



BUILDING BLOCKS™

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When You're Ready to Catapult Forward.....

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Trust As Currency

Trust is the currency of effective communication. It is at the foundation of all truly good relationships, whether they are of a personal or business nature. With trust, you can build all kinds of things. With trust things move more smoothly. Absent a foundation of trust, everything you build is subject to crumbling. Abuse it and the finely oiled machine can screech to a snail's pace, or stop altogether. And the machine itself can be destroyed.

Trust is the keystone to moving things forward. When it's there, people don't have to double check, document, or wait for completion to move past fear. When trust is absent or low, people verify, second guess, and cover their butts. In the process, things slow down, hostilities and fear rise, and people overreact. Paralysis can occur.

If you were to ask ten people at random today, "are you trustworthy?" how many do you think would say "yes?" All of them. Yet, if you were to ask those same ten people how many people in their life they truly trust, what would the average response be? According to my sample, the answer ranges from "I can count them on one hand" to "dozens." Even if you're at the "dozens" end of the scale, think about it – there's a huge gap between "dozens" and "everyone."

How is trust defined? For purposes of this article, the definition is "what a person does matches what he/she says." Are there levels of trust? Absolutely! You might trust Louis to cut your hair nicely, but not trust him to be the executor of your will. You might trust a colleague to follow through on a commitment to complete a job assignment on time and within budget, but not trust her alone with your husband. So how do these levels of trust affect our lives as individuals and collectively?

Consider the pace at which it's possible to move when trust is present. For example, if you took someone at his word that he would sell you his house on a certain day at a certain price, in good condition, imagine the time, stress, cost and documents that would go away. You might be thinking, "well THAT'S never going to happen!" And you would be right, given our current environment.

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Our levels of trust have sunk so low that we have become the most litigious nation on earth. We have 1 attorney for every 300 citizens in the US. Trust levels globally are such that we assume ill intent instead of positive in many, many instances. Think about how that impacts the world we're creating.

This will be a series of articles on Trust – the 10 Components of Trust, the 4 Stages of Trust, 6 Ways to Develop Trust, and how we might start creating a different culture, in our own spheres and that of the world at large.

Think of the possibilities! Entire industries might erode (such as the law profession), but other, creative endeavors would spring forth that would add value to our lives, because we could be focused on what might be possible to create, as opposed to being focused on how to protect ourselves from what might happen. Trust is what allows things to move forward.

Trust can take two forms: faith and proof. An example of faith is when a man on the side of the road flags you down and asks for a ride to the nearest gas station. You don't know him, and have no way of knowing that his story about his girlfriend ditching him at the restaurant is true. There are very real risks in trusting this person, yet you decide to trust him anyway, invite him into your vehicle and give him a ride.

Proof based trust is much easier. When you board an airplane, you trust the pilot and crew to fly you safely to your destination. While you again probably don't know the pilot personally, you feel that the fact that he has a pilot's license, a job with a major airline and experience warrants your trust. The leap of faith in this example is far smaller in this example.

Standards enter into how well a person or organization meet our expectations of trustworthiness. One person might feel it's perfectly acceptable to be duplicitous in business dealings (it's all part of the game), but have impeccable integrity in his personal relationships. He might see himself as perfectly trustworthy, whereas a business competitor or client might see him as a snake. So articulating expectations of what "trustworthy" means at the beginning of relationships can help to level the playing field of expectations.

The point is, we usually have some choice in whether, and how much, we trust in a situation. Will some individuals or organizations abuse that trust? Experience would dictate yes, without a doubt. The question is whether you choose to base your trust filter on those experiences (or fears), or whether you choose to base it on the premise that most people are trustworthy (again, virtually all in a survey would say that they are). Which approach serves you better, in terms of accomplishing what you want to, and general levels of happiness? Are the risks of trusting worth the benefits?

Consider a time when someone placed her trust in you, perhaps with something that felt like a stretch for you. Was your reaction "aha! I can surely take advantage of this situation! What a fool she is!" Or was your reaction one of warmth, where you swelled with pride that someone would trust you just on faith, and where you became far more determined to uphold or exceed the expectations of that trust? This month, become more aware of your trust filters and how they affect your relationships. More to come here in the ensuing months!

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