



Q&A with Dennis and Michelle Reina

1. **You've recently completely rewritten *Trust and Betrayal in the Workplace: Building Effective Relationships in Your Organization* (3rd ed.). What inspired you to take a bestselling book, and completely re-craft it?**

Since the publication of our 2nd edition, we've continued our 'in the trenches' trust work with leaders and organizations worldwide. We wanted to bring our readers the most current and comprehensive research in building and sustaining trust in the workplace.

Most importantly, we wanted to debunk the myth that maintaining trust is solely the job of leaders. Trust begins with each and every person, at every level of responsibility. Yet, trust is complex. People often don't know what to do to build and sustain trust...or repair it when it's been compromised.

So, we completely rewrote our book to be a trust building field guide. Its intended audience? Anyone who works with another human being. In the book, we give people the specific behaviors to practice to dramatically improve their relationships, even when times are really tough. This edition is an accessible, practical resource to support *everyone* to work through challenging human dynamics, strengthen trust, and build effective relationships and teams.

2. **For nearly 25 years, you have focused on workplace trust building. What is it about trust that's held your focus for so long?**

When we started this work, we said to ourselves, "the need for trust has never been greater." Now, two and a half decades later, we find ourselves saying exactly the same thing, only with more intensity. Why?

People can't do their best work without trust.

Trust means 'uncompromised by doubt.' Every day in workplaces around the world, people are asked to solve complex challenges in the midst of ambiguity and change. They're asked to do more with less, stretch beyond their comfort zones, and achieve stretch goals. People can't do their best work in these conditions if they are mired in doubt. Doubt about others' intentions or capabilities. Doubt about the direction or viability of the organization. Or, most importantly, doubt about their own ability to keep up with the demands placed on them.

The behaviors that build trust are the same behaviors that erase multiple layers of doubt and liberate people to do their best work in relationship with one another.

In our experience, when people are supported to strengthen trust and clear away the noise and confusion, clarity emerges, followed by confidence. From this footing, people lean in. They take risks, speak their truth, and help one another develop. They gain the courage they need to admit mistakes, ask for help, and reach out. They connect with one another at a deeper level, not just as professionals, but as human beings.

People have a powerful need for this deeper connection. It's what allows them to tap into their inner fierceness to go the distance, become truly *great*, and take their organizations to the next level, again and again.

For nearly 25 years, we've been fueled by the transformational business results our clients have achieved. We've been inspired by their requests that we go further and deeper in our trust research in service to them. For us, devoting ourselves to trust building hasn't been a strategic business decision. It's been a natural outcome of our desire to serve our clients most powerfully. It's been our calling.



3. You often say, “Trust begins with you.” What do you mean by that, exactly, and why is it so important for people to understand this message?

When we step into organizations around the world, we find – consistently – that creating a trustworthy environment has been placed on the shoulders of leadership. The result of this mindset is that people are waiting for their leaders to step in and restore trust. As they wait, they build barriers around themselves and their areas of responsibility. Essentially, they withhold trust until they’re guaranteed their workplaces will become more trustworthy.

Multiply this behavior by hundreds or thousands of people, and you can imagine the impact on teamwork, collaboration, engagement, and cultural health – not to mention on deliverables and bottom-line results. The key to interrupting distrust’s downward spiral is reversing our thinking about who’s responsible for trust in our workplaces. People don’t have to wait for their leaders to take the first step. Trust begins with each one of us. Trust begins with you.

4. You’ve built assessments that measure trust at the leadership, team, and organizational levels. How does one go about measuring trust?

Trust is built and broken through the way people show up and behave in their relationships with one another. Our assessments, which we call The Reina Trust Scales, allow people to recognize and measure how their behavior is building and breaking trust.

Each assessment is built on the research-based, systemic Reina Trust and Betrayal Model[®] and its Dimensions of Trust: The Three Cs[®]: Trust of Character[®], Trust of Communication[®], and Trust of Capability[®]. When the behaviors identified in our model are practiced, trust is high. When they aren’t, trust is vulnerable. We have nearly 25 years of trust-focused research and consulting experience to support this finding. We routinely put our assessment tools through rigorous psychometric testing, to ensure they are statistically reliable and valid. This means they measure what they say they measure, consistently over time. You can trust the results.

5. As your clients have moved through your assessment process, what’s the most notable transformation you’ve seen?

There are several transformations we hold as benchmarks, from a company that moved from lowest to highest producer nationwide to a company that decreased union grievances by 30%. Perhaps the most notable was the organization that salvaged a \$30 million change initiative that had severely veered off course...and increased engagement scores by 25% while getting the initiative back on track.

When we stepped into this organization, the initiative – including the \$30 million in initial costs, as well as the tens of millions of dollars of anticipated savings over the next few years – was in jeopardy. The health of the division was at risk, and so was its ability to navigate the changes ahead.

Just six months after stepping into the trust building process, the division’s employees had reduced their trust breaking behaviors by 80% and increased their trust building behaviors by 63%. In 12 months, engagement scores had risen - by 25%. Within 18 months, the \$30 million system rollout – along with its tens of millions of dollars in potential long-term benefits - got back on schedule. In fact, it was ahead of schedule, and on budget.

The CFO and his leadership team told us that their greatest source of pride was that their people had reconnected with one another, regained a feeling of community, and learned a new way of being as a team.



6. Where can we learn more about your approach, your book, and your trust assessments?

We're proud to have recently launched a new website, newsletter, and blog. We also love connecting with people via Twitter and LinkedIn. And of course, we always welcome emails and phone calls.

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