# How to Build Trust With a New Team in Your First Ninety Days

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Earn a new team's confidence in ninety days by listening first, writing agreements down, keeping small promises visibly, and repairing your own missteps fast.

## Things you will need

- Notebook dedicated to listening conversations
- Shared document for the working agreements
- Promise log in a spreadsheet or shared doc
- Decision memo template with five headings
- Whiteboard or virtual board for the who-does-what map
- Current organization chart printout for annotations
- Recurring one-to-one agenda document per person
- Simple anonymous form tool for the monthly question
- Calendar blocks for the pulse question and quarterly reviews
- Timer for keeping one-to-ones inside 30 minutes
- Sticky notes for sorting irritations into three columns
- Escalation contact list with names and response times
- Situation-behavior-impact wording card for feedback
- Ninety-day summary draft started in week one

## Days 1-30: Listen Before You Change Anything

1. **Run a Listening Tour With Three Questions**

   Book 30 minutes with every direct report in your first three weeks, plus 20 to 30 minutes with three to five people you depend on: neighbouring team leads, your most senior stakeholder, and anyone who has been in the role longer than you.

2. **Send Each Person a Written Summary Back**

   Within 48 hours of every conversation, send 150 to 250 words back to that person: the three things they said that mattered most, what you intend to do about each, what you cannot change and who owns it, and one line inviting correction — tell me where I have got this wrong.

3. **Map Who Actually Does What**

   Build one page that records reality rather than the organization chart: each person's name, the responsibilities they genuinely carry today, the decisions they make without asking anyone, the two or three hand-offs that cross their boundary, and how long those hand-offs usually wait.

4. **Say Out Loud What You Do Not Know**

   In your first team session, name three to five specific things you do not understand yet — the history behind a project, an internal system, a client relationship, a piece of budget — and attach a date to when you expect to understand each.

5. **Refuse the Urge to Fix Everything**

   Write down every irritation you notice in your first month — meetings that run long, a template nobody likes, a reporting step that feels pointless — and commit to changing none of it before day thirty unless it is a safety, legal, or pay problem.

## Days 20-45: Make the Rules Explicit

### 6. Agree Response Times Instead of Assuming Them

Put numbers on the thing everyone silently argues about.

### 7. Write Down Who Decides and Who Escalates

Ambiguity about authority is where new-manager trust leaks fastest, so publish a decision-rights table with four rows: I decide alone, I decide after asking you, you decide and tell me, we escalate.

### 8. Test the Agreements in One Team Session

Do not publish rules by decree: hold a 45 to 60 minute session, put the draft on screen, and walk the three sections — response times, decision rights, escalation.

### 9. Set a One-to-One Cadence With a Shared Agenda

Offer 30 minutes every week or every two weeks, 45 for anyone new to the role, at the same slot, and hand ownership of the agenda to them.

### 10. Keep a Promise Log You Close in Writing

Create one small tracker in a shared document or spreadsheet with five columns: date made, who it is for, exactly what you said, the date you promised, and status; fill it from every conversation and review it every Friday for fifteen minutes.

## Days 45-75: Decide Fairly and Give Feedback Cleanly

### 11. Make Your First Decisions in a Visible Way

Pick your first three to five real decisions and treat the process, not the outcome, as the thing under review.

### 12. Explain Reasoning Even to People Who Disagree

Say the hard part out loud in the meeting, not only in the memo: here is what I traded, here is what I would have chosen if the constraint were different, and here is what we give up by doing it this way.

### 13. Give Credit Publicly and Critique Privately

Name the person and the specific behavior in front of others within 48 hours: the analyst who caught the error in the model, the developer who documented the migration, the person who trained the new starter without being asked.

### 14. Sit on an Existing Conflict Without Choosing a Side

When two people arrive with a dispute that predates you, do not referee it in your first weeks; take each separately for 45 minutes, ask what they each want rather than what the other did, and ask what has already been tried and by whom.

### 15. Review One Early Decision Without Blame

Six to eight weeks after your first decisions, put one of them back on the table for 45 minutes with everyone affected, including the people who argued against it.

## Days 60-90: Deliver, Measure, and Repair

### 16. Ship One Small Improvement People Asked For

Choose one item from your day-one listening notes that is genuinely wanted, small enough to finish in two to four weeks of existing team capacity, and needs no budget or only a modest tool license in the tens or low hundreds of dollars.

### 17. Ask One Anonymous Trust Question Monthly

Once a month, send a single anonymous question that takes 30 seconds to answer, worded something like this: in the last month, did you feel safe giving your real opinion to whoever needed to hear it, and what is one thing that would make the answer more yes?

### 18. Name and Repair Trust You Break

You will miss a date, forget a name, repeat something you were told in confidence, or decide something you said the team would shape.

### 19. Publish a Ninety-Day Summary People Can Check

At day ninety, write 600 to 900 words and send it to the team and your own manager: what you heard in the listening tour, in aggregate and without attribution, what changed and who drove it, what did not change and why, the decisions you made with their reasoning, the agreements you broke yourself, and the three things you are doing next.

### 20. Turn the Rhythm Into a Standing Habit

Nothing in this plan should stop at day ninety; all of it is cheap to keep and expensive to restart.

## Sources


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Written as a checklist from https://www.howcompass.com/how-to/Build-Trust-With-a-New-Team. Corrections: https://www.howcompass.com/co