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MANAGEMENT

Lewis And Clark Showed Importance Of Trust In Success

By Steve Watkins, FOR INVESTOR'S BUSINESS DAILY

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Meriwether Lewis and William Clark never would have made it to the Pacific Ocean and back to St. Louis without a team they could trust and that had faith in them.

Here's how they did it and how it applies today.

- **Get to know them.** Talk to your people and learn what drives them, says Antigoni Ladd, who, along with her husband, Everett, runs [Tigrett Corp.](#), a historic leadership training firm based in Gettysburg, Pa.

Communication is how Lewis and Clark developed their team. They started with military people who were disciplined and had survival skills. As their trip wore on, they added fur trappers and translators who could help them.

By going to lunch with your people, or sitting down to talk with them, there will be no reason to panic the next time you're hit by a crisis. You'll already know who has the skills to solve the problem.

- **Play to strengths.** When Lewis and Clark started out in May 1804, they divided tasks evenly and rotated them. They soon learned some guys couldn't hunt and others couldn't cook. They decided to put people in jobs they could do well.

"They adjusted based on experience," Ladd said.

- **Win over people.** You don't get ideas and engaged employees if they don't trust you, says [Nan Russell](#), a Whitefish, Mont.-based workplace consultant who wrote "Trust Inc." People need to feel passionate about working at a company to give their best ideas and be their most productive. They'll do neither if they don't feel trusted, and they won't stay with the firm.

"You won't keep your top performers without trust," Russell said. "It's starting to be something organizations can't ignore."

- **Turn the tables.** Want others to trust you? Start by trusting them. It'll end up working both ways, says Russell. And you don't have to place too much faith at once in a new person. She likens it to a dimmer switch. Trust goes up and down as people show they're accountable or not. "You establish a trust currency," she said.

- **Stay steady.** No matter where they were or what they went through, Lewis and Clark met every night to review what happened and set their strategy for the next day.

"They built a plan for consistency into their behavior," Ladd said.

- **Look in the mirror.** Set the tone by showing integrity and character yourself, Ladd says. That speaks volumes. "Otherwise, people will see right through you," she said.

- **Get 'em involved.** Trust comes from more than the top. Managers down the chain can create their own trustworthy environment, Russell said: "It's really a local issue. The old belief was that authority created trust. What's really true is that trust creates authority."

- **Talk.** Communicate with what Russell calls heightened transparency. Shoot for getting people the information they need to do their jobs. If you suddenly decide to put in a policy that affects a lot of people, like preventing them from working from home, be sure to explain the reasons quickly.

"If you communicate why it's happening, that's fine," Russell said. "If you don't, your best employees have a lot of choices. People are not staying in an environment where they're not trusted."

- **Pay attention.** When leaders listen, they engender trust, Ladd says. President Eisenhower had that trait. At Cabinet meetings he'd seek input from those who hadn't spoken. His men then placed full faith in him. "Those are the tools of a good listener," Ladd said. "Make sure everyone gets heard. People will feel like they had input to the final decision."

