

A Bigger Crisis?

We are in a crisis. What's more, our biggest crisis is not the financial one. At the World Economic Forum in China last week world leaders declared that our biggest crisis is not financial but a lack of trust and confidence. We are in a *trust crisis* and few people really understand the bottom line implications. Not only does it affect credit and government relations, but it also affects every relationship and every organization. Professor John Whitney of the Columbia Business School found, "Mistrust doubles the cost of doing business." I think it costs even more. Trust is not just a "soft skill" it is the fundamental key to all lasting success.

Without trust leaders lose teams and sales people lose sales. Without trust we all lose productivity, retention of good people, reputation, morale and revenue. The lower the trust the more time everything takes, the more everything costs, and the lower the loyalty of every one involved. However, with greater trust come greater innovation, creativity, freedom, morale, and a bigger bottom line.

All of my Master's research points to the fact that *trust* is the unique commonality of the most successful leaders and organizations. Obtaining this level of trust isn't easy. If you are looking for a quick fix, don't look to trust. While it may appear to be static, in reality it is more like a forest—a long time growing, but easily burned down with a touch of carelessness. Trust is by nature solid and proven. Without trust no lasting genuine success exists--just a brittle, fluffy, mirage of the real thing. The good news is that we can build this fundamental key to success. It is worth it! And it is the **ONLY** way to genuine relational or organizational success. Following is a synopsis of the eight pillars that build the *Trust Edge*.

1. **Consistency:** It's the little things, done consistently, that make the big difference. In every area of life it is the little things. If I am over weight it is because I have eaten too many calories over time, not because I ate too much yesterday. If I am a good husband I am doing the little things that honor my wife on a daily basis. It is the same in business. The little things done consistently make for leaders being followed, increased sales and retention, and a higher level of trust. Consistency is

the way brands are built and character is revealed. Even if we don't like McDonalds, we trust them because they deliver the same burger in Cleveland as in Tokyo. Do the little things, consistently.

2. **Clarity:** People trust the clear and mistrust or distrust the ambiguous. Be clear about your mission, purpose, expectations, and daily activities. When people are clear about the mission they do the little things differently. A clear mission unifies and inspires. When a manager is clear in expectations, she will likely get what she wants. When we are clear about priorities on a daily basis we become productive and effective.
3. **Compassion:** Think beyond yourself. Never underestimate the power of sincerely caring. It is the reason we trust our mothers over some sales people. We are skeptical if the sales person really has our best interest in mind. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" is not just an old saying, it is a bottom line truth. If followed it builds trust.
4. **Character:** Do what is right over what is easy. Character is a mix of two things. One is integrity, which means being the same from beliefs to words to actions. The other is moral character. It could be argued that Hitler had great integrity but low moral character. Most people know what is right. It is *doing* what's right that is the difficult. We know we should respond to that email or stop watching TV and exercise or read to the kids. Take the high road in every interaction.
5. **Contribution:** Few things build trust quicker than actual results. Be a contributor that delivers real results!
6. **Competency:** Staying fresh, relevant and capable builds trust. The humble teachable person keeps learning new and better ways of doing things. They stay current on ideas and trends. According to one study the key competency of new MBA's is not a specific skill, but rather the ability to learn amidst chaos. Arrogance and a "Been-there-done-that" attitude keep people from growing. There is always more to learn so make a habit of reading, learning, and listening to fresh information.
7. **Connection:** People want to follow, buy from and be around friends. People become friends when they build connection. Ask questions. Listen. Life, work,

and trust are about relationships. All relationships are best built by establishing genuine connection.

8. **Commitment:** Stick with it through adversity. Followers trusted General Patton, Martin Luther King Jr., Gandhi, Jesus and George Washington because they saw commitment. They saw sacrifice for the greater good. Commitment reveals and it builds trust.

Trust does not start with the economy or government. It starts with individuals becoming trusted. When will we get out of this trust crisis? When we as individuals decide to build the *Trust Edge* on a daily basis. Keep on being trusted.

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