is invited, emphasize openness and put a premium on asking questions and giving honest answers.

The impact of the large-scale interaction in the TGIF meetings carries over to smaller group settings as well. The managers who are considered to be the best at Google are those who are the most effective at communicating—willing and able to answer questions, listen to people, and extend influence by supporting employees' efforts to create and work on their own projects. One employee described the support and freedom she receives from her manager: "My manager is there for me. He doesn't really 'manage' me in any way; he is there to help me in a very real sense. I've said no to my manager a lot more than I've said no to my teammates. We can have an open conversation, and that's really refreshing. It lets me work with my teammates to figure out what we should be doing. We are the people who know the stuff we're working on better than my manager. I think that's really unique, empowering, special, and it's something that I really cherish."

For a fuller understanding of people's ability to influence the internal workings at Google, I turn to David Fisher, the former vice president of Global Online Sales and Operations. Fisher found a culture at Google unlike that at any company he worked for previously. During his time there, he learned to be more open with information, to invite participation, and to extend influence to others.

When Fisher first started at Google, he was struck by how open people were to ideas. The pattern at his previous employers—and in many corporations in general, he says—was very different: "In places I've worked before, you have an idea and the first thing that happens is that everyone comes up with a list of why it won't work or why there's a problem." Fisher contrasted this with life at Google, which he says is much more a place in which people ask "Why not?" and seek to free each other from constraints.

He acknowledged going through a period of having to adjust to this new openness. "It took me a little while to realize that Google's answer to the perennial list of why something won't work is that we are going to absorb the risks, within limits. It's really very liberating—it's much

more about trying to do things that are big and different from the way things have been done before. In some ways, precedent can become an anchor that can weigh you down if you let it."

The second difference he noticed between Google and his other employers was the lack of hierarchy. Leaders at Google talk with everyone and listen to everyone, and it starts at the top. Fisher spoke of having recently been in a meeting with cofounder Larry Page in which Page explicitly asked for input from "the people who are making the product decisions," not the executives. Fisher, who previously worked in Washington, DC, said he saw a lot of people there who thought that the title was what mattered most. At Google, it's much more that the *ideas* matter, especially the ideas from the people who are creating the product, providing the service, and interacting with the customer. And because their input is so important, they influence the outcome of decisions.

Fisher told a story on himself that both highlights how extending influence works at Google and shows his own ongoing learning as a Trustworthy Leader. "Two nights ago I drafted something for a new part of AdSense that we're trying to develop and make progress in. A key question we're facing is: What will our go-to-market strategy be for this product? I was sitting with some folks on my team who are working with me on this, and they said, 'We've got all these great people interacting with advertisers around the world. Why don't we just ask the team?'" Bingo! Fisher wrote a short note, and they set up a site where people could post their ideas and everyone could vote on them. Fisher explained, "I'm confident that there are lots of great ideas out there, but sometimes you need to invite people to submit them a little bit more. Maybe when you're a small organization, that happens a little more naturally, but here we wanted to make sure we reached everyone."

What is so interesting about Fisher's story is how it clearly illustrates the potential for people with information and experience to contribute to and influence something larger than themselves. Fisher's team members and the people interacting with advertisers around the world

have a wealth of information to tap into. The process of setting up an internal website through which people at Google could respond to Fisher's query shares information with them so that they can understand the question, and invites them to participate in the process of creating a new part of the AdSense platform.

The lack of hierarchy that struck Fisher was also evident in the AdSense meeting he described. Fisher, in a hierarchy, would be at the top of the food chain. In the meeting he described, he is sitting with people on his team, and they—the team members—provide the input that leads to the decision to ask everyone else—the people in the field—for their input. Any chimera of hierarchy is blown aside as the best input is sought to answer the product question. Significantly, not only were people asked to provide input but also they were all asked to *vote* for the best option—they were invited to influence the outcome.

When you are able to approach a situation in this way, your actions as a leader will convey tremendous respect to the people whose input you seek. Your invitation to people to influence the outcome of a decision is an acknowledgment of their professional expertise. The collective voice of so many people sharing information and participating by voting will lead to the creation of unique knowledge that is likely to make the final choice much more successful in the marketplace. And the respect you show to people—members of your team and others throughout the organization who support the implementation of the product—contributes to their ability to trust you.

Google has created great power in their culture—the power that comes when you promote understanding, enhance participation, and extend influence through the sharing of information. People don't stop and second-guess themselves before asking a question or making a suggestion within their work groups or at all-company meetings. Instead, they feel empowered to contribute, and they do. One employee described the culture of openness at Google as one in which everyone has a seat at the table based on the power of their ideas, not tenure or title.

The ability of Googlers to influence the organization extends beyond their work projects to the policies and practices that

affect employee life in the organization. One person spoke of recent changes that had been proposed for Google's travel policy. "They said we had to get something approved by our managers if we traveled internationally. Everyone said, 'This is ridiculous. We're just not going to do it.' [Management's] response was, 'You're right. That's ridiculous. We're going to go back to the drawing board.'"

Sharing information to extend influence reduces—if not completely eliminates—any compliance- or fear-based behavior in an organization, whether that organization is Google or any other company. If people disagree with something, they can challenge it. Because they have access to information, they can be prepared to propose something different. Well-intentioned policy changes that just don't cut it can be rethought before they become institutionalized. And rather than having people resent the fact that something has been imposed on them that they now need to accommodate, they jump in to make the situation better—they gather information and use it to create a better outcome. They use their influence.

> My family is from a small village in India. My parents grew up without electricity or running water, and they don't have a college education. When I go back to the village and look at the school where my mother studied, it looks the same, except for one difference: the kids in the village, through connectivity to computers and tools like Google, now have access to the same information as kids who go to Stanford. That leveling of the playing field is what Google's mission is all about. They do it in a way without worrying about profits and money. The founders and the engineers who build products are completely beholden to that idea. In many ways, everybody here is part of that one singular mission, which is the leveling of the playing field for what is now the most important resource of the century, which is information.
> —*Google employee*

CONTINUING THE CIRCLE

Sharing information will affect how your organization is structured, what people will accomplish, and the experiences of customers and suppliers. When you share information broadly, then your organization will be less hierarchical, even if on paper there are many layers between the frontline salesperson and the CEO. Because information is necessary for the creation of knowledge, and knowledge helps people to take action, the more shared—within the context of enhancing understanding, participation, and influence—the better.

On the flip side, if people are left ignorant on key issues and their access to information is limited, that ignorance will inhibit their ability to answer questions or resolve dilemmas. Conversely, when people have useful information, they will understand more, participate more, and influence more—and be better able to meet the needs of patients, customers, and suppliers.

In Thomas Kuhn's landmark 1962 book on the history of science, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, the physicist provides an elegantly simple rationale for the importance of having information broadly shared within a system, especially a system like an organization in which regular change is necessary for continued evolution: *"The reasons provided for a needed change can only appear reasonable to people who understand."* It is so simple that it can easily be missed. If people don't understand the information being shared to encourage change or pursue something new, then no matter how compelling the reasons for the change, those reasons won't make any sense. Some people may move with the change process simply because they have to—their jobs are changing. Others may try to participate yet be able to do so only to the degree that they understand the information shared.

When systemic cultural change is needed, everyone who is a part of the system needs to understand the reasons for change in order to participate and have any degree of influence during the change process. The same is true for product or service decisions. If people are asked

to create a new product or provide a new service, the more involved they've been from the beginning in understanding why the new effort is being made, the better able they'll be to participate. And when they can participate, they also have the possibility of influencing. As a Trustworthy Leader, your actions can invite people in, give them the information they need to participate, and enable them to influence the outcome.

From the leaders we've just met—Vic Buzachero, who implores people to promote understanding by avoiding jargon and buzzwords and sharing information in ways that are appropriate and meaningful for the audience; leaders at Hoar Construction, who invite everyone to participate in the life of the organization; and Google's extension of influence through the continuous sharing of information with all—we see how Trustworthy Leadership moves another step forward in the Virtuous Circle while staying connected to the elements of honor, inclusion, and followership that have come before.

Some leaders, like Chris Van Gorder from Chapter Two, have a singular incident that they can cite as a turning point in their approach to leadership; others, like Bob Giles from Chapter Three, refer to a particular learning experience that caused them to see anew the power of a certain approach. Many other people become Trustworthy Leaders through a lifetime of experience. Nothing really dramatic or earth-shattering—simply the steady affirmation, over time, of a set of beliefs that is turned into action. This was the case for Vic Buzachero, who came to his philosophy about leadership and sharing information through his natural tendencies, career path, life experience, and varied interests.

Buzachero is by nature a curious person—he likes to figure things out so that he understands why something is true. And he says that he has always had an intuitive sense that people make the difference in an organization's success. "And if you intuitively know it," he says, "then you begin to try to dig in, to see how you can prove it. Some of it is proving it to yourself, and some of it is statistically demonstrating there is a difference between doing this versus doing that. It's no different than someone getting a Ph.D. and working in these areas and doing a dissertation and statistically demonstrating there

is a difference between doing this versus doing that, and it means something." Vic took an additional step by taking those "proofs" he was developing and translating them into financial terms in ways that others could understand.

Buzachero had an academic background in finance and economics. Early on he developed the skills to take what he believed made for successful management practices and translated them into knowledge that a CFO would be able to use. His operations experience gave him an understanding of the measurements that are used to define success in many organizations—and it also gave him an awareness of the importance of collaborating with others to refine those measurements, translate them, and make them meaningful to different people in different operations roles. And his intuitive belief that people make the difference in the success of any organization provided a third key element that has supported his leadership success.

Although Buzachero's path to becoming a Trustworthy Leader is not dramatic, the impact he has been able to have on people's lives and the success of Scripps Health is. When Chris Van Gorder spoke of the reasons why he has been credited with so much success at Scripps, he cited Buzachero's contribution to the leadership team as a key reason why he, himself, has been able to accomplish so much. "A couple of years into this change effort, when I started putting together an executive team, I finally got Vic. I knew we needed to focus on the people. I went through almost a year's worth of interviews for the head of HR. I had some of the top-notch people in the country coming here, and none of them were what I wanted. Because I wanted someone who understood what we do. We are in the people business in two ways: people are our customers, and people provide all of our services. And Vic had operating experience. He understands what it takes to run an organization. It took me a long time to find him because people like him are few and far between." But Van Gorder finally did find him, and they've been moving forward ever since.