CONCLUSION

But one new—and surprising—thing we learned is that high-trust cultures are associated with 50% higher productivity, 66% closer to their colleagues. And a high-trust culture improves how people engage and retain. Additionally, a high-trust culture increases oxytocin production in others, which can influence behaviors that foster trust. These behaviors are measurable and can be managed.

I agree with the authors of the Google study that even engineers need to socialize. However, socializing is not just about making friends. It is also about bonding and increasing oxytocin production, which can lead to a more engaged and satisfied workforce.

The neuroscience shows that recognition has the largest effect on trust when it leads to chronic stress, which inhibits the release of oxytocin and undermines the bonding process. Therefore, leaders should provide consistent feedback, the recognition of excellence, and sharing information (67% and 68%, respectively). So, even engineers need to socialize to increase oxytocin production and build trust.

The brain network that oxytocin activates is evolutionarily old. This means that oxytocin production is influenced by social interactions, which can lead to increased engagement and retention. When a manager assigns a team a difficult but achievable job, the moderate level of stress can increaseoxytocin production, which can foster trust and cooperation. Asking for help is a sign of a secure leader—one who engages everyone to reach goals.

Ongoing communication is key: A 2015 study by my research team has found that companies in the top quartile had 106% higher productivity than those in the bottom quartile. This is because ongoing communication helps employees to give up before they even start. Leaders should check in frequently to assess progress and adjust goals that are too easy or out of reach.

Intentionally build relationships. Earning back trust is more difficult than building it in the first place. Therefore, leaders should make decisions to trust others (if they are senders) or to be trustworthy (if they are receivers). The neuroscience shows that recognition has the largest effect on trust when it leads to chronic stress, which inhibits the release of oxytocin and undermines the bonding process.

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