

🎵 What's Trust Got To Do ... Got To Do With It 🎵

How to reduce negative emotions from trust in order to grow revenue.

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The inspiration for this article comes from the 1984 Grammy Award winning song “What’s love got to do with it” as performed by the ageless Tina Turner.

There’s a line in the song that declares love to be a “second hand emotion.” I don’t know what the song’s authors meant by that phrase but I do want to use it to segue into the emotional role that **trust** – a “first hand reaction” – usually plays in business.

If someone were to call you untrustworthy, there’s a high likelihood that you would have an emotional, negative reaction. From our earliest days in the schoolyard, we are taught to always tell the truth so that others will trust us – recall the allegories: “The boy who cried wolf,” “Pinocchio” and the (untrue) legend of George Washington chopping down the cherry tree.

Can you imagine how viscerally upset your mother would be to learn that her child can’t be trusted?

The common understanding of trust is that it is a moral judgement of someone’s character and truthfulness. “I’d trust you with my life” as one might emotionally declare to a close confidant.

Zig Ziglar, the famous sales educator once said: “If people like you, they’ll listen to you but only if they trust you will they do business with you.”

So one purpose of this article is to bring forth an uncommon, perhaps more practical means to objectively examine trust in a business context (although it’ll work the same in your personal life).

Say you have a regular dentist that takes care of your teeth. Let’s also say you have a trusted auto mechanic that regularly services your car.

If I asked you if your dentist and auto mechanic were trustworthy, you might answer without hesitation: “Sure, that’s why I regularly give them my business.”

But if I asked you if you would trust your dentist to fix your car ... or ... worse yet, trust your auto mechanic to fix your teeth, the answer would be obviously – hell no!

So this immediately informs us that competence in the “domain of action” is at least one attribute of trust.

For example, when I first met my South American wife while she was living in her home country, she spoke no English. Fortunately, I spoke enough Spanish for her to trust me to teach her basic conversational English so that she could get along without me during her first few visits to the U.S.

After ten years of being together, eight of them living in the U.S., my wife’s level of competence has now surpassed my own when it comes to translating English for other Spanish natives.

However, if she needs to travel to, say, Korea, she cannot trust me to teach her even the simplest of phrases to get around safely. I am not trustworthy in that domain and either of us can easily declare it without any emotional reaction.

Try it for yourself. Repeat the following phrase a few times:

“I am not trustworthy to speak Korean [or whatever] as I am incompetent speaking that language.”

I bet the first time you said that, it felt uncomfortable. It’s uncommon to readily admit to a perceived weakness. As you repeat it, though, you’ll find your body’s emotional response diminish as your rational brain makes sense of it, especially when it’s a language you’re not expected to know anything about.

Now imagine saying it for something substantial.

“I cannot be trusted to ...

... repair my own car.

... fill a cavity in my tooth.

... complete a tax return by myself.

... satisfy this particular customer requirement.”

There are lots of things we cannot do. The key is to know what we don’t know and be comfortable declaring it to others when the occasion demands it.

Notice that we’ve now removed most of the emotionality from the discussion. We’re not expected to know everything, therefore, it’s simply a rational choice we’ve made to be competent in some domains and not others.

Now we need to extend this discussion to our company and ask:

- Am I competent to do what my employer has asked of me?
- Are we competent to bid and execute on this project?
- Can we “fake it ‘til we make it?”

More importantly, what actions should you take after such intellectual honesty if the answer is no? There’re only two options – take the time and energy to become competent or pay to have another do it for you.

Perhaps you can now observe that Competence in a particular domain of action is at least one crucial attribute of Trust. You might ask, are there others?

Returning to the example of our dentist, let’s imagine that she happens to be the most competent dentist that’s ever been licensed. How would we feel if her office was outfitted with equipment from the nearest rent-to-own dental supply house (if there is such a thing) and she’s working out of a trailer in an RV park? Would we trust her to be there for us a month from now when another tooth start acting up?

That implies there’s more to this trust song than mere competence. In his book “Conversations for Action – Instilling a Culture of Commitment in Working Relationships,” the internationally distinguished

philosopher, author and entrepreneur Dr. Fernando Flores created a framework for trust that includes four attributes – competence being just one.

I have found Fernando's distinctions extremely useful because they have allowed me to both recognize when trust has been broken and, most importantly, how to objectively rebuild it.

So now let me be sincere with you (one of the other attributes).

The secondary purpose of this article is to entice you to join an upcoming webinar my business partners and I will be hosting which will:

- Reveal the growing, pervasive levels of distrust in business relationships today.
- Frame the spectrum of trust from distrust to naiveté.
- Explore four objective attributes of trust.
- Produce new thinking on how to diagnose and rebuild broken trust.
- Provide opportunities to increase revenue through more trusted relationships.

The webinar is scheduled for Wednesday, December 13, 2017, 10am (U.S. Pacific Time).

You can register for the event here:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/2693212338019028738>