

THE TRUST EQUATION

Ok, let's go through the trust equation piece by piece and then look at the best way to quantify the formula.

$T = C + R + I / S$, where T = Trust, C = Credibility, R = Reliability, I = Intimacy, S = Self-orientation

Credibility = Words = Credentials plus honesty

Reliability = Actions = Promises kept

Intimacy = Emotions = Feel comfortable talking to you about the sensitive, personal issues connected to the surface issue

Self-orientation = Motives = Know that you care about serving our interests

If fail to be: You'll be seen as:

Credible	A windbag
Reliable	Irresponsible
Intimate	Vendors
Unselfish	Manipulative

CREDIBILITY

Credibility is the area most commonly achieved. It focuses on technical expertise...plus presence. Presence refers to how we look, act, react, and talk about our technical expertise. You must illustrate not just assert. It takes a moderate amount of time to establish compared to the other components of trust. The rational part of credibility (believability - not telling lies) can be examined or checked pretty quickly (i.e., references). The emotional side of credibility (honesty - telling the complete truth) takes longer to evaluate because honesty has to do with being comfortable with you. You must allay any unconscious suspicions of incompleteness. Two things do this quicker than anything else:

- 1). anticipating needs and
- 2). speaking about needs that are not commonly talked about (best to do this in the form of a question).

A few ways to enhance Credibility:

1. Tell the truth.
2. Don't over exaggerate.
3. Avoid saying things that others may construe as lies. (e.g., "We'll put our best people on it.")
4. When you don't know, say so quickly and directly.
5. If you don't really belong there, don't put yourself there in the first place
6. Do your homework.
7. Love what you do.

RELIABILITY

Reliability is about whether clients think you are dependable and can be trusted to behave in consistent ways. It is determined mostly by the number of times the client has interacted with you. We trust those we know the best and assign less trust to those whom we have not interacted. Judgments about reliability can be borrowed by checking experiences others have had with you but these are estimates that can be quickly revised by direct client experience. Reliability links words and deeds, intention and action. This action orientation distinguishes reliability from credibility. The rational part of reliability is the repeated experience of links between promises and action (you do what you say). This is done formally by meeting due dates, increased quality levels, increased sales, etc. but also seen less formally in how long it takes someone to return a phone call, whether meetings are cancelled or kept, quality and timeliness of day-to-day communications, etc. The emotional side of reliability is revealed when things

are done in a way the client prefers, or to which they are accustomed. We unconsciously form opinions about someone's reliability by the extent to which they seem to anticipate our own habits, expectations, routines, and quirks. Thus, reliability in an emotional sense is the repeated experience of expectations fulfilled (see the importance of personality profiling in quickly revealing someone's personality expectations?). Consistency (rational reliability) in terms of the client's preferences (emotional reliability)

A few ways to enhance Reliability:

1. Make specific commitments to your client around small things (e.g. finding information on topic discussed by Monday) and delivering on it, quietly and on-time.
2. Send meeting materials in advance.
3. Make sure meetings have clear goals, not just agendas, and ensure goals are met.
4. Use the client's terminology.
5. Review agendas with client before meetings. They should have a say in how the time will be spent.
6. Reconfirm scheduled events before they happen.

INTIMACY

Intimacy and self-orientation are the most effective source of differentiation in trustworthiness. People trust those with whom they are willing to talk about difficult agendas (intimacy), and those who demonstrate that they care (low self-orientation).

Intimacy is needed to make a connection to the interior, emotional state of the client. It does not mean that private lives necessarily get shared. What it does mean is that things personal, related to the issues at hand, get shared. Intimacy is about emotional closeness concerning the issues at hand. It's a game of mutually increasing risk. One party offers a piece of himself or herself and the other party either responds (deepening intimacy) or they don't (drawing an intimacy line). Trying to establish intimacy too soon in the client relationship can backfire. It is the scariest part of trust because it is about who we are more than any other aspect of trust. It requires courage. Many assume intimacy takes the longest to develop but when done well, it is potentially the least time dependent.

A few ways to enhance Intimacy:

1. Ask questions they haven't previously heard from an integrated marketing firm.
2. When step out to create intimacy, make sure you give the client a way not to answer.
3. Practice phrasing. Think or even write down 2 or 3 ways to ask a difficult question.
4. Don't overrate the downside risk. Is saying something going to risk the business or just put us in a place of personal discomfort?
5. One of you has to make the first move. It should be you!

SELF-ORIENTATION

There is no greater source of distrust than account service people who appear to be more interested in themselves than in trying to be of service to the client.

Self-orientation covers anything that keeps us from focusing on our client. Things like a desire to jump to the solution, a desire to always be right, fear of not knowing what to do or say next, fear of rejection, etc. can keep us preoccupied with our own agenda and it will directly reduce trust.

Clients recognize excessive self-orientation through such things as:

1. A tendency to relate stories to ourselves
2. A need to finish the clients sentences for them

3. A need to fill empty spaces in conversations
4. An inability to provide a direct answer to a direct question.
5. An unwillingness to say we don't know
6. Name dropping
7. Always wanting to have the last word.
8. Putting forth ideas on solutions before fully understanding the client's situation.

A few ways to demonstrate low self-orientation:

1. Let the client fill the empty spaces in conversations.
2. Ask the client to talk about what's behind an issue.
3. Use open-ended questions.
4. Focus on defining the problem, not guessing the solution.
5. Reflective listening, summarizing what we've heard to make sure we heard correctly what was said and intended.
6. Saying you don't know when you don't know.
7. Taking most of the responsibility for failed communications.
8. Think about how you would help your client if you were completely responsible for this person's future success. Make their concerns your concerns.
9. Be honest with yourself. If you have little interest in the work, it is almost inevitable that you will focus more on yourself.

Low self-orientation is all about the intensity of your commitment to help your client.

QUANTIFYING TRUST

Ok, now for the numbers:

Stating the obvious, new clients should have lower numbers than existing clients

In the new client case we might rate the client's initial perception of your credibility as a 6 (above average) on a scale of 1 to 10, probably based on reputation and the slight experience with Jennifer. Reliability, which typically takes longer to establish might be somewhere around 3, and intimacy, which would not be far along at this point might be a 3. Self-orientation would be high since in sales situations we typically believe the other party is looking after #1. So the self-orientation score might be an 8. Low self-orientation is very rarely the starting assumption.

$$6+3+3=12$$

$$12/8 = 1.5$$

So with most new clients we have lots of work to do in the trust area.

With existing clients the score usually looks more like this:

$$\text{Credibility} = 7$$

$$\text{Reliability} = 8$$

$$\text{Intimacy} = 5$$

$$\text{Self-orientation} = 4$$

$$7+8+5=20$$

$$20/4=5$$

Perfection would be a score of 30. You'll never get there though you should try.

A more realistic goal is between 12 and 20. Remember the score changes as the relationship and the type of projects change. Also, remember that with intimacy, the client may limit how close you get so your score may never be above average. The most important area to focus on is self-orientation.

For example, let's say you have a good client and you see the opportunity to pitch a new project to the client. This new project would involve new people in an area you haven't worked in before with that client. You boldly ask for the new project without setting the stage in terms of the client's best interest. The trust equation of the existing relationship is a 10 but let's look at how pitching this new project this way would affect the relationship.

Credibility: 4 The current account service person's credibility is low because she has to bring someone new into the relationship. The new person's credibility is only gotten from the current account service person's testimonial, whose motives may seem mixed.

Reliability: 2 No track record regarding new area or new person

Intimacy: 3 Broadened agenda without involving the client. No questions asked, no real discussion of the issue, just a big pitch.

Self-orientation: 8 All the talk is about what we can do for the client, no indication of a focus on the client's perspective or personal issues.

Trust score = 1.13

So you can see how quickly a good client can be lost if you take your eye off the trust ball.

On the other hand if trust is well built...

1. The client comes to rely on you for advice in broader areas beyond your base technical expertise
2. The client understands the value you provide and doesn't focus as much on price (trust and profitability go hand in hand)
3. You are given greater leeway to make mistakes (not careless errors but honest mistakes)
4. The client will give you a more complete picture of their true situation
5. The client will refer you to other potential clients

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