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Helping you align your people with your vision



“Trust me! Please . . .”

Four Core Dimensions of Great Sales Relationships

By Libby Wagner, Founder of Professional Leadership Results

As a smart sales professional, you know that creating great sales success is about connecting with people. There are a kazillion books, tapes and classes to help you network to find prospects and potential customers and to connect with people who might need what you have to sell. But the real truth is that creating great sales success is about creating great relationships based on trust. So, if great relationships are built on trust, how, then, do we create trust with people we don't know yet? It's not as easy as giving a great handshake, looking someone in the eye and saying, “hey, trust me, I'm your friend!”

If you want to create great, long-lasting sales relationships, you need to *earn* trust. Building a foundation of trust is a simple concept, but not everyone takes the time to do it. They just imagine that they are trustworthy, so people should trust them. *Why?* Why should I trust you? Over time, we can create trusting relationships with friends and associates, but is there anything to do immediately that would communicate a sense of trustworthiness to a potential customer?

Here's the key: *it's your behaviors that influence, not your intentions!* You can have the best, most honorable intentions in the world and they won't mean anything unless your behaviors—your actions and your words—demonstrate what's going on inside. You cannot influence someone to believe in you, to trust you, unless you are demonstrating trustworthy behaviors.

Four core dimensions can help you identify what behaviors create a foundation for trust: *respect, empathy, specificity and genuineness.*

1. Respect is one of those words that people are always throwing around lightly. It's not a light word. It means that when you are interacting with a customer, you treat them as you want to be treated. You respect their time, their right to ask questions and even their right to say, “no!” You remember that you are committed to offering value and creating a foundation for a long-term relationship. You listen.

2. Empathy is more than just listening. Empathy is the demonstration that you have not only understood what the other person is feeling, but *why* he feels that way. If your customer is resisting you or fretting about price, you listen carefully and you may respond by saying, “so, you're concerned because you're not sure this price creates the greatest value for you?” or, “so, you're feeling frustrated because the customer service center didn't return your call when you wanted your question answered?” This allows the person to *be heard*—a natural human need—and often can help pave the way for continued communication and negotiation. When you find your customers repeating the same information over and over, don't assume there is something wrong with them, in fact, they may not feel that you've heard them, so demonstrating empathy allows you to do that, so you can both move on.

3. Specificity means you don't leave out any details that you, yourself, would want to know. It also means you listen to the questions being asked and you answer as specifically as you are able. If you don't know, don't fake it, tell them you'll find out and then follow up! The degree to which we are not specific, people have to guess, and this can cause miscommunication, a decrease in trust and lost relationships.

4. Genuineness may be the most important one. You can mess up a lot of things in communication, but if you're not sincere, none of the rest of it matters. Check yourself. Don't interact with hidden agendas. Be able to look yourself in the mirror and know you are acting with honesty and integrity. Be sincere in your speech, your body language and your humility. You can be a confident, assertive sales professional all while demonstrating genuineness—and people will know it and respond to it!

Of course, demonstrating high levels of these core dimensions over time is what really creates the strong foundations for relationships built on trust. Those are the kinds of relationships where price is irrelevant and no matter what, they'll buy from you *because they trust you.* ❖

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