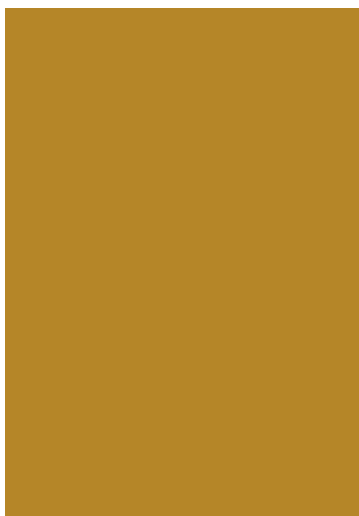


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Trust First, Then Competence

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In an information-cluttered world, people often size things up in order to cope. People's attention span gets shorter. In order to be noticed, we need to understand this behaviour of sizing things up.

In a study conducted by Amy Cuddy, Susan Fiske and Peter Glick on first impressions, they posit that people size others up based on these two questions:

1. Can I trust you?
2. Can I respect you?

The Oxford dictionary defines trust as the firm belief in the reliability, truth or ability of someone or something. It defines respect as a feeling of deep admiration for someone or something elicited by his or her abilities, qualities, or achievements.

Based on these definitions, the first question, "Can I trust you?", focuses on the reliability and warmth while the second question, "Can I respect you?", focuses on competence.

In the professional context, we believe that competence is a differentiator and use it to influence others.

When the trust is not yet established, this act may sometimes arouse suspicion and project us as manipulative. Focusing too much on

our competence at the start of any encounter can backfire. It is only when the trust is won, then our competence becomes a gift rather than a threat.

The most important factor is to demonstrate our care instead of competence. Show care by offering warmth and play up on our trustworthiness.

1. Do what you say and say what you do

One of the most important steps in building trust is to do what you say. Failure to do so will create hairline fracture in your trustworthiness. However small a promise may seem, once articulated, the other person may place great significance on it. Any lack of follow-through could be hugely disappointing. Be realistic. Do not over-promise, under-deliver. Congruence in words and actions is key.

2. Keep your emotions under control

To gain trust, you need to regulate your feelings and only express the appropriate ones. For example, you do not yell at your customers just because they started yelling at you first.

People who have high degree of emotional self-awareness

recognise how their feelings impact others. When they are feeling overwhelmed by their feelings, they are aware of the signals that they are sending and try to control them. They have the ability to wait till their emotions pass, thus allowing them to respond from a place of reason, rather than negative feelings. They are reflective, thoughtful, purposeful and disciplined.

3. Get to know others

Attend social and networking events. Be approachable: GST – greet, be sincere and give thanks. Engage in active listening.

Be on time for all meetings. Respond to correspondences with a high sense of urgency.

Look after other's best interest and try to solve their problems. Do not make excuses by quoting company policies or standard operating procedures.

In a competitive business environment, building trust first before delivering high quality performance is a winning move in forging life-long relationship and business. This is because the high performance from high competence further deepens the trust others will have of you.