



Increasing Genuiness to Engender Trust **Balancing the “I Message” with Empathy**

By Libby Wagner, Founder and President

I think it’s amazing that people actually study trust. Personally, I’m not the lab coat type, but I think I might actually like this research project where we project an hypothesis about why someone might or might not trust someone else and then test it out—this is my kind of study!

Frankly, I didn’t need to do the studies, but I’m glad they exist because sometimes people want data. They want facts and specifics about why something is one way or something is another way. They want the official scoop.

I also like that when we study something using the scientific method, we can begin to identify replicable systems, which always helps when we want some practical solutions rather than just theory that sounds good but we don’t know how to make it happen. Most people I work with want trust, know they need it, and really struggle with

how to give or get it once it’s lost. The **Influencing Options®** communications model helps create a practical system for increasing trust.

Recently, I had an opportunity to visit with Bob Weyant, mentor and friend, and we were discussing the über-importance of the Core Dimensions (Respect—Empathy—Specificity—Genuiness) and their relationship to trust. I wanted to know whether or not someone could overcome what seemed to be a deficiency in Genuiness. In other words, for whatever reason, others perceive you to have a lack of sincerity, a diminished bank account of Genuiness. It’s not exactly that they accuse you of being a liar or a cheat, but they just don’t believe in your sincerity. They don’t trust your delivery of some of the other behaviors that might normally engender trust, i.e. Respect and Specificity, because they don’t think you are delivering these from a place of truth or authenticity.

Geez. That sounds like a losing battle . . . what can you do if someone doesn’t trust you, and you feel like you are definitely, absolutely trustworthy?

Some things to note:

If it's worth it to establish or re-establish trust, **then you may want to take the first step.** Initiate a conversation that directly addresses your desire to create a stronger, more trusting relationship.

Even if we can establish almost immediate rapport, **trust is generally established over a period of time** with consistent behaviors. So, building long-lasting trust can take some time, and you need to make a commitment to consistent behaviors. You don't have to be perfect, of course, but you may want to invite feedback from the other person along the way so you don't lose ground via miscommunication.

In order to overcome obstacles to trust, **you need to deal with perception.** This part can be tough because you may need to ignore the "facts" so as not to get wrapped up in a defensive exchange about what's right and wrong from your perspective. Covey was right: seek first to understand, then to be understood.

Advanced Specificity

In the **Influencing Options®** communications model, we teach many tools and practical, immediately useable skills for influencing, confronting and communicating. Everyone learns that Specificity is key—"Specificity is HUGE," as we often say in our classes and coaching interactions. (See, "[Tell Me What You Want: Specificity Breeds Contentment.](#)")

Let's take Specificity to an advanced level with an even greater Return-on-Investment than communicating clearly!

Here's the scoop:

The "I Message": What do you want? Start with Specificity and reflection. Ask yourself, in a particular situation or relationship, what you want. If you'd like to influence the person to change or to meet you half-way, clearly identify what that might look like. You may have to convert the "undesirable" current scenario into a more "desirable" version because you need to ask for what you actually want, not what you don't want them to repeat.

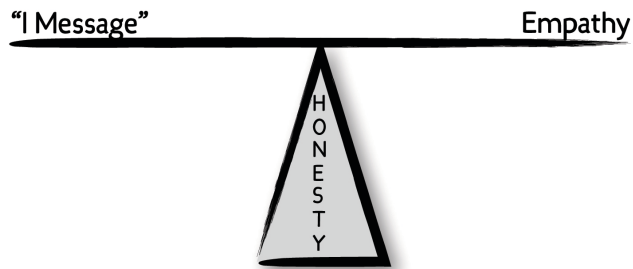
Where you are coming from: How do you feel? Also, clearly identify what your feelings are about this subject or issue. Are you excited? Disappointed? Concerned? Stressed? Name it. I used to work with an economist who couldn't say the word "feelings" without dramatically dragging out the long "e" sound. "FEEEEEEELings," he'd mockingly note whenever we were discussing the emotional impact of learning environments at the college. Here's the short answer: ignore feelings—your own and others—at great risk. If you want to increase or change the trust factor, you've got to pay attention to the emotional content of the situation.

Where they are coming from: Deliver empathy. Delivering Empathy authentically—demonstrating that you understand what the other person feels about the issue/topic, without judgment—forces you to increase your Specificity with regards to listening. In other words, if you are engaged at the level of attention required to deliver Empathy, you can't help but get specific because you are trying to show you get it.

Focus on Attending Behaviors. The combination of language, tone and non-verbal behaviors contribute to your delivering attending behaviors, or those behaviors that communicate your focus, attention, and engagement

to the other person. Part of the way we increase our delivery of Genuineness is to be completely “in the moment” with the other person, free from distractions and interruptions, calm, rational and present.

A Balancing Act:



Balancing Genuineness Behaviors

When you are able to balance your interactions by utilizing the four items from Advanced Specificity, above, you will be balancing the give-and-take of delivering specific “I messages” and listening and demonstrating Empathy. It’s the perfect balance of “you” and “me,” creates congruence, allows for openness and sharing, doesn’t de-value the other person—all contributing to the greater notion of your genuineness and authenticity and demonstrating trustworthiness.

Why do we even care about this? Because trusting relationships form the strong foundation for influencing the kind of organizational culture you want: a Profit Culture!

[Click here](#) to order **The Influencing Option: The Art of Building a Profit Culture in Business.**

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