

Title:

How To Cultivate The Trust Factor In Business

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Summary:

In today's highly competitive economy, it is difficult to maintain a significant market advantage based on your professional skills alone. Developing trusting relationships with your clients is vital to your business success as well. No matter what business you are in, the most powerful value-added contribution you can make to any business relationship is the trust factor.

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Article Body:

In today's highly competitive economy, it is difficult to maintain a significant market advantage based on your professional skills alone. Developing trusting relationships with your clients is vital to your business success as well. No matter what business you are in, the most powerful value-added contribution you can make to any business relationship is the trust factor.

The trust factor is even more critical in today's business climate with the level of trust in Corporate America continuing to be at an all-time low, and suspicion of "all things corporate" remaining on the rise. To make matters worse, large corporations and small businesses alike continue to use antiquated techniques, such as gizmos and gadgets, to try to win over new clients. When instead, they should be trying to address the heart of the matter by utilizing trust-building techniques that will most effectively resonate with consumers and new prospects.

Clients and prospects are in search of trust in their business relationships, but building trust and credibility does not happen overnight. To cultivate trust, it takes the risk of being open with clients and prospects. This enables them to perceive you as a real person—one with strengths and weaknesses that come into play as the relationship develops. When trust is reciprocal, you will

find that your confidence in others is rewarded by their support and reinforcement of what you also stand for as a business entity.

What is Trust

What is trust? Trust can be defined as a firm belief in the honesty of another and the absence of suspicion regarding his motives or practices. The concept of trust in business dealings is simple: Build on an individual's confidence in you and eliminate fear as an operating principle.

Letting Go of Fear

Let go of fear, which restricts your ability to relate to others. Letting go frees you of behavioral constraints that can immobilize your emotional and professional development. Fear of rejection, fear of failure, fear of success, fear of being hurt, fear of the unknown—all these are roadblocks to developing and growing a trusting relationship with clients. Let go of your fear of losing an account or not having the right answers. Leave all your fears at the client or prospect's doorstep.

Other critical steps in cultivating trust are knowing who you are and knowing your potential value to your clients. The relationship that forms because of this can have a tremendous impact on your sales. People don't just buy from anyone. They buy from people they can trust. The rapport and credibility you can establish with the trust factor go a long way toward building a client's confidence in your ability to meet his business needs.

Trust has both an active and a passive component in a business relationship. The active feeling of trust is confidence in the leadership, veracity, and reliability of the other party, based on a track record of performance.

The passive feeling of trust is the absence of worry or suspicion. This absence is sometimes unrecognized and frequently taken for granted in our most productive relationships.

Building Trust With Care

So how do you build trust with clients? First, you need to care about them. Obviously your clients care about your knowledge, expertise, and accomplishments. However, they care even more about the level of concern you have for them. Successful trust building hinges on four actions: engaging, listening, framing, and committing. The trust factor can be realized once we understand these components of trust and incorporate them in our daily lives.

Engaging clients and prospects occurs when you show genuine concern and interest in their business and its problems. Maintain good eye contact and body posture. Good eye contact signifies openness and honesty. And your body language and other forms of nonverbal communication speak volumes about your attitude toward them. By the same token, you want to be cognizant of your client's or prospect's eye contact and body language.

Listening with understanding and empathy is possible if you think client focus first.

Let the client tell his story. Put yourself in his shoes when you listen to his business concerns, purpose, vision, and desires. Show approval or understanding by nodding your head and smiling during the conversation. Separate the process of taking in information from the process of judging it. Just suspend your judgment and focus on the client.

Framing what the client or prospect has said is the third action in trust building. Make sure you have formed an accurate understanding of his problems and concerns. Confirm what you think you heard by asking open-ended questions such as "What do you mean by that?" or "Help me to understand the major production problems you are experiencing." After you have clarified the problems, start to frame them in order of importance. By identifying the areas in which you can help the client, you offer him clarity in his own mind and continue to build his trust.

Committing is the final action for developing the trust factor. Communicate enthusiastically your plan of action for solving the client's problems. Help the client see what it will take to achieve the end result. Presumably, what you have said up to this point has been important, but what you do now—how you commit—is even more important. Remember the old adage "Action speaks louder than words." Show you want this client's business long term. Complete assignments and projects on budget and on time. Then follow up with clients periodically to see how your partnership is faring.

In the final analysis, trust stems from keeping our word. If we say we will be there for our clients, then we should honor that commitment by being there. Trust results from putting the client's best interest before our own, from being dependable, from being open and forthcoming with relevant information. It is impossible to overestimate the power of the trust factor in our professional lives. Truly, trust is the basis of all enduring, long-term business relationships.