

Twelve Keys for Building Trust

The foundation of any relationship, whether it be with a Business associate, spouse, parent, client or, friend, is trust. Trust is not something that can be built with quick fix techniques. Rather, it is something that is cultivated through consistent habits in your interactions. The following are twelve patterns of behavior that increase trust in your relationships.

1. Be transparent

Do not try to hide things from others. Refuse to have any hidden agendas. You might think you can pull a fast one on someone else. You can't. Most people have good intuition and even though they may not be able to consciously determine that you are hiding something, they very likely will have an uneasy feeling around you. If they don't feel comfortable around you, they won't be able to trust you.

Another sinister aspect of having hidden agenda is that it erodes your ability to trust others. You will assume that if you aren't fully forthcoming, other people aren't either. When you are trustworthy, however, you will see others as more trustworthy too.

2. Be sincere

This is similar to the previous point. Only say what you mean. Be impeccably honest with your words. Refuse to try and craft your words to manipulate others. Don't give fake compliments, patronize others or say something just because you think you are supposed to. Again, people have good BS detectors. When others know that you only speak genuinely, it increases their capacity to trust you. Everyone loves authenticity.

3. Focus on adding value

In any relationship, always have the best interest of others at heart. Work hard to give as much or more than you get. When you consistently add value to someone's life, they not only feel like you are on their side, they also have the urge to reciprocate. In Business relationships, this means always under-promise and over-deliver. In personal relationships, focusing on meeting the needs of the other person instead of taking in order to get your own needs met.

4. Be present

The last thing anyone wants is to have a conversation with someone who isn't there. Instead of retreating into your head, focus on listening to others. Whenever you are with someone, make them your primary focus. Don't think about work while you are at Home talking to your spouse. Don't think about life at Home when you are with a client. When it comes to relationships, presence means quality time and quality time builds trust.

5. Always treat people with respect

Ever since we were little kids, we have been taught to be respectful. However, when our standards get violated or there is no one around to see (read: we don't think there will be any consequences), we can often engage in petty behavior. This encompasses a wide range of actions from personal attacks during arguments to gossiping behind someone's back.

Always remember that another person's inherent worth as a human being entitles them to be treated with dignity. When people know that you will always treat with them respect, it is very natural for trust to flourish.

6. Take responsibility

When you mess up, which you invariably will, be quick to clean it up. Skip the excuses and just take responsibility. Justifying and making excuses may help you in the short term but in the long run, it does nothing for your character or the level of trust you are given.

Accountability is a rare trait these days with most people wanting to avoid negative consequences at all costs. Dare to be different and you will win the trust of others.

7. Focus on feedback

Unless you're a mind reader, the only way you can know how well a relationship is going is by getting feedback from the other person. Be not only willing to accept feedback – actively seek it out. Many people are afraid to give you feedback, especially if its negative, out of fear that they will offend. Ask with sincerity and respond respectfully and others will be far more willing. Take both the positive and negative into account along with your own judgment and adjust your behaviour accordingly.

8. Take criticism well

Learn to handle criticism with grace. Instead of getting defensive, consider the possibility that what the other person is saying might be true. Closing yourself off from criticism has the effect of closing off all communication.

In some cases, the criticism may indeed be inaccurate. In these instances, you have the opportunity to show empathy. Try to understand the problem from the other person's point of view. Perhaps the criticism is just a thinly veiled attack that stems from a deeper upset they may have with you. In these cases, your willingness to dig deeper without getting defensive will certainly enhance the trust in the relationship.

9. Set boundaries

Be clear about how you expect people to behave around you. Again, do this in a mature manner: be sincere and respectful. When you have clear standards, people know exactly how to behave around you and that gives them certainty. The strength that you communicate by setting boundaries builds trust – when someone knows that they can't take advantage you that alleviates the fear that someone else will.

10. Be a class act

Hold yourself to a higher a standard. Be quick to apologize when you know you are wrong. Only speak well of others, even those who don't speak well of you.

Why should you do this? First, imagine what it would do to your sense of self to know that other people only have good experiences with you. Second, imagine how much trust such behaviour engenders in others. Finally, imagine the example you set for others – the conduct of others will improve just by being around you consistently.

11. Your word is your bond

Keep all the promises you make and ensure that you make promises only sparingly. Make your word stronger than any written contract. Refuse to make empty promises and manipulate people.

When a promise you have made is no longer beneficial to you, instead of deciding to not follow through, attempt to renegotiate the deal. When you renegotiate the agreement, ensure that the new commitment provides even more value to the other person.

12. Be consistent

Above all, be consistent in your behavior. Don't engage in the behavior once in a while when it seems convenient. Your consistency is the key to your trustworthiness. Small actions add up and a track record of high character is invaluable in any relationship. Become intensely principle-centered and trust will follow easily and consistently.