6. The Law of Solid Ground – Trust is the Foundation of Leadership

**Principles of the Law:**

It’s not the decisions you make, it’s the leadership you possess.

When it comes to leadership, you just can’t take shortcuts, no matter how long you’ve been leading your people.

A leader’s history of successes and failures make a big difference in his credibility. It’s a little like earning and spending pocket change. Each time you make a good leadership decision, it puts change in your pocket. Each time you make a poor one, you have to pay out some of your change to people. When you’re out of change, you’re out as the leader.

Trust is the foundation of leadership. To build trust, a leader must exemplify these qualities: competence, connection, and character. People will forgive occasional mistakes based on ability, especially if they can see that you’re still growing as a leader. But they won’t trust someone who has slips in character.

“Leadership is a potent combination of strategy and character. But if you must be without one, be without strategy.” General H. Norman Schwarzkopf

Character makes trust possible. And trust makes leadership possible. That is the Law of Solid Ground.

Character Communicates Consistency

If your people don’t know what to expect from you as a leader, at some point they won’t look to you for leadership.

Character Communicates Potential

Craig Weatherup explains, “You don’t build trust by talking about it. You build it by achieving results, always with integrity, and in a manner that shows real personal regard for the people with whom you work.” When a leader’s character is strong, people trust him, and they trust in his ability to release their potential. That not only gives followers hope for the future, but it also promotes a strong belief in themselves and their organization.

Character Communicates Respect

How do leaders earn respect? By making sound decisions, admitting their mistakes, and putting what’s best for their followers and the organization ahead of their personal agendas.

A leader’s good character builds trust among his followers. But when the leader breaks trust, he forfeits his ability to lead. That’s the Law of Solid Ground.
First trust, then support.

Whenever a leader breaks the Law of Solid Ground, he pays a price in his leadership.

No leader can break trust with his people and expect to keep influencing them. Trust is the foundation of leadership. Violate the Law of Solid Ground, and you’re through as a leader.

Questions for Further Review:

1. How can school leaders develop trust in their organization?
2. Which activities cause leaders to lose the trust of others?
3. What strategies can school leaders use to gain the trust of their staff?
4. What strategies can school leaders use to gain the trust of their students?
5. What strategies can school leaders use to gain the trust of their parents and community leaders?

Action Plan:

A. Make a list of recent successes and failures. Use the Law of Solid Ground to evaluate your successes and failures.

B. List what you have done to illustrate the leadership qualities of competence, connection, and character.

C. Describe two decisions you made last week which resulted in wins for your organization.

Evaluation:

Evaluate yourself on a score of 1 to 5 (1 is poor, 5 is great)

_______ I never take shortcuts as a leader.

_______ I exemplify the qualities of competence, connection, and character.

_______ TOTAL (Your leadership score for the Law of Solid Ground)