

40 Ways to Build Trustworthiness in Customer Relationships

There are four factors that will turn any customer interaction into an opportunity to build trust and earn the right to advance. These ideas and insights are based on guidance about the [Trust Equation](#) from “The Trusted Advisor” by David Maister, Charles Green, and Rob Galford.

Credibility

WORDS

Credibility exists in the domain of words. It is created through your credentials, your truthfulness, and how you present yourself.

“I can trust what they say about...”

Credentials

Truthfulness

Accuracy

1. Take the initiative to expand your knowledge
2. Ask great questions
3. Use metaphors, stories, and vivid examples to share your ideas, prove your point
4. Offer your point of view when you have one
5. Share the “why” behind your point of view
6. Find ways to demonstrate your expertise; don't just talk about it
7. Say “I don't know” when you don't know
8. Never ever lie
9. Report regularly on progress
10. Be curious; there is always more to learn

Reliability

ACTIONS

Reliability occurs when you prove yourself to be dependable and predictable over time.

“I can trust them to...”

Dependability

Predictability

Availability

11. Set expectations up front – report back regularly
12. Be prepared for meetings
13. Be at least on time, if not early
14. Be unbelievably responsive
15. Make lots of small promises and consistently follow through
16. Do what you promise to do – always
17. Announce changes immediately and acknowledge the impact – especially when you won't deliver as promised
18. Be rigorous about using good business practices, such as meeting agenda and notes
19. Reconfirm scheduled events
20. Only cancel if you absolutely must

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Intimacy exists in the domain of *emotions* and emotional connectedness. The Trusted Advisor visibly demonstrates both empathy and discretion, which makes it possible for customers to flourish in a comfortable and safe working environment.

Intimacy
EMOTIONS
“I can trust them with ...”
Discretion
Empathy
Interpersonal
Risk-Taking

21. Be relentlessly discreet; honor confidentiality
22. Share and/or ask about something personal
23. Tell your customer something you appreciate about him/her
24. Send a hand-written note of acknowledgment/thanks
25. Be willing to show your emotions (elation, frustration, etc.)
26. Ask others about their feelings
27. Acknowledge uncomfortable situations
28. Think in advance of how your customer is likely to react
29. Practice different ways of asking difficult questions or making difficult statements before you deliver them
30. Take responsibility for mistakes

Other-oriented business people are relentlessly focused on their customer's wants and needs. Other-oriented business people are also committed to making sure that interactions are all about the customer—not about themselves.

Self-Orientation
FOCUS
“I can trust that they care about...”
Motives
Attention
Intentions

31. Don't jump to problem-solving—slow yourself taking notes, confirming expectations
32. Be self-deprecating
33. Answer direct questions with direct answers
34. Watch a tendency to name-drop
35. Cultivate an attitude of curiosity—think in advance about what questions you want to ask
36. Call your customer just to find out how he/she is
37. Eliminate your jargon from your conversations
38. Don't interrupt
39. Practice “thinking out loud” with your customer
40. Take responsibility for failed communications