



Can We Rebuild Trust?

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Have you ever taken a minute to ask yourself the question: Who do you trust? Are you someone who tends to trust people quickly or does it take a while?

I had a chat with my girlfriend yesterday about trust and believe it or not, it is quite an interesting subject. Both her and I are very much alike, in that we need to get to know people well before we give them our trust. This makes it even more hurtful when they act in an untrustworthy way. On the other hand there are people who give their trust right away until someone is "proven" not worthy. There is of course a middle ground.

Based on your paradigms (including your strong beliefs), you have automatically and unconsciously established a pattern of trust. What is yours? As I mentioned, I prefer to know people before giving them my trust. Two years ago I left a big job to go back to school and obtain my certification as a coach. This is when my pattern of trust became very obvious to me. The small group of about 15 people in the class, after 2 classes, looked like they had been best friends for months or years, whereas I was still in the "get to know you" stage. And that is OK; you have to respect your own process. I dislike it when people try to force me to be who I am not. And I have done plenty of analysis as to why it takes me a while to trust and I am happy with the results, as it works for me.

However, now that I have started my business, my slowness in trusting people can be perceived as my being cold and aloof, which I am not. So I had to find a way to improve my style of "being" when meeting new people. I found this amazing book called *The Speed of Trust* by Stephen M.R. Covey. In the book, he talks about the myth that trust is a "soft" skill. On the contrary, trust is a hard and measurable skill. It takes effort, consistent focus and in-depth understanding of what consists of trust in order to develop it with others. And you can measure your level of trust with different people, like a bank account.

The consequences of a lack of trust can be huge on your relationships and on your organization. Mr. Covey calls it the Trust Tax. If you have low trust, it reduces the speed of doing anything and increases costs. Here is an example. After 9-11, the lack of trust in airport security forced the authorities to increase the screening process at checkpoints therefore reducing the speed of passing through security. Which caused increased costs not only for the security organization but also for us travellers who had to show up extra early because of long lines at security.

Look at a close relationship where trust is lacking, whether it is in your personal life or professional life and ask yourself: what is this lack of trust costing me?

While you were searching for the answer, you probably came to realize that there are some people you don't trust (or they don't trust you) and that it would improve your life if there were trust between you. You most likely also came to realize that there are some people who are just not worth it.

It all sounds very calculated, but it is not. It is just another way to look at our relationships, both personal and professional. Consider the following quote from Warren Buffet: "It takes 20 years to build a reputation and 5 minutes to ruin it. If you think about it, you'll do things differently." This is valid for a company but also valid in your relationship with people. What this quote tells me is: pay attention to what you do. You could ruin an important relationship in minutes and you would realize it only after it is too late. Why do you think most couples do not survive it when one party cheats on the other? The trust is gone. And it is a lot harder to try to regain trust after having lost it, than it is to try to improve a basically good relationship.

Much like a bank account, in terms of trust, you are either in the black or in the red. Your level of tolerance for mistrust will be higher if your relationship with a person is high in the black. You will have no tolerance at all if it's in the red. According to Mr. Covey, in the Speed of Trust book, there are 5 waves of trust: self, relationship, organizational, market and societal. I am going to be focusing on the first two.

Before pointing the finger at everyone around you, let's look at ourselves. Can I be trusted? Do you stand by and meet your commitments? The fastest way to lose trust is to miss your deadlines or to not keep your promises. If you keep missing deadlines at the office, your credibility will be diminished, so much so that at some point people will not want you on their team. You will be known as the person who cannot be trusted or depended upon. Another example is when you promise your children you will attend an important event in their lives, but you keep missing it because you have to work late. Then you wonder why your relationship with them is not fantastic. What can you do?

Actions speak louder than words, so start keeping your promises and meeting your deadlines. That is one of the best ways to regain trust. In my experience, the next best way to re-gain trust is to apologize when you do something wrong. Not 2 years later, right away. Whether it is with a co-worker or a family member, they will appreciate it. As long as you don't repeat the offense, of course!

In the book, Mr. Covey mentions 13 behaviors that affect Trust. Here they are:

1. Talk straight
2. Demonstrate respect
3. Create transparency
4. Right wrongs
5. Show loyalty
6. Deliver results
7. Get better
8. Confront reality
9. Clarify expectations
10. Practice accountability
11. Listen first
12. Keep commitments
13. Extend trust

Choose a relationship that needs improving and determine which behavior you should focus on. If we look at you not

meeting your deadlines for instance, I would suggest the following behaviors: **Talk straight, Demonstrate Respect, Right Wrongs** and most importantly: **Deliver Results** as well as **Keep Commitments**.

If you have missed a few important events in your child's life, I would start with: **Right Wrongs, Get Better and Keep Commitments**.

I have noticed that in most cases, in my coaching practice, we need to **Clarify Expectations**. That is a very important behavior in all our relationships. We don't usually set out to disappoint others; often we just did not understand the expectations: either theirs or ours. So you will want to spend a bit of time on clarifying them.

So practice: pick a relationship and see what you need to improve. I would suggest at first to practice privately, then meet the person and explain to them what you are doing and go through the list of behaviors you feel is important to focus on. Always let the other person communicate how they feel about the relationship without your judgment. Listen empathically.

If you want to know more about Trust, I definitely suggest this book. Franklin Covey also offers a 2-day seminar for leaders that is absolutely fantastic. It is worth it. I will leave you with this one quote:

"Trust is the one thing that changes everything." - Stephen M.R. Covey

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