The importance of trust cannot be underestimated when it comes to managing teams successfully. Mistrust can lead to resentment, poor morale, low productivity and ill feeling. Trust can be broken down into five main categories:

**Level 1, Total Trust** – We all know someone whom we trust implicitly. We know if we tell them something that they aren’t going to tell anyone else and would treat it in the strictest of confidence. If you need to hit an urgent deadline, the people who you totally trust are the ones you will turn to. They don’t have to be your best friend, but they are someone who you respect and admire for the standard of work they carry out.

**Level 2, Social Contract** – You trust someone here due to the personal relationship you have with them. You may know them outside of work, maybe go for a coffee with them or have the same personal interests. It could even be as shallow as supporting the same football team! Whatever the reason, you trust them. Maybe not as much as the people in level 1, but on the whole you trust them.

**Level 3, Quid Pro Quo** – We all start here when we start with an employer. Basically, you do something for me and I’ll do something for you. You come into work, do a good job and hit your objectives and your employer will pay you and look after you. Over time, people move up to levels 2 and 1, but some people stay at level 3 for years which if course is fine.

**Level 4, Deception** – Something has happened for you to see people through the eyes of deception. They may have been at level 1 or 2 but an incident of mistrust has happened and they have plummeted to level 4 – it’s not a healthy place be. Deception can lead to low morale and even lost contracts with clients if the mistrust is irreparable.

**Level 5, Revenge** – This is where the other party are on a mission to get their revenge. Trust has been damaged to such an extent that one party wants the other to suffer in some way. It could be through choosing to take their business elsewhere, jumping on the social media bandwagon, or through internal punishments e.g. giving someone a boring job, or making them work at the weekends etc.

The key is to identify where your team, colleagues and customers are on the ladder. Where would you put them and where would they put you? Once you have identified this you can then work proactively to manage and sustain a healthy relationship.