

Building Trust

An important part of all our relationships is the ability to trust. A Harvard Business Review article called “To Trust is Human” explains the following:

Thanks to our large brains, humans are born physically premature and highly dependent on caretakers. Because of this need, we enter the world “hardwired” to make social connections. The evidence is impressive: Within one hour of birth, a human infant will draw her head back to look into the eyes and face of the person gazing at her. Within a few more hours, the infant will orient her head in the direction of her mother’s voice. And, unbelievable as it may seem, it’s only a matter of hours before the infant can actually mimic a caretaker’s expressions. A baby’s mother, in turn, responds and mimics her child’s expression and emotions within seconds.

In short, we’re social beings from the get-go: We’re born to be engaged and to engage others, which is what trust is largely about. That has been an advantage in our struggle for survival.

Trust kicks in on remarkably simple cues...

But similarly, trust can be lost even more easily on those same cues.

A simple formula to help us pinpoint trust, or indeed what is lacking in our relationships in relation to trust is called the Trust Equation. This was developed by Maister et al and is a useful way to explore what trust means to us, means to others and how we can build strong relationships.

The Trust Equation

$$\begin{array}{c} \leftarrow \text{(CREDIBILITY)} + \text{(RELIABILITY)} + \text{(INTIMACY)} \\ \hline \text{(SELF-ORIENTATION)} \rightarrow \\ \hline = \text{(TRUSTWORTHINESS)} \end{array}$$

- **Credibility** has to do with the words we speak and the knowledge we possess. In a sentence we might say, “I can trust what she says about XYZ; she’s very credible on the subject.”
- **Reliability** has to do with actions. We might say, “If he says he’ll deliver the product tomorrow, I trust him, because he’s dependable.”
- **Intimacy** refers to the safety or security that we feel when entrusting someone with something. It is about how we feel. We might say, “I can trust her with that information; she’s never betrayed my confidentiality before, and she would never embarrass me.”
- **Self-orientation** refers to the person’s motive. In particular, whether a person’s focus is primarily on himself, or on the other person (or Team). We might say, “I can’t trust him — I don’t think he cares enough about me, he is focused on what he gets out of it. Or more commonly, “I don’t trust him — I think he’s too concerned about how he’s appearing, so he’s not really paying attention”. Essentially, if you’re out for yourself, rather than the team, then it destroys trust.

Think about a time where Trust was built. What did you see? Did it follow the formula?

Note the occasion down:

