Starting with Why: Build Trusting Teams with Simon Sinek, Ethnographer and Author, *Start With Why*

Fundamentally, what makes a company strong is a culture of trust. When workers feel trusted by and trust in their colleagues, managers, and leaders, they're able to admit vulnerability and to learn on the job. This is the nature of a healthy organization—that everyone from the CEO on down feels secure enough to ask for help and to improve together for the benefit of the company.

Understand trust

- Trust is a *feeling*, not an instruction.
- Trust emerges in **safe environments** where we feel that our *personal growth* and *well-being* are supported. Cynicism, paranoia, mistrust and self-interest emerge in unsafe environments.

Create a safe environment

- Make it your goal to inspire, not threaten, when addressing performance issues.
- Don't say: *If you don't . . . I can't promise you a job.* Say:
  - *Are you okay? . . .*
  - *I'm worried about you . . .*
  - *I know what you're capable of.*
- Recognize that there may be factors of which you're not aware. Show your **empathy** to create a space where people can ask for help.

Show vulnerability

- Vulnerability is about **honesty**. It means saying:
  - *I don't know what I'm doing.*
  - *I don't know how to do that.*
  - *I made a mistake.*
- Model vulnerability for others by admitting your mistakes and exposing your weaknesses. When you allow yourself and others to bring their humanity to work, you make the organization stronger.

Sounds nice, but how do you create this kind of company culture? It's pretty simple, really. Begin by not threatening and alienating employees when they falter. To err is human, and to respond with empathy and support is the mark of a real leader. Also, if leaders want to create an environment in which employees can admit vulnerability, they need to admit it themselves, transparently sharing their own learning process on the job. Ironically, a pose of invulnerability will make a company weaker and less adaptable in the long-run—a dangerous position in a fast-changing world.

Prepare

Before you watch the video

Recall a company leader you've trusted deeply in your career. What did she do to engender that feeling?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Practice

After you watch the video

Explain in your own words why vulnerability is essential to a healthy company culture.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

In a volatile market where layoffs are sometimes necessary, how can you help employees build a sense of safety and trust?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

What does Sinek's example—of how to respond to an employee with low performance numbers—demonstrate?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____