

Building Higher Trust 50 How Long Does it Take

by Robert Whipple: MBA, CPTD



I frequently get asked how long it takes to build a relationship of trust with another person. My answer may surprise you. I usually say, “It can take from three seconds to never.” I have a program entitled “Planting the Seed of Trust in the First 10 Seconds.” I actually believe it is possible to get a relationship off to a fantastic start of trust in just a few seconds.

Malcolm Gladwell wrote a book entitled “Blink.” Malcolm shares a characteristic about human beings that is normally true. He indicates that we have an amazing ability to size up another person and decide whether we should trust him or her in under 3 seconds. Of course, that feeling of trust is just the first step. It takes a lot longer to have enough verification steps to constitute mature and lasting trust.

I stretch the analogy all the way out to ten seconds, but I have experienced it in my own life that I had a strong positive reaction to another individual upon meeting him for just a few seconds. The bond comes from a combination of several factors as follows:

Factors that Plant a Seed of Trust

Eye contact – upon approach and during the handshake (if there is one)

Posture and dress – an indication of education level and hygiene

What the person is saying with his face – how eager he is to meet me

Lack of distraction – the other person is focused on me

If that seed of trust is planted in the first few seconds, then the relationship will proceed toward mature trust at roughly ten times the rate than if the seed was not planted.

On the other hand, if the above elements are missing, it may take a l-o-n-g time for me to trust the individual, and if he fails along the way, we may never get to a state of real trust.

Example

I once met a CEO at a seminar I was doing. We shook hands but he made a concerted effort to look down and away during the handshake. He lost the opportunity for me to have initial trust in him, and we eventually parted ways without ever experiencing any kind of trust.

Full Mature Trust

It does take time to reach a full mature level of trust with an individual. It may take a year or longer depending on what happens between the two of you. It is very common to be building up some level of trust only to have it squashed by some inappropriate actions or words. Then you have to start all over at the beginning and with higher skepticism.

If you squash the trust a couple or three times in a relationship, chances are you will never reach full mature trust with that individual.

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