

Trust Isn't a Given So How Do You Get It

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Trust is vital in any lasting business relationship. In fact, the level of trust you establish determines how successful you will be in selling a product or proposing a solution. If the level of trust is strong, managers will feel you are the right person for the task. Customers will have faith that you will make the right recommendation for their situation or that they can turn to you for advice. What are the key components that you need to consider because trust isn't a given?

First and foremost, you need to be seen as honest, credible. For example, if your solution really doesn't answer a customer's need or if you or your company has erred, are you upfront? Do you take ownership of any problems? When a customer assumes that you have a deep understanding of a particular industry or a specific product and you don't, what do you do? Do you bring a technical person with you who does have the knowledge required or just punt? People will take notice and applaud your honesty, even if they don't say so out loud. If others were assessing you, would they see you as honest and credible?

It is important to be transparent. One of the areas where customers seem confused is about costs and coverage, particularly in a service contract or healthcare package. Carefully explain in terms the customer would understand about what is covered and what is excluded. Do not rush. Pause often to allow for questions. Look people in the eye. If there are any changes to the original design, again be sure to notify the customer. Hide nothing. It is never good to say, "I should have told you."

Reliability or follow through goes without saying. For example, if you promise someone that an install will be done in six weeks and it takes ten, you erode trust. If you say test results with the new process will be 95% accurate and eliminate someone having to manually do the work and it only partially does what you said, a manager will be frustrated. Be as good as your word, even if it means working long hours or weekends. You shouldn't sometimes be reliable but other times not!

Ask anyone in your workplace what treatment they most want from their bosses and coworkers and they will say R-E-S-P-E-C-T. Respect is a genuine admiration and deep regard for an individual. It is shown by recognizing that people's opinions, experiences, competence, and rights are valid and matter. It is demonstrated through your body language and by how well you listen. It is also shown when you freely give praise and share information.

Finally, people trust those who seem like them. What commonalities would people see, what shared aims? If you don't know the person, how might you sleuth out commonalities? What can you learn about them on LinkedIn, Facebook and other social media? What do you share about yourself? How open are you? What would make someone feel they could connect with you on a personal level?

Trust isn't automatic. It has to be earned, and it can be lost in a nanosecond. If employees don't trust each other or their managers, problems start to arise: collaboration and communication stagnate, innovation ceases and employee engagement declines. When there is trust, productivity improves. Employees stay loyal. Customers buy. It's a win/win.

Question: *What have you found has made the difference in building trust? We're interested in your opinions. Click here – to comment on this article, share your concerns or ask questions. Judy will respond to all questions.*

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