

Building the Pillar of Trust

by Robert Porter Lynch © 2008

What is Trust?

At a minimal level, trust is the *absence of fear* in a relationship: it's knowing that you won't intentionally hurt me.

But at a higher level, it's a *reliance* -- knowing that:

- you will be there for me when I need you
- you won't sacrifice me for your self interest
- you can be counted on to work for my best interests as well as yours
- ultimately I will be better off from having trusted you

The High Cost of Distrust

Distrust is one of the most insidious and corrosive forces in any relationship, whether it be between two people, within a family, or in a team.

Distrust saps people's energies, disorients them from focusing on important issues, and causes innumerable maneuvers to protect them, including over-burdensome contracts, litigation, fruitless blaming, escalations, and a never-ending stream of other protectionist fervor.

Trust is the Foundation of All Cooperative Relationships

Trust Building

Trust has a major impact on a person's well-being and their self image. Without trust, relationships fail, period.

Trust is the hallmark of the personal relationships between the people who constitute any team. Without this trust, no legal agreement, no prenuptial agreement, no structure, and no process can bring joy, happiness, contentment, or synergy.

Trust is the glue that binds personal relationships and the grease that prevents frictional differences from becoming fractious.

What Makes a Great Relationship?

When examining *great* relationships, there appear to be four things that form the foundation of the relationship:

1. **Love** – for intimate, passionate relationships, this is obviously an essential ingredient. However, when love is the sole basis of the relationship, the relationship will flounder, fall apart, or fracture easily.
2. **Trust** – People must have a strong trust in each other. Often they will say: "I trust my partner completely, and would put my life in their trust."
3. **Belief** – To have a beautiful relationship, I must *believe* in you, and you must *believe* in me. Without an abiding belief in who you are yourself, and who and what the other person represents, it is hard to have a sustainable relationship.
4. **Wholeness** – To have a relationship that is mutual, each person must be whole enough themselves to give to the other person without feeling depleted or drained by the act of giving.

The Power of Trust

In a world filled with distrust, those who can truly trust each other thus spawn the possibility of having a breakthrough in their relationships, because together they can co-create, be spontaneous, and contribute to each other's well being.

What's more, trust and integrity enhance creativity, build teamwork, reduce unnecessary fear, and make the relationship more fun, thereby building human energy.

Elements of Trust

Trust is the sacred cloth of all relationships – personal, family, friendships, and business; a cloth whose fabric is composed of four interwoven threads:

1. **Values**
2. **Integrity**
3. **Mutuality**
4. **Commitment**

1. **Values:** Values are an essential element of our trust foundation. By adhering to them, you will set the course for building a strong relationship with those you encounter in your life. The values to cherish – and be alert for in others – are;
 - **Honor:** The idea of honor is powerful, but seldom appreciated in today's modern world. Honor means you will keep true to your values and value others – your friends, your teammates, your family. Honor means you will do nothing to dishonor another person, you can be trusted and will not tolerate back-stabbing, sniping, and behavior that tears the team apart.
 - **Openness:** Being open means being open to new ideas, open to constructive feedback, open about your intentions and goals, open to making things happen in ways not yet explored. People who are open tend to be co-creative; closed people are stuck.



- **Compassion:** Having a trusting relationship means you care about the other person and their team or family. Win-Lose relationships lack compassion and sensitivity, becoming cold, over-bearing, and filled with the polarity of blame and attack.
 - **Alignment of Priorities:** Most Win-Lose relationships are so filled with positioning and posturing that no one is focusing on how to ensure priorities are clearly aligned. Synergistic relationships take the time to ensure that priorities are aligned. One characteristic of dysfunctional relationships is typically priorities are not aligned between the players.
 - **Respect of Differences:** The French have a wonderful saying: "Vive la difference!" meaning "differences bring us life and vitality." This attitude is the foundation of respect, but more – it gives us the place to begin the co-creative process.
2. **Integrity:** Integrity means you are what you say you are, that your word is your bond, and you will do what you say you will. Integrity is not easy, and often it's painful. But without integrity, people won't trust you.

Integrity is more than just being honest or trustworthy; it means being true to oneself, to one's deepest values; and the benefits are ultimately both a divine blessing and a liberating freedom.

"Integrity resides in the ability to constitute yourself as your word. As such it is a home, an anchor, a self-generated and continuing commitment to honor your word -- despite contrary thoughts and feelings if need be. It is a consistency of being, speaking and acting that shapes who you are -- to yourself and to others."

Anonymous

Integrity becomes a divine gift by enabling us to touch the deepest yearnings of others around us, thus creating a new set of possibilities filled with hope and inspiration. Integrity is thus expansive, allowing us to become more than ourselves, to create with others, to empower others. Expectations are natural in any relationship; integrity is about meeting people's expectations about you – or setting the record straight early on when an expectation is unreasonable or unrealistic.

Integrity liberates us to live our relationships forward into the future, enabling us to experience the present moment cleanly and without fear that our past will undermine us, corrode our vision, and erode our energy.

The lack of integrity inevitably forces one to look back over one's shoulder, haunted by a past filled with historic baggage

which will harbor tomorrow's illness, or threaten to destroy one's false illusions that were invented to disguise the sordid realities of a disingenuous life.

Several of the components of integrity include:

- **Certainty:** Doubt and ambiguity erode trust. In times of change, people around you must be certain that you will be there for them when you are needed.
 - **Predictability:** This goes hand in glove with certainty. Predictability means someone knows they can count on you to act in a rational, enthused, and collaborative manner, no matter what the conditions of adversity.
 - **Honesty:** An honest person is hard to find. Honest people speak the truth, shun deception, and account for themselves as accurately as possible. Deception and the creation of illusion are not part of the honest person's repertoire.
 - **Walk the Talk:** Congruity – constituting yourself as your word and deed is essential to your integrity. Otherwise you are not believable as a person.
3. **Mutuality:** Being in something together, for the "greater good of the whole" is the fundamental premise behind mutuality.

We stand together, you for me, me for you, us united together to create more than we could independently.

Mutuality embodies the idea that we must treat each other as teammates, fairly, equally, justly, and honorably. We will not polarize into "it's my way or the highway," nor will we tolerate double standards.

The rule of "do unto others as you would have done unto you" is essential to building trust for relationships to proceed powerfully. Without mutuality, trust will be shallow and difficult to achieve.

Unilateral decision-making without consideration of the consequences to the other party is taboo in a mutual arrangement.

Mutuality embraces these fundamentals:

- **Win-Win:** This is not just a point of view; it is a state-of-mind, a core value, and a goal to be achieved. Win-Win means you are not going to sacrifice the other person to achieve your goals

- both must come out winners. Win-Win is the minimum boundary of acceptable relationship behavior that will continue to build a foundation of trust.
- **Reciprocity:** Co-creation is based on sharing of ideas, information, opportunities, insights, resources, and capabilities. Reciprocity builds possibilities, which create the expansion of knowledge and the creation of more, thus impacting the future and destiny of our relationship.
 - **Shared Risk-Reward:** Sharing risks and rewards links two parties together because each has “skin in the game.” By fairly sharing risks and rewards, both become mutually committed to a joint outcome.
 - **Fairness & Flexibility:** The “fairness” doctrine is an essential underpinning to mutuality. Always attempt to be fair and expect fairness in return. Fairness may be relative to the circumstances. What is fair today may not be fair next year. For example, if I make a commitment to go on an expensive vacation, then lose my job or become terribly ill, then conditions have changed dramatically; fairness demands a reexamination of the terms.
 - **Communications:** Two-way communications, with clear listening and mutual exchange of ideas is essential. When problems arise, using the appropriate form of communications is essential. For example, use of emails to solve urgent problems is not appropriate in most circumstances.
4. **Commitment:** Commitment is measure of desire, motivation, and integrity to honoring promises and intentions. Without it, there can be no trust.

Building trust in a relationship comes not from golf games and dining together. It's built in the heart, and played on the field of deeds; it's held in the commitment to transform values and beliefs into concrete actions, it's founded on the commitments to the integrity of one's word.

Trust is knowing you won't be intentionally hurt by your partner in times of adversity

Trust and Integrity are but hollow

concepts until vigorous commitments are put into place. For it is with commitment we transform promise into reality by words that reflect intentions, and actions which speak louder than words. Commitment is making the time when there is none; the daily triumph of vision over skepticism, of conviction over fear, of cohesiveness in the face of adversity. Commitment is the willingness to take risks, even when past experience calls for

caution. Commitment is crossing the chasm of fear and danger to meet the needs and hopes of your partner.

Commitment is the willingness to look from the past into future possibilities; the willingness to move enough to release anger and hurt to enable our rising to a higher level, seeking to turn breakdowns into breakthroughs. Commitment is the power to transform the reality of relationships. Commitment is the willingness to take the leap of faith when there is little justifying evidence, because one believes in the other's values and integrity. It is from this loyalty, commitment, and integrity that relationships create a camaraderie that lasts for years.

- **Dedication:** Knowing that you are dedicated to a mutual endeavor is a powerful trust builder. When people are dedicated to a cause, a vision, a breakthrough, it is contagious. This is a sign of reliability and honor.
- **Competency:** Building a personal competency is also a sign of our commitment and reliability. If we make a commitment to fix the plumbing, but have never learned to use a wrench, then the commitment is hollow. If we make a commitment to go ball-room dancing, but don't know the difference between a rumba and a waltz, the commitment is phony.
- **Dependability:** When we can be depended upon, particularly in times of adversity, pressure, or stress we will be trusted, and more mutual opportunities will manifest.
- **Focus:** The ability to stay centered on the target, to keep critical priorities in focus, and to eliminate superficial distractions is essential to trust-building. People who lose focus get scattered, diluted, and lose concentration. Focus on what needs to be done to succeed, not peripheral minutiae.
- **Discipline:** Creating synergy is a discipline that requires practice, understanding of the concepts, and constant attention. People who are professionals at the art of life are trusted because they are disciplined at their art and craft.

Building Trust through Joint Operating Principles

A strong, enduring, trustful relationship can be bonded by co-creating a strong set of joint operating principles. These operating principles then form the foundation of interaction, joint decision-making and inter-personal behavior. Below is an example of joint operating principles that were co-created by a condominium group that was tearing itself apart with strife and discord:

Principles of Cooperation As a Member of our Condominium Community,
I hereby pledge to:

- 1. Build a Spirit of Cooperation among our Community**
 - Work for the Greater Good: “All for One, One for All”
 - From Chaos Seek Unity, From Discord Find Harmony
 - Tolerate No Divisiveness, No Polarization, No Back-Biting
- 2. Engage & Embrace all Members with Respect**
 - Respect Everyone’s Need for Solitude, Peace, and Tranquility
 - Respect and Listen to those with a Different View
 - Seek Always to Bring Out the Best in Others
- 3. Build Relationships based on Trust, Integrity, and Ethics**
 - Speak only the Truth, Otherwise be Silent
 - Give People the Benefit of the Doubt
 - When wrong, Acknowledge, Apologize, then take Corrective Action
- 4. Speak Only the Language of Cooperation:**
 - Seek Solutions, Not Blame
 - Neither Speak nor Spread any Gossip
 - Forgive those who Apologize for their Transgressions
- 5. Disagree without being Disagreeable**
 - Be Critical without Criticizing
 - Never Threaten, Attack Issues but not People
 - Do whatever Can Be Done, and Gracefully Accept what Can't.
- 6. Try to Bring a Spirit of Joy to All**
 - Dwell Not in Negativity
 - Complain Not about Petty Things
 - Receive Everyone with a Cheerful Face and Open Arms
- 7. Keep a Positive and Caring Attitude**
 - Listen with Empathy and Compassion
 - Hold our Responsibilities as Dearly as our Rights
 - Respect the Minority’s Needs, even though the Majority Rule
- 8. Live by the Spirit, not just the Letter, of the By-Laws**
 - Live with the Intention of Peace & Harmony
 - Live to Create Advantage for Everyone, not take advantage for yourself
 - Respect the Law for the Guidance it gives,
not for loopholes that may create an advantage for one over others

Fear of Betrayal

The noble quest for co-creation and synergy is, all-too-often, thwarted by betrayal (even the fear of betrayal, which is one of our deepest fears, most tormented anxieties, and horribly painful lessons is often enough to make the brave seek protection).

To attain synergy, it’s essential to understand its polar opposite – the fear of betrayal. For it is the juxtaposing of these two themes – betrayal and synergy -- that has created on the one

hand: wars, divorce, political upheaval, and tyranny, and on the other hand: civilization, technological innovation, institutions of commerce, healing, and learning, and even transcendental glory.

The interplay between the “Quest for Synergy” and the “[Fear of Betrayal](#)” is so profoundly engrained in our society’s institutions as to be nearly invisible. To discover its roots, however, one needs only to examine the archetypal sources that are so imbedded and intertwined in our society. Examining the historical records will cast great light on early civilization’s yearning to attain the Quest and battle the Fear.

How to Recover when Trust is Destroyed

Trust can be destroyed far faster than it takes to build it. If someone transgresses the boundaries of trust, it is essential to use the “triple A” approach:

- **Acknowledge**
- **Apologize**
- **Act**

High Levels of Trust Enable:

- Very High Performance
- Greater Innovation, Creativity & Synergy
- Expansion of Possibilities
- Enhanced Problem Resolution
- Faster Action/Implementation and...

Make whatever corrections must be made to put the trust back in place. Do not make excuses or find fault, just fix it.

Spectrum of Trust

Our understanding and vision of trust is far more sophisticated and well defined in ranges of Distrust than in the ranges of positive trust. The spectrum below begins to illustrate the full range of thinking and behaviors associated with the “trust spectrum.”



Along this spectrum lies hideous destruction or resurrective possibility. Most relationships devolve into relative obscurity because the participants do not have an architecture to design the trust part of their relationship. All too often, the relationships stays in the middle zones of enlightened self-interest or safety. Maybe it is symbiotic (from the Greek: Sym—with, and Biosis – to live). Perhaps at times they share material possessions or share their bodies in love-making, but do they ever envision reaching into the highest form of trust where they engage in the synergistic (from the Greek: Syn – to join, and Energos – energies) process of co-creation?