

Review of Great Place to Work Part 4 of 6

Credibility, Respect and Fairness – these dimensions in a Work Place build trust.

This week, the focus will be on the last dimension - Fairness.

The Great Work Place defines Fairness as “the employees’ sense that a level playing field exists with regard to decisions that affect them.” When fairness is experienced, people feel as though they are treated in an equitable and impartial ways, and that their gender, age, race and other personal characteristics are not factors in assessments of their performance."

Yet Fairness is also recognised as the dimension “most difficult to master” of the three building blocks of trust. The Great Place to Work Institute calculates benchmarks for each statement on the Trust Index Survey and while for the 100 Best, most items in the survey have benchmarks in the high 80s and low 90s, with regard to fairness statements, the benchmark is much lower at around 70.

It is a chicken-and-egg situation. “A leader’s trustworthiness depends upon how fair his decisions are, but these decisions are not believed to be fair unless the leader is trusted.”

Nor should fair treatment be boiled down to equal treatment. “Decisions must be made in ways that acknowledge the individual while honouring the organisation as a whole (and the other people within it.”

Three categories of fairness

1. Equity – reflects the belief that “tangible and intangible rewards are distributed in a balanced way”; as importantly equity is a belief about *process* not distribution
 - a. Pay
In MOE schools, we may feel that equity through pay is not within our jurisdiction. But the performance bonus is. The attribution of CEP is also within our purview and does have an impact on the rate of promotion to the next promotional grade. The recent move to let staff know their performance grade is a step towards the kind of transparency that helps equity.
 - b. Membership
“Equity in membership is the belief that all employees, regardless of their position, are treated in a way that conveys their full value and worth to the organisation. Like most aspects of fairness, much of membership equity is behaviour-driven, not policy-driven.” It is shown in the way school leaders speak to teachers and EAS and AEDs, and in the way they make decisions and communicate them.
2. Impartiality – the belief in

- a. even-handed decision making that avoids favouritism
- b. the school leader's ability to make decisions on the basis of the right things – not politics, friendship or personal gain

Leaders struggle all the time to strike this balance. If it helps,

- c. the right thing to do is often the most caring thing
- d. the tough decision is often best for everyone involved if it is made fairly

A suggestion from the book : Leaders should make the decision they feel is right, expect fallout, and plan to communicate.

3. Justice – employees experiencing a just work environment believe that management promotes inclusive behaviour, avoids discrimination and is committed to ensuring fair appeals.
 - a. Treatment – it's not about groups that are only open to minority groups; it is about addressing the diversity needs and interests of all employees, including those of the majority group.
 - b. Appeals – about being able to appeal any decision and obtaining a fair hearing. Often the mere presence of a clear and publicized policy for handling grievances or concerns improves the sense that there is justice.

Leader Imperatives to bring about Fairness

- Keep Fairness Top of Mind
- Take a Zero-Tolerance Attitude toward Unfairness
- Send Strong Messages
- Get Involved