

Overview of Trust

The ability to gain and keep trust is a vital factor in being able to influence others. Research has shown, time and time again, that trust is always a contributing factor in the ability to influence others. When a person trusts you, that trust alone can motivate them to accept your message. On the flip side, if people don't trust you, all the evidence, reasoning, facts or figures in the world won't get them to budge in their resistance.

Trust can be an ambiguous concept, but certain things are quite clear: 1) You can't get others to trust you unless you first trust yourself; and 2) Your message will not be convincing to others unless it's convincing to you. Whenever someone tries to influence us, in our minds we ask ourselves, "Can I trust this person? Do I believe him? Is she really concerned about me?" We are less likely to be influenced if we sense that the person who is trying to persuade us is driven solely by self-interest.

The Five C's of Trust, as listed above, will all help you gain the trust you need to have lasting influence. Let me use a story to illustrate how these elements work in tandem. Imagine you're experiencing extreme tooth pain. You've put off going to the dentist as long as possible, but now nature's telling you your time has run out. You recently relocated, so your previous dentist is 2,000 miles away and no longer an option. You ask your new friends and neighbors about their dentists and you get the following five responses:

1. "My dentist has great character. He is one of the most honest people I know. He's not very competent, though. I heard he's famous for sticking the needle completely through your cheek."

Would you go to this dentist?

2. "My dentist is one of the top dentists in the state. He's extremely competent, but kind of a crook. He has no character. He's been caught a few times over-billing his patients and he also sometimes fills more cavities than you actually have."

Would you go to this dentist?

3. “My dentist doesn’t have much confidence in his work. One time he said to me, ‘I’ve never been very good at reading x-rays. I feel unsure about whether I should give you a root canal or just leave the tooth alone. Look at this x-ray and tell me what you think.’”

Would you go to this dentist?

4. “I’m not sure my dentist is licensed. I didn’t see any degree or diplomas on his wall, and no one seems to know where he went to school. His office doesn’t have the latest equipment. He even asked me to pay cash instead of writing a check. He has no credibility in my book.”

Would you go to this dentist?

5. “My dentist is a nice guy, but he doesn’t keep his stories straight. Congruency and consistency are not his strong suits. Last year, he said I’d probably have to get a root canal on my molar the next time I came in. When I came back, I asked him about the root canal on my molar, and he said, ‘You don’t need a root canal on that tooth. Who told you that?’”

Would you go to this dentist?

I’m sure you would spend more time trying to find a dentist who met all five criteria before you’d resort to one who lacked one of the Five C’s of Trust. A deep and lasting sense of trust will not exist without all five trust characteristics being present. We know that if a person is lacking in just one of these areas, it will affect every aspect of her/his ability to build, gain and maintain trust.

