

Building Higher Trust 110 Five Cs To Initiate Trust

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD



Can you initiate trust with a new acquaintance by focusing on five Cs? The answer is YES! In this article, I explain that five concepts that begin with the letter C will help initiate trust.

This article is a companion to one that I wrote at the start of this series. That article was entitled [“Planting a Seed of Trust in the First 10 Seconds.”](#) The idea here is that an initial relationship of trust is established. Full, mature trust does still take time to grow. That is because people need to witness your consistency over time.

You can initiate trust quickly

Most people believe that trust takes years to kindle. Trust requires that you have the opportunity to interface over an extended period of time. I disagree with this analysis. I think trust can kindle very quickly between two individuals. There is even a name for this, “swift trust,” coined by Debra Meyerson. After that, trust grows or shrinks based on the interactions that occur between individuals over time.

You can initiate trust in only a few minutes of time if the proper conditions are present. Trust rests on the relationship between two individuals. If you are going to trust me, you need to be personally convinced that I fulfill 5 conditions that all begin with the letter C.

These items form the basis for trust to start. We convey them from one person to another in short order. The first two conditions I borrowed from Stephen M.R. Covey’s bestselling book, *The Speed of Trust*. The rest of the list is from my personal experience and background.

Here are the 5 C’s to initiate trust

Competence – You must be convinced that I know what I’m doing to view me as credible. I pass the competence test if you believe I can deliver on my statements. If you doubt that I can deliver, then you will remain skeptical until you test me.

Character – Do I have the integrity to do what is right? You need to feel that I am not duplicitous. I will stand up for what I believe is right. It does not mean that we always need to agree on every point. You need to see me as a person of high moral and ethical fiber before trusting me.

Consistency – You need to be convinced that I will do what I say. This characteristic normally takes people a long time to test. It doesn't need to take months for someone to be convinced that I am consistent. You can discern the value of consistency through the way I word my intentions. Even the body language I use to chat with you contains clues. Am I relaxed and genuine, or am I uptight and rigid?

The ability to follow through with intended actions is easy to spot. You can also get back to the other person if conditions change. It is also easy to observe a blowhard who says nice things but has little fortitude to actually do them.

For example, if I promise to send you an article and I ask for your card, that signals my intent to follow up.

Congeniality – You are not going to grant initial trust to someone who comes across as morose or stern. To gain your trust, I need to smile and show that it comes from the heart.

A genuine cordial facial expression when first meeting a person is a prerequisite for trust to kindle. If I put on a false smile it is the kiss of death. It pegs me as someone who cannot be trusted at all.

Care – The final “C” in this handful is to project that I really do care about you. Again, people might say it takes years to show I do care about you. I disagree. Care can be displayed in hundreds of ways, just as selfishness can be worn like a suit of armor.

Giving deference to the feelings of others is an important component of Emotional Intelligence. People who have low Emotional Intelligence have the biggest blind spots, according to Daniel Goleman. If I come across as a phony, I will have little ability to detect this in myself. You will usually be able to see it quickly.

Conclusion

I cannot fake the 5 C's. Words, actions, tone, and body language must all be consistent. To initiate trust in just a few minutes, pay attention to the 5 Cs. It is then up to me to remain consistent and keep building on that base over time.

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