

Building Higher Trust 6 The Transactional Nature of Trust

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPLP



Trust between people is transactional by nature. Think of it like a bank account. We have a balance of trust in each direction. That balance is the result of all transactions that have happened in the past. Hopefully the account balance is positive.

Now, everything that transpires between the two individuals makes an impact on the balance. If a trust “deposit” happens, then the balance has increased. If a “withdrawal” was what one person observed, then the balance for him or her goes down.

All day, every time we interface with another person the trust level is being modified on a moment-to-moment basis depending on what is going on. There may be deposits in both directions or withdrawals in both directions. It is also possible that a deposit in trust from person A to person B results in a withdrawal of trust from person B to person A.

Recognize that many of these transactions are so small and fleeting that we hardly notice them at all. Even just the tone of voice on a phone call or some body language in a meeting will impact the trust level.

There is a very dynamic and complex system that is playing in the background 100 percent of the time. If an action has a huge negative impact on trust for one person, then the account balance is overdrawn and it will take a lot of remedial work to bring the balance back to zero. In that case, numerous deposits in trust will be required before the balance starts to go up again.

The Five C’s of Trust

I believe that people are constantly observing each other to determine what I call the Five C’s of Trust. These conditions form the substance of the transactions that impact the trust balance. They are as follows:

Competence is about applied knowledge. Does the person display competence or is he or she prone to bumbling things frequently?

Character is about having integrity. Can you rely on the other person to do the right thing at all times?

Consistency is about being predictable. Can you count on the same reaction to a stimulus tomorrow that you see today? An inconsistent person leaves people guessing, and that does not build higher trust.

Congeniality has to do with whether the person is a pleasure when interacting with other people. A negative or judgmental person will usually have a negative impact on trust.

Care is about having empathy for other people. When we demonstrate that we care for other people, we are building higher trust.

We must recognize that external conditions may make the five C's more difficult to demonstrate at times. For example, when COVID 19 struck, and most people had to work from home, it was more of a challenge to demonstrate consistency. Many people were faced with taking care of children while trying to get their work done or attend a zoom meeting.

Recognize that the phenomenon of trust is not static; it changes with every transaction, no matter how small.

Bonus Video

Here is [a brief video on The Transactional Nature of Trust.](#)

Bob Whipple, MBA, CPLP, is a consultant, trainer, speaker, and author in the areas of leadership and trust. He is the author of four books: 1. The Trust Factor: Advanced Leadership for Professionals (2003), 2. Understanding E-Body Language: Building Trust Online (2006), 3. Leading with Trust is Like Sailing Downwind (2009), and 4. Trust in Transition: Navigating Organizational Change (2014). In addition, he has authored over 1000 articles and videos on various topics in leadership and trust. Bob has many years as a senior executive with a Fortune 500 Company and with non-profit organizations