



The trust factor: Transform your business and your life

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HAS THE CONCEPT of “trust” been overdone? *Trust me* ... it has. (Sorry for using the industry’s most discredited phrase.)

Amazon lists 354,902 books with “trust” in the title, and the mother of all Internet search engines, Google, returns 259 million trust-related links.

So clearly, trust — or the lack thereof — is on a lot of people’s minds. But that’s the problem. Plenty of talk about trust, but not enough action. For this reason, I’d like to devote this column and the two that follow to the topic of achieving business breakthroughs with trust.

Here’s where I’m headed with the whole “trust factor.” Supreme trust is the integral element of business success. When advisors don’t increase trust, they run the risk of hindering their progress or, worse, of destroying their business. But when they do, they lay the groundwork for unlimited future success and fulfillment.

Now, building trust is important, but everybody is doing this, so you need to do it better. Even more important, since you’re human, you *will* make mistakes and weaken client trust. So knowing how to restore trust is probably a more useful skill than knowing how to build it.

How can an advisor go about building and restoring trust with clients? By (1) communicating his character and (2) demonstrating his competence.

Communicating character includes behaving in ways that show integrity, good intentions, exemplary motives and 100 percent honesty. Competency hinges on the quality of the advisor’s skills, capabilities, track record, education and experience.

Both character and competence are crucial. Honesty without competence is a recipe for mistrust, as are skills without integrity. Here are five ways to enhance character and competence:

Be credible. This involves becoming an expert with an ongoing commitment to learning. It also involves doing a credible job with your marketing materials — making sure they are orderly and neat, totally in compliance and accurate. Especially important is making sure your needs analysis is “spin free.”

Be reliable. Advisors should view every client interaction as an opportunity to show dependability. If you make a promise, you should keep it. Following through on all service commitments, as well as returning calls in a timely manner, is pivotal.

Be honest. This involves talking straight, telling the truth and being totally transparent to your clients. This is really important when it comes to discussing your education, background and designations.

Be personable. Become a great listener and demonstrate a client focus, rather than being consumed with your own agendas. Showing humility and respect to all is key, as is always being optimistic in dealings with clients and personally charming.

Have integrity. The foundation of integrity is always having straightforward motives, genuinely caring for people and always doing the right thing for clients, even when it hurts.

My bottom line is this: You can have anything in life that *you* want if others will trust you to give them what *they* want.

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