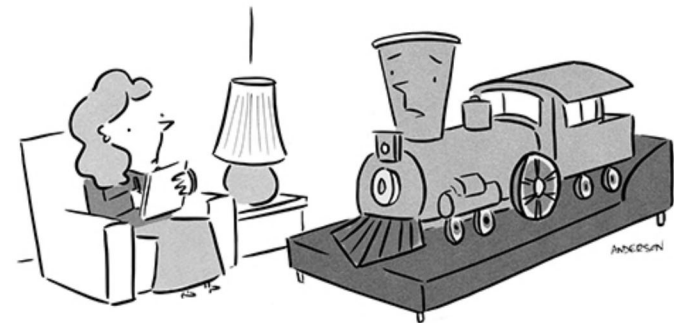


## 4 phrases to communicate trust to your team

It's not enough for you to trust your team — they have to know you trust them in order to feel confident, decisive, and inspired to give their best effort. Here are some ways you can say it out loud.

WWW.ANDER2TOONS.COM



"I think I can, but *should* I?"

### 1. "I've seen you handle situations like this before."

*Use it when:* You have a stronger belief in your direct report than they may have in themselves.

This phrase communicates that you know what the person is capable of — and have confidence that their abilities will serve them well now. Follow up with specifics to help them appreciate their skills and talents and to have more confidence in applying them going forward. For example:

*"This may be the biggest client you've met with, but I've seen you have very effective client conversations. You've proven that you know how to listen to what clients need and explain how our service can help. I have every confidence that you can use those skills in this meeting."*

## 2. “How would you like to handle this?”

*Use it when:* You want your direct report to know that you trust their judgment and that you’re still there to support them.

By asking this question rather than telling them your solution, you make it clear that they are driving their work — not you. For example:

*“You’re our go-to person on this topic, but I know you haven’t done many executive presentations. How would like to handle this?”*

Because it’s a question, you also leave room for discussion. If they respond with uncertainty or low confidence, you can offer support or refer to examples of their past positive performance (see No. 1). If you have concerns after they tell you their approach, ask questions to help them find a better way forward (e.g., *“How could we tweak that idea to be sure it works for new customers who aren’t as familiar with us?”*). Or share your expectations without crushing their self-belief (e.g., *“I love your enthusiasm. But could you share your draft with me two days earlier than that so we have time to discuss it?”*).

For more, see [Coach’s corner: 3 ways to boost your direct reports’ engagement with every assignment](#).

## 3. “I trust you.”

*Use it when:* You want to make your trust explicit to someone you’ve built a relationship with and who has delivered on previous commitments.

Even if you think your trust should be obvious to the person, don’t assume that it is. Saying the words out loud in different ways (e.g., *“I trust you,” “I believe in you,”* and *“I have confidence in you”*) repeatedly over time helps them to absorb your sentiments and to see their own worth. For example:

*“I trust you to lead the first task force meeting. I’d be happy to debrief with you afterward or give input if that would be helpful. Just let me know.”*

Caution: Stepping back while they lead doesn’t mean abandoning them. Make sure you let them know that you are still there to give them the support they need.

#### **4. “I know you’ll do what you think is best.”**

*Use it when:* You want your direct report to know that you trust them to act with good intent, that they’ll do the best job they can — and that you don’t expect them to be perfect.

Saying only “I trust you” could leave low-confidence people thinking, *But I don’t trust myself — and if I make a mistake, you won’t trust me anymore.* This phrase communicates that you think that they will do everything they can to make the right decisions, and it’ll be OK if things don’t work out as planned. For example:

*“You don’t need to check in with me every time a customer has a request. You decide how to handle it. I know you’ll do what you think is best. If it doesn’t work out, we can talk it through and figure out ways you might handle things differently next time.”*

Caution: Before using this phrase, be certain that you really are comfortable with your direct report making a mistake — and that you’re committed to responding with support rather than a reprimand. If they do make a mistake, coach them through a postmortem analysis of their decision to see what lessons they — and the rest of your team — might learn.