

## Building Trust in Business Relationships

Categories : [EMPLOYER HOT TOPICS](#)

Date : November 28, 2011

In a society filled with [Super Committee failures](#), [rampant ponzi schemes](#), continual terror threats and pervasive identity theft, you may rightfully be tempted to ask, “Whom can I trust?”

The truth is, trust is a rare thing – especially in business today. In fact, a 2011 [GfK Corporate Trust Survey](#) indicates that “distrust of corporations remains high among American consumers three-plus years after the nation’s financial crisis, with a majority (64%) saying it’s harder for US companies to gain their trust today than it was a few years ago.” This lack of confidence will likely continue into the future, with more than half (55%) of the 1,000 Americans surveyed saying it will be harder for corporations to gain their trust in the future.

It seems faith in our economy, and perhaps our society as a whole, is faltering these days. Trust levels are at an all-time low, corporate suspicion is on the rise and customers are desperate to develop business relationships they can truly count on. It’s up to us to turn things around. As America’s business managers and owners, we need to lead by example to re-instill optimism. Here are a few things we can all do to help build and maintain a sense of trust – one customer at a time:

**Listen.** Effective listening involves much more than just “not talking.” It requires understanding, empathy, training and practice to master. When you meet with a client or customer, let him tell his story. Put yourself in his shoes as he shares his concerns, purpose, vision and needs. Focus on taking in information and suspend judgments.

**Speak with candor.** Clients value honesty when dealing with any type of sales person or service provider. Train everyone in your organization to be straightforward in business dealings – about what will and won’t work when it comes to the products and/or services you provide. Take the risk of being open with clients and prospects. Whether the news is good or bad, people will trust you more when you are consistently honest.

**Demonstrate concern.** From a client’s perspective, genuine concern is a critical element in maintaining trust. Your customers want to know that you not only understand their problems, but that you “feel their pain.” Instead of listening only for what you can solve, listen to what is truly important to your client. Strive to make each customer feel as though his issues really matter to you.

**Live up to your commitments.** Create detailed action plans for the commitments you make to your clients – and then do what you say you’re going to do. Make “under-promise and over-

deliver” your business mantra. Trust ultimately grows from you keeping your word, time and time again – so if you say you will be there for a client, honor that commitment at all costs.

**Leverage your successes.** Use referrals, endorsements and testimonials to help you establish credibility and build trust with prospects. Ask your best client to write a testimonial detailing his experiences with you, or create a customer case study that demonstrates your reliability. Develop a list of referrals you can provide to prospects, so they can learn from satisfied clients how trustworthy you are. No matter how great you say you are, people will always trust what others say about you more!

While living out these principles in your daily business is no small task, it’s worth the effort. Over the long term, you will foster solid working relationships that are built on trust – an invaluable source of competitive advantage for your business. So take the high road. As you look toward the new year, renew your commitment to building and maintaining trust in your business relationships.

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Trust is a rare thing in business today, but a vital component of a successful staffing partnership. The next time you have a staffing need, please [give Snelling a call](#). We’ll work hard to earn and maintain your trust, one successful placement at a time.