



The Speed of Trust

The One Thing That Changes Everything

Stephen M.R. Covey and Rebecca R. Merrill
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Rating

8 9 Applicability
6 Innovation
7 Style

Focus

Leadership & Management

- Strategy
- Sales & Marketing
- Finance
- Human Resources
- IT, Production & Logistics
- Career & Self-Development
- Small Business
- Economics & Politics
- Industries
- Global Business
- Concepts & Trends

Take-Aways

- Trust is universally necessary and productive.
- Distrust is costly to businesses, like a burdensome surtax.
- Low-trust organizations tend to be bureaucratic and political.
- High-trust organizations tend to be collaborative, innovative, creative and effective.
- The "Four Cores of Credibility" are integrity, intent, capability and results.
- The "13 Behaviors" are ways to act that express and develop trust.
- Trust moves outward in rippling waves, from "self-trust" through trust in society.
- Trusting others is a way to build trust, but trust is not gullibility. Exercise good judgment when you decide whom to trust and how much.
- You can repair broken trust and make it even stronger than the original trust.
- When others break trust with you, be slow to judge and quick to forgive.

Relevance

What You Will Learn

In this summary, you will learn: 1) Why trust is important to companies and families; 2) How to act to develop trust; and 3) What to do when trust is broken.

Review

Stephen M.R. Covey's book provides a framework for understanding trust, and a set of guidelines for building and restoring trust. Abundant anecdotes illustrate its lessons. An impressive array of business leaders, gurus and authorities lent their names to blurbs for this book, most of them endorsing the proposition that trust is good for the bottom line of any business. It would be hard to argue with that. If the book's style reminds you of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, there's a reason. The author is the son of *7 Habits*' guru Stephen R. Covey, and the same writer, Rebecca R. Merrill, was involved in both books. While this solid book may not be quite as intensely focused as *7 Habits* (but then, what is?), *getAbstract* recommends it to readers seeking confirmation of perennial truths about the importance of trust and its application in business.

Summary

"Contrary to what most people believe, trust is not some soft, illusive quality that you either have or you don't; rather, trust is a pragmatic, tangible, actionable asset that you can create - much faster than you probably think possible."

"When trust is high, the dividend you receive is like a performance multiplier, elevating and improving every dimension of your organization and your life."

The Value of Trust

Trust is necessary to the credibility – and, therefore, the empowerment – of any organization, economy or human relationship. People who work in an atmosphere of trust can collaborate productively, so things get done faster and at lower cost. Without trust, however, business slows down and costs rise. When trust is absent, people keep trying to protect themselves against those whom they cannot trust. They insist on getting everything in writing because they cannot believe what people say and they engage in other steps whose only function is to compensate for lack of trust. The absence of trust is like a tax on a business. The presence of trust is like a dividend.

"Character and competence" underlie trust. Character includes integrity, motivation and the right attitude. Competence includes skills, capabilities, work habits and products. A competent yet dishonest person is untrustworthy; so is an honest but incompetent person.

Trust can be built, broken and restored. Those who speak and act in ways that build trust pursue it as a distinct purpose. They are attuned to the "five waves of trust," which move outward among people, like the ripples on a pond after a tossed pebble hits the surface.

"Self-trust" – To trust or be trusted by others, you must be able to trust yourself.

"Relationship trust" – Consistently build and establish trust in your relationships. Consistency is a fundamental principle of **"The 13 Behaviors."**

"Stakeholder trust" – Is made up of the following three waves:

- **"Organizational trust"** – This involves trust in organizations and their sub-units, not only businesses, but also nonprofit, governmental and educational institutions.
- **"Market trust"** – Reputation supports brands, which depend upon the market's trust.
- **"Societal trust"** – This requires directly or indirectly creating value for society.

"Self-Trust"

Credibility is the foundation of self-trust. For others to believe in you, you must be able to believe in yourself. Little things matter. For example, very few people keep their New Year's resolutions. They make and break them year after year. Similarly, many adults make promises or threats (if you don't clean up your room, you'll get no dessert) to children and do not follow through. These little breaches of trust compound over time. When people break their commitments to themselves or others, they create distrust. Your personal credibility is based upon four "core" attributes:

1. **"Integrity"** – This is not merely a synonym for honesty. Integrity calls for saying what you mean, meaning what you say and doing what you commit to do. Honoring your commitments to yourself is fundamental to integrity. Only make commitments to yourself and others that you can and will keep. Be true to your values.
2. **"Intent"** – Intent is what you aim to do. Other people may read or misread your intent, taking their cues from your behavior. Your motives and agenda provide the background to your behavior. To improve your intentions, you need a clear, accurate understanding of your motivation. To clarify your motives, use the "five whys" process first developed in the 1970s for the Toyota Production System. Ask why you want or don't want something, and then ask why that is your answer. Do this five times to derive a much clearer understanding of your motives. Once you understand your motives, declare them. Making your motives and intent clear builds trust.
3. **"Capabilities"** – The elements of the "TASKS" acronym (talents, attitudes, skills, knowledge and style) define capabilities. Understand your capabilities and match them to your job. Michael Jordan was a great basketball player, but a mediocre baseball player. Tiger Woods works continually on improving his golf swing.
4. **"Results"** – The way you get results matters as much as the results you get. Even negative results can help you improve your self-understanding and competence, if you study how you got those results. Being responsible for your results, including communicating them to others, gives you perseverance and a winning mindset.

"The 13 Behaviors" of "Relationship Trust"

Thirteen behaviors grow from the four core attributes of credibility. They are rooted in fundamental principles of "relationship trust," and are evident in the behavior of trusted leaders worldwide. Anyone can implement these behaviors and they are universally appropriate. How you behave can add to or subtract from how much people trust you, your intangible "trust accounts." Every relationship has a trust account for every person in it; each account lists the total trust each person perceives in each relationship.

1. **"Talk straight"** – Say what you mean; mean what you say. Don't beat around the bush, flatter or equivocate. One study says that most employees think bosses communicate dishonestly, for example by spinning and posing, which erodes trust. Straight talk does not mean brutal or hurtful language. It means clarity, integrity and communication.
2. **"Demonstrate respect"** – Little things matter greatly. For example, knowing and using the names of people who perform menial jobs for you demonstrates respect. Contemporary entertainment uses disrespect as a fulcrum for comedy, which may desensitize viewers to the importance of being respectful. Reflect on how you show respect for others. Do small things that acknowledge and express respect and appreciation. Be especially respectful of those who can't help you get what you want.
3. **"Create transparency"** – At a minimum, do not work in the dark; do not cover up; do not do one thing in public and another in private. American Airlines CEO Donald Carty destroyed his employees' trust in him by asking their unions to make wage

"People want to be trusted. They respond to trust. They thrive on trust."

"Credibility is something we can do something about. We can choose to increase the self-trust that flows from the inside out and affects every dimension of our lives - and the lives of others."

"There is absolutely nothing you can do that will increase integrity faster than learning how to make and keep commitments to yourself."

"Say what you're going to do, then do what you say you're going to do."

“When we believe people truly are acting in our best interest, we tend to trust them. When we believe that they are not acting in our best interest, we do not trust them. It's that simple.”

“Leaving the right impression means communicating so clearly that you cannot be misunderstood.”

“Don't assume that expectations are clear or shared.”

concessions, while secretly establishing a special fund to guarantee top executives' pensions. His successor, Gerard Arpey, overcame this poisonous legacy of distrust by making sure that the union was fully aware of the company's finances and management challenges. Create transparency by being truthful, and disclosing your intentions openly and verifiably.

4. **"Right wrongs"** – When you break trust, repair the damage. Make sure that people know that you are really trying to fix what you have broken, and not just trying to cover up, excuse yourself or justify your actions. Forgive others and be humble.
5. **"Show loyalty"** – Give others credit for what they have done, both to their faces and behind their backs. Giving people credit builds trust. Backbiting, on the other hand, destroys trust. It is easy for leaders to point fingers, but the leader who accepts responsibility, instead of blaming subordinates, builds enormous amounts of trust.
6. **"Deliver results"** – A consistent track record of results establishes trust, and will allow you more flexibility and freedom in a relationship. However, you must know what results the other party in the relationship expects you to deliver. Then, you must commit only to realistic results. When you commit, deliver results – not excuses.
7. **"Get better"** – Make a commitment to improve yourself, then act to fulfill that commitment, consistently. Steady improvement builds your capabilities, which are essential to trust, so continuous improvement builds trust. See your mistakes as a form of feedback and learn from them. Thank people for criticism and keep building; always remember that the capabilities you have today may be inadequate tomorrow.
8. **"Confront reality"** – Have the courage to face hard facts. Ignoring them doesn't change the facts; it only destroys trust. Sometimes, refusing to face and frankly describe reality demonstrates disrespect for the people around you. Show others respect by being honest about tough issues and by bringing out the truths that others may be afraid to voice.
9. **"Clarify expectations"** – At home or work, ambiguous or unclear expectations can destroy trust. One party may believe that he or she is meeting or exceeding anticipated goals, while the other party may disagree. To avoid this, make everyone's expectations crystal clear. At work, write project agreements. After conversations, double-check to ensure that everyone has heard and agreed to the same thing. At home, share written objectives with your spouse or children, so everyone can work toward the same goals.
10. **"Practice accountability"** – Hold yourself and others accountable. Pay attention to what you think and say, and stop any tendency to blame others. At work, hold people accountable. Establish accountability for responsibilities at home.
11. **"Listen first"** – When you are talking, you are not listening. Nor are you listening when you spend time thinking about what you are going to say next. Listening demonstrates respect and provides the knowledge you need to make the best possible decisions. Learn to listen for things that people aren't saying explicitly. Learn to listen to yourself.
12. **"Keep commitments"** – The more commitments you make and keep, the more trust you build. Of course, commitments need to be realistic – unrealistic commitments get broken, which destroys trust. If it becomes clear that you cannot honor a commitment, take the initiative as soon as you can and prepare the other party for a renegotiation. Be as strict and consistent about your commitments at home as you are about commitments at work.
13. **"Extend trust"** – Build trust in a relationship by trusting the others involved. When others seem not to trust you, ask yourself if you trust them. Trust sows trust in business and at home. Suspicion and micromanagement poison trust. Be prudent in your trust. Trust involves risk, but well-managed risk leads to rewards.

"Stakeholder Trust"

The final waves of trust reach out to different levels of stakeholders:

- **"Organizational Trust"** – In high-trust organizations, people share information, tolerate mistakes, demonstrate loyalty, innovate, create, communicate authentically and generally function productively. In low-trust organizations, people may be so tied up in red tape that they neither enjoy their work nor work well. Low-trust organizations typically face redundant management, bureaucracy, destructive politics, low employee engagement and even fraud, as well as high turnover among employees, customers and suppliers. High-trust organizations reap dividends of value growth, innovation, collaboration, partnering, smooth execution and high loyalty. A family is also a kind of organization and is covered by the same principles of trust.
- **"Market trust"** – A brand is primarily a product of trust. People make purchase decisions based on the degree of trust they have in a company. Other stakeholders, similarly, can build or destroy a company's value. The Edelman Trust Barometer measures trust in brands. Results show that currently, U.S. brands enjoy less trust in Europe than in the United States. Chinese brands are also discounted because of distrust. The 13 behaviors outlined above can help companies build brand strength and economic value. For this purpose, the key behaviors are to talk straight, create transparency and listen first.
- **"Societal Trust"** – Trust is so important to our society that, frequently, people take it for granted. In societies characterized by high trust, people have more opportunities to collaborate and cooperate, and consequently they have more economic choices. Contribution is the *sine qua non* of societal trust. Such leaders as Bill Gates and Oprah Winfrey seem to understand the importance of helping others. *Business Ethics* magazine has recognized the corporate integrity of leading companies, including Intel, General Mills, Texas Instruments and Wells Fargo. Indeed, contributing to society is now considered an essential part of business – not an add-on or an option. In this era of global citizenship, companies need to create trust.

"Hold yourself accountable. Hold others accountable. Take responsibility for results."

"Low trust breeds bureaucracy, and bureaucracy breeds low trust. In low-trust organizations, bureaucracy is everywhere."

"I'll never forget what one CEO said about the risk of investing in a focused training initiative for his company. Someone asked him, 'What if you train everyone and they all leave?' He responded, 'What if we don't train them and they all stay?'"

Smart Trust and Broken Trust

Various tools can help you decide where to place your trust. For instance, the "Smart Trust™" matrix gives you criteria you can use to determine whom to trust and how much. This matrix has four quadrants: gullibility, judgment, indecision and suspicion. The sweet spot on the matrix is the second quadrant, judgment.

Trust is not a constant. You can build it through the four cores and the 13 behaviors, and you can use these measures to repair it if it's broken. In fact, broken trust can present a challenge that leads to an even stronger level of renewed trust. When you break trust, first you must repair your trust in yourself by consistently practicing trustworthy behavior. Your effort to live the 13 behaviors may also help you to do what is most important when others break trust with you: refrain from rash judgment and be forgiving.

About the Authors

Stephen M. R. Covey is co-founder and CEO of CoveyLink, a leadership consultancy. **Rebecca R. Merrill** is the co-author of *Life Matters* and *Connections* (with Roger Merrill) and of *First Things First* (with Merrill and Stephen R. Covey).