

How to (and How Not to!) Build Trust with Builders

by Darl Williams

Trust is critical in customer relationships. With that in mind, ask yourself this question: Are you sure that everyone you come in contact with trusts you -- without a doubt? If your answer is somewhat tentative, consider using the following tips to help you build trust and develop stronger relationships.

- **Understand the business.** The more you understand the builder's business, the more the builder will trust you.
- **Speak the language.** Do you know the various industry terminologies, from finance to construction? Your prospective customer should be thinking, *"This person knows my industry!"*
- **Ask thought-provoking questions.** Probing questions look below the surface and seek answers to important issues. We trust people who make us think.
- **Do what you say you will do.** Follow through on even the smallest commitments. Beat deadlines if at all possible.
- **Take quick and full responsibility.** Mistakes happen. Straight talk and candor generates trust during this kind of situation.
- **Share and respect each other's values.** Do you cheer for the same football team? Do you share the same political views? When we know where people are coming from, it's easier to build trust.
- **Show you care.** Send a card and celebrate your builder's special day.

What Not to Do

Here are five things to avoid so you can continue to build and retain trust with your accounts:

- **Don't exaggerate!** Nothing will destroy hard-earned credibility faster than exaggeration. Once you stretch the truth about anything, people will generalize and presume that you always do so. They will discount what you say and do. Tell it like it is, period!
- **Don't be afraid to use emotion!** Aristotle said no appeal to logic is ever as good as the appeal to emotion. We trust those who elicit emotional bonds, between people -- and likewise between products.
- **Don't ask a good question and then be a poor listener.** You have to learn how to give your undivided attention to the builder or contract distributor. Maintain eye contact and nod to indicate you are hearing what is being said.
- **Don't be afraid to have an uncomfortable situation.** If you need to stand up for your company or for your product because it's the right thing to do, then do it. While the short-term impact of a disagreement may be uncomfortable, in the long run, you'll earn respect for it. People trust people who have convictions.
- **Don't be afraid to step up and admit if you or your company makes a mistake.** The bigger the mistake, the more trust you'll gain for stepping up to the plate and taking responsibility for it.

Someone once said, "Trust is not what we say when someone is listening. Trust depends on what we do when no one is watching."

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