



BUILDING **TRUST** IN A DIGITAL WORLD

Building Trust with Clients



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Why is **trust** important to **you** and **your organisation**?

If you think about how clients choose you, how people join your organisation or how you choose suppliers, very often your answer will include a healthy amount of trust.

In a digital age, building trust is becoming more challenging with the level of misinformation and misleading claims and content wherever you turn. Being able to cut through this and build trust in all parts of your organisation helps you stand out from the crowd.

To help you achieve this we will guide you through the key areas that will help you and your organisation in:

- Building trust with your clients and potential clients
- Building trust within your organisation to attract and retain the right people
- Linking trust into each part of your long term strategy
- Giving you operational tools to bring trust to life

02 | EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Trust is the foundation of any successful organisation. It influences client retention, employee satisfaction, and overall business performance. In any organisation where relationships are paramount, trust can be the differentiator that sets your organisation apart from your competitors. The key factors to understand are:

1. How you and your organisation become your clients trusted adviser
2. Creating personalisation and absolute client focus
3. The foundations of trust– what are the basics and what builds extra levels of trust
4. Trust killers and how to recover
5. Digital trust in a busy and complex landscape

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Did you know that trusted companies outperform their peers by up to 400%? That customers who trust a brand are 88% more likely to buy again? And that 79% of employees who trust their employer are more motivated to work (and less likely to leave)? The importance of trust is at an all-time high - just as our inclination to trust is at an all-time low.” **Deloitte - Four Factors of trust**

Building trust with clients



Trust is at the core of effective long term client relationships. How can you and your organisation use a systematic approach to building trust?

Faced with the option between working with two organisations with different fees, how do clients choose? What are they looking for?

Trust is one of the intangible things talked about around client engagement, and it's an important one to think about. If you trust the people you engage with you tend to find working together easier and more rewarding. The key area missing at the start of any relationship is trust. If you think about it, trust takes time to establish (along with rapport). If you can build trust quickly and simply then this helps you start that long term relationship on solid foundations.

How do we expand your thinking and help you create a real focus around trust?

The process and steps we recommend are based around the trust equation.

Charles H Green developed an excellent, simple, yet practical, equation to help all of us in business to increase our trust quotient. Charles H Green's equation is this:

$$T = \frac{C+R+I}{S}$$

C H Green

✓ T is Trust

✓ I is intimacy

✓ C is credibility

✓ S is self-orientation

✓ R is reliability

Looking at the equation, to build trust you need to increase your credibility, reliability and intimacy whilst reducing your self-orientation.

So, let's break each component down and give you a few key tips.

C is Credibility

Credibility is all about having people believe in you and it comes from the Latin verb “to believe”.

Credibility is important in building trust because your customers need to know, they need the assurance that they can afford to invest their time, their money and energies in you, they need to believe in you.

Here are some tips for increasing credibility:

- **Communication is key.** In particular, active listening and avoiding jargon. Communicating complex ideas in simple language is a great indicator of credibility
- **Have the knowledge and experience that clients would reasonably expect you to have.** Are there professional bodies, associations and publications that are relevant to your industry? If so, use these resources to continually build your knowledge
- **Be consistent.** It’s much easier to believe in a person that doesn’t blow hot and cold
- Do you and your organisation have a range of testimonials, case studies and a string of clients who would recommend you and your organisation? New clients look for this, make it easy for them to see your track record of supporting your clients
- **Keeping simple promises early in client engagement builds credibility.** Prompt meeting follow up and information shared in a timely manner



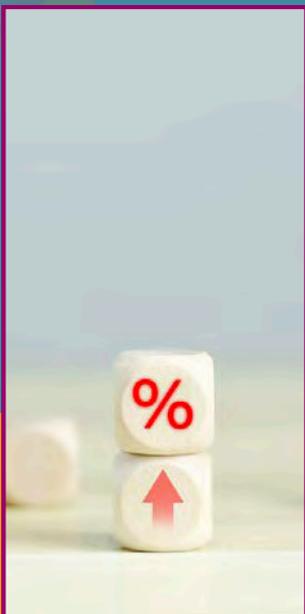
R is Reliability

This means delivering what you promise to deliver: You do what you say you are going to do.

So, how do we go about doing that?

Be very clear on what you are going to deliver and when you are going to have it done by. Make sure you don’t over promise on something that you can’t possibly deliver. Remember the simple adage to under promise and over deliver.

Be clear on the core components and the key elements that you do in your job. The very best of professionals (allow themselves to) get dragged into activities that don’t help to meet the client’s objectives. You need to be crystal clear on what you need to be doing to deliver to your clients. This focus on your clients’ specific needs is a live demonstration of your reliability.



I is intimacy

Intimacy is a strange word to be using in a business context, particularly in Britain. While it's very closely related to empathy, what we really mean is treating each person as a human, an individual.

So, the question is, what can you do to increase trust by increasing intimacy? Well, as with credibility there's a number of steps that we believe are the most important; the most critical to building trust. Here's our top 3 tips:



1. Accept your vulnerabilities. You're not superhuman so if you make a mistake admit it. Similarly, if you're in a very uncomfortable situation acknowledge it; it's not a sign of weakness it's about being bold and people will recognise that.

2. Be positive. Appreciate what your clients do for you. Without clients where would we be? This is something that researchers call capitalisation and it's shown to strengthen relationships. So, when your clients buy from you or give you a recommendation or come back to you for some additional work, remember to thank them.

3. Remember that whatever you believe, you are not business to business, you are not business to consumer. You are person to person, human to human. You need to remember to be human and treat your clients in the way they want to be treated. What does that mean? It means remembering to use your clients' language; remembering to use their name, remembering key details about their piece of work and more of their personal information showing them that you care.

Another way to think about intimacy is the "relationship beyond the transaction". It's taking the time to understand a little more about your client and them as a person, as well as sharing a little more about you. This discussion can very often help you build rapport and that deeper long-term trusting relationship.

S is self-orientation

Self orientation is the only element that you need to reduce. Put simply, focus on your clients and what's most important to them. That sounds obvious, but you would be surprised by how many professionals assume rather than really dig into the detail to find what this client wants this time.

So, what is self-orientation? Well, it's about where your focus is. Is it on you, your organisation, and your services, or is it on your clients, their challenges, their needs and their aspirations? To increase trust you need to shift the focus to your client, especially in terms of your communications.



Now this can be boiled down to two core elements:



Listening: really listen; don't dive in; don't dive in to fill a gap in the conversation.

No diving on top of something that might lead to a link to your service. Instead, wait, be patient and listen, to build the full picture so that you genuinely understand. Pull back from the immediate transaction and look at the bigger picture. Understand what is happening before, during and after this piece of work. What has led your client to this point?

Shape your questions so that you're encouraging your client to talk.

Now, this means avoiding the “I” statements; keeping away from leading questions and making more use of “TED” questions. TED is an acronym for a set of questions starting with Tell, Explain and Describe. These type of questions can help you build a deeper level of client curiosity, exploring what they are telling you and looking for more information.



By using the trust equation, focusing in on the four key elements you can build trust in every single client interaction. You can build trust in a systematic way before someone even becomes a client.

Applying the tools and approaches we have described help you develop the core foundations needed in becoming your clients’ trusted adviser.

Two **key** questions your organisation needs to address

How can you and your organisation use a systematic approach to building trust?

Example: Focusing on client's specific needs, using case studies and examples of your work to demonstrate your real-world credibility and reliability?

Faced with the option between working with two organisations with different fees, how do clients choose? What are they looking for?

Example: A deeper level of questioning and listening will help you uncover your client's real needs and motivators, not those that present at the surface level.

Creating trust within your teams



Compared with people at low-trust companies, people at high-trust companies report: 74% less stress, 106% more energy at work, 50% higher productivity, 13% fewer sick days, 76% more engagement, 29% more satisfaction with their lives, 40% less burnout.

– **Harvard Business Review** –
The Neuroscience of trust

People thrive in high trust environments. You may have experienced the huge benefits of operating in an environment where you can be open, share your thoughts and challenge those around you.

How do you create focus on building trust within your organisation? Here are three key areas to develop:

- 1. Trust and psychological safety**
- 2. Hygiene factors** – what are the basics and what builds extra levels of trust
- 3. Values, motivators and beliefs**

Trust and psychological safety

Trust and psychological safety are critical for an effective workplace. Having both in place promotes teamwork, innovation, and learning. Think of trust as the belief that others will act with integrity and to help others. Psychological safety promotes a culture where you can express yourself without fear of judgment, and mistakes are viewed as learning opportunities.

Hygiene factors

There are a few fundamental areas to consider around the basic elements of trust:

- ✓ **Accountability:** The ability to take ownership of mistakes and successes
- ✓ **Compassion:** Trusting people who care about others, there is a relationship and connection beyond what I needed to get the job done
- ✓ **Consistency:** People seeing and hearing the same thing consistently helps build trust
- ✓ **Integrity:** Actions match words, and people choose what's right over what's easy
- ✓ **Communication:** There is a consistency of open communication, disagreement is accepted (even encouraged) and there is a unified message
- ✓ **Reliability:** Delivering against actions inspires confidence in others
- ✓ **Empathy:** Connecting with others on an emotional level helps build trust

Values, motivators and beliefs aren't written on a wall, they are lived by every person every day.

Former Herman Miller CEO Max De Pree once said, "The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. The last is to say thank you. In between the two, the leader must become a servant."

The experiments I have run strongly support this view. Ultimately, you cultivate trust by setting a clear direction, giving people what they need to see it through, and getting out of their way.

It's not about being easy on your employees or expecting less from them. High-trust companies hold people accountable but without micromanaging them. They treat people like responsible adults.

Exploring trust in a changing world

Trust is at the core of effective long term client retention and development. Having trust within your organisation is at the heart of retaining and attracting the very best people for your organisation. We live in a digital driven world, and you need to look at trust and how this links to both your client and team interactions.

Digital trust

Think about your online experience versus your face to face experience in these two simple examples:

1. An organisation has a brilliant, slick website and you purchase an item from them. You decide to collect the item from their premises and it's dirty, and disorganised and no one seems to know where your order is. When someone finds your order they seem unsure if it's the right item when they hand it to you and the box is battered and torn. Do you take the item or ask for a refund and walk away?

2. You are looking at job vacancies on LinkedIn and one really matches your skills and experience, in fact it looks like the ideal job. You look at the companies LinkedIn page, and it's website. Both have little information on and what information there is appears to be out of date. You speak to a trusted member of your network, and they assure you the organisation you are looking at has a great culture, brilliant people and would be a great fit for you, do you apply for the role?

In both cases the digital and real world experience don't match. There is a break in congruence between what you see and hear digitally and in real life. If you think about your own personal digital footprint and the digital footprint of your organisation are they both up to date and relevant?

Referred trust

Why is it we take a recommendation from a friend or colleague on a restaurant or holiday, and why do we trust the digital review we see online for each? We like to know what others experience, and we like to have a prior understanding before we purchase something. The more we trust someone, the more we value their thoughts and opinions on these purchases.

If we extend this to look at employee retention and recruitment, we trust the recommendations of a closest trusted adviser about who to interview. If we are seeking a position we trust those closest to us to make great recommendation about places to work.

In both examples we are experiencing referred trust, the trust that a third party gives us about a job, a meal or a holiday.

To help us build a network of advocates, who will pass trust to their network, we must communicate simply and clearly what we do and how we benefit their network. If you work for a company you love you are more likely to refer others into the business. If you know a great business where people love their jobs, you are also likely to recommend that organisation if someone is seeking employment there.

The key is to understand what your clients, employees and network are saying about you and your organisation when you aren't in the room. Will they tell a positive story and encourage others to engage with you?

Trust in a busy landscape / online

To connect digitally you must understand how your target audience operates. You might have the most effective Facebook presence that brings to life you and your organisation in a simple and effective way. But if your audience is on LinkedIn not Facebook, you might be wasting a lot of time on the wrong digital channel. It's important to look at the data and ask questions about your target audience and the most effective ways of engaging them. Once you have clarity on your digital landscape you know where to invest time and effort to build trust and engage your ideal connections and audience.

Trust killers and how to recover

Not delivering a product or service is not the end of trust. In fact people who experience a poor level of service can become trusted advocates based on how you handle this poor service. Admitting mistakes quickly is key. Then understanding how a clients wants an issue to be resolved is key. A cancelled order and a refund is no good if I still want the product or service. A rearranged delivery a week later is no good if that is a week after I need a gift to arrive. Getting things wrong is an opportunity to show real client focus in how you resolve things. Get this part right and clients will tell others a positive story about you and your organisation.

With your team, think about all of the positive areas we discussed earlier. You can break trust in any number of ways, simply by not communicating, not living your values or by not following up on your actions. The key here is when things aren't right you need to over communicate, engage and ensure you put things right quickly

Demonstrate you have learned lessons from mistakes and explain how you have made changes based on those mistakes. You then need to consistently demonstrate that the new behaviours match what was expected and this will help you rebuild trust.

You can see that the opposite is true, if you break trust, don't learn lessons, don't communicate, and don't demonstrate living your values then trust is broken, and what trust remains is slowly eroded away.



As adults, trust has many definitions and can be established, lost and regained (Mikulincer, 1998). According to Rempel, Holmes and Zanna (1985), trust requires that partners be seen as reliable and predictable, that the partner is concerned with one's needs, and that the individual feel a sense of confidence in the relationship with the partner. According to the authors, each element of trust varies in how much it contributes to the relationship. "The most important aspect of trust in close relationships appears to be faith: the belief that one's partner will act in a loving and caring way whatever the future holds" (Rempel, Holmes, & Zanna, 1985). Another important aspect of trust is that of consistency – or rather inconsistency.

Checklist – building trust in a digital world:



Does everyone in your organisation know the importance of trust? Would the following rank you and your organisation as high trust:

- ✓ Your employees
- ✓ Your suppliers
- ✓ Your clients
- ✓ Your executive team / partners / directors
- ✓ The community around you

Thinking about the trust equation, do your team:

- ✓ Have personal credibility?
 - ✓ Demonstrate they are reliable?
 - ✓ Build business intimate relationships?
 - ✓ Reduce their self orientation and focus on the needs of others?
-
- ✓ As a firm do you have a systematic process to build trust?
 - ✓ Looking at the hygiene factors on page 7, are all of these in place?
 - ✓ Thinking about digital trust, is there a congruence between online and real world experience?
 - ✓ Would your network describe you as a high trust adviser?
 - ✓ If things have gone wrong, can you demonstrate how you turned these scenarios around and created advocates of your organisation?