Why You Need Trust to Do Business: Crash Course Business - Soft Skills #1

Crash Course: Business - Soft Skills
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Picture this: a businessperson. What do you see? A gray suit in an office job? A former advertising agent who quit her job to be a freelance YouTuber? Maybe you picture someone who looks like you. Or, maybe you don't. But, when it comes down to it, everyone's a businessperson. Like, have you ever decided on a chore schedule with roommates? That's negotiation. Have you told someone about yourself on a first date? I know, it's uncomfortable, but that's an elevator pitch. Have you organized a bar crawl and made sure your friends all got home in one piece? Well, congrats, because you've just planned an event and held a management position.

So, in this series, we're going to help you hone those day-to-day business skills, look for a job, get along with your co-workers, and really take your career to the next level. We're not turning you into a business robot. I mean, do I look like a suite? No. We want you to succeed on your own terms and identify what works best for you. As they say in the business world, we're here to help you capitalize on your core competency, or use what makes you special to really strut your stuff. And, before anything else, we need to sit down and have a chat about trust.

I'm Evelyn from the Internets, and this is Crash Course Business: Soft Skills.

[Intro]

Turst may seem like a basic idea, but it's actually a challenging and fundamental concept, like the bottom level of a business pyramid. Not a pyramid scheme. Trust forms the basis for your reputation, which is the foundation of working relationships, promotions, and job offers. Your decisions about whom to trust are affected by how confident you are in someone, as well as what you know about them and your experiences with them; how have they acted, what have they said, what kinds of decisions have they made? If you're planning a road trip, who would you trust to navigate and also make a fire playlist? Your best friend who you've gone to concerts with since high school, or her roommate who blasts techno and wrecked his car last Tuesday? When you trust someone with your AUX cord, your car, or your career dreams, you're being vulnerable. And, when you start a new job, you're trusting that organization to treat you fairly as much as they're trusting you to do the work.

Trust can also make or break professional relationships. When a team is running smoothly, co-workers rely on one another to get their jobs done. But, if you don't trust someone, it can create an imbalance of work, or you might feel like you have to double-check everything they do. And, that can make for a rough work environment. Lack of trust can even close the door on opportunities. If people don't see you as trustworthy, they won't want you on their team or suggest you for that promotion.

So, how do you decide who's trustworthy, and what can you do to make others trust you? Now, I do not have all the answers. But, I can tell you that there are a few different kinds of trust, like cognitive, dispositional, and emotional. They all blend together to form a picture of how trustworthy someone actually is. It's like a trust and reputation smoothie, y'all.

Trusting or not trusting someone for rational reasons is known as cognitive trust. And, what fo you look for when you're analyzing a person's character? It's elementary, my dear Watson. You need evidence! That's why it's important for your hard work to be seen by others. Your reputation can't improve if people don't know what you've been up to.

To build cognitive trust, you can focus on its three basic elements: competence, intent, and integrity. Let's imagine you're paying off those soul-crushing student loans, and you take up a side-hustle at a local coffee shop. Too real? First up is competence, are you capable of doing the things that your employer needs? Can you make an extra-hot, double foam, non-fat caramel macchiato with two pumps caramel and one pump cinnamon dolce in under 3 minutes flat? Or, are you going to give up during the morning rush and slap down a plain black coffee with a misspelled name? It's Evelyn with a "V" and a "Y," not Ellen or anything else. I'm salty.

If you want to build you competence, think about how to demonstrate what you can do, hone your skills, and acknowledge your shortcomings so you can work on them. Find new ways to showcase your work, or take classes to build skills, like a workshop on latte art. And, if you don't have the time or money to sign up for something official, you can keep watching free educational content on YouTube.

Next up is intent. Are you look out for others' interests, as well as your own? Intent is sort of on a sliding scale. You're generally not taking a job for incredibly pure or nefarious reasons. Maybe you mainly just want to be able to pay rent, and that's ok! If your interests align with someone else's, you can work together, although one of you may be less invested. So, while you're probably not going to be begging your boss to explain how the coffee beans are farmed, ground, and shipped, you can still demonstrate intent. Show genuine concern for others, be tactful, and help your co-workers. Chatting with them or doing favors, like picking up an extra shift, can help build your reputation.

Finally, there's integrity. Can you talk the talk and walk the walk? Do you show up to your 5 A.M. shifts and open the store, make sure the tables are set, and write the daily special with a pun on the chalkboard? Or, do you show up late and forget to spell-check frappuccino? It's ok, it's hard. Rememer that consistency matters. Doing an amazing job 90% of the time and falling flat 10% of the time is sometimes worse than doing an acceptable job all the time. Little mistakes can make a big impact on your integrity, so follow through with what you say you're going to do. A helpful trick is under-promising and over-delivering. If you've ever started something last-minute, you'll know that it takes longer than you expect to get things done. So, manage your time wisely, and don't deliver half-baked work or miss your deadlines. It kills cognitive trust.

These three parts of cognitive trust are like the legs of a tripod. If one's missing, trust collapses and you've got a mess on your hands. But, just because you've done your best to make sure your tripod can stand on its own, doesn't mean you'll immediately earn someone's trust. Like we mentioned earlier, cognitive trust is only one ingredient in this trust smoothie, although it's a big one.

There's also dispositional trust: a person's baseline level of trust in others. Some people will trust you automatically, while others take a bit more time and evidence. To see what I mean, let's go to the Thought Bubble.

Imagine you've just joined a fashion magazine as a junior assistant to the editor-in-chief, and you don't know if you're meeting her expectations. Your boss is hard to read, and she keeps giving you menial work, like picking up her dry cleaning. You want to help out with the fall fashion show in Paris, but you're not sure she trusts you enough.

So, let's get back to our tripod. You were hired with a gleaming resume and great recommendations, and show up with her coffee in hand every morning, so you're obviously competent. You care about the magazine's reputation and applied because you love writing, so your intent is good. And, you've shown this intent by protecting your boss from embarrassment at charity functions. Despite her doubts, you consistently achieve her impossible last-

minute demands, like a signed first edition of *The Deathly Hallows*. And, that shows some stellar integrity.

So, what gives? Well, your boss may just have low dispositional trust. Like we said, trust involves vulnerability, which involves risk. So, dispositional trust is tied to an idea called risk aversion, or how much you avoid risks. It's not particularly bad to have high or low risk aversion. But, like anything, there needs to be balance. Having high risk aversion can protect you from being exploited, but too much can stunt your relationships. And having low risk aversion may open up more opportunities, but if you're too trusting, you could easily be taken advantage of.

So, your boss might think that taking a chance on a journalist fresh out of college is an uncomfortably high risk, and have low dispositional trust. And, you just have to try not to take it personally and give it time. Be conscious of how others perceive your actions, do your job well and consistently, and build your reputation. You don't need to overwork yourself; work smart, not just hard. And, if you can go above and beyond by getting ahead of deadlines, that's great! Before you know it, you'll be helping with the next big project.

Thanks, Thought Bubble.

Now, let's say you're great at your current job. You've show competence, intent, integrity, and jumped over dispositional trust hurdles to build your reputation. That doesn't mean you'll be trusted in every situation. Trust also depends on the circumstance. A competence mismatch is when someone may trust your skills in one area, but not others. For example, you might trust an actor to deliver high-quality entertainment, but, no matter how well they played a lovable but crotchety E.R. doctor, you wouldn't trust them with your actually knee surgery.

An intent mismatch is if you might help someone in one way, but not others. Like, you might ask the English major down the hall who roots for a rival basketball team to read over your essay, but you're not going to ask her to seed your picks for March Madness. Building trust in all these ways can take years of time and effort, so it's important to protect your reputation and act professionally in all your jobs. Treat others with R-E-S-P-E-C-T, hold yourself to high standards, and think about how your actions will be perceived.

But, it's ok to make mistakes. We've all shown up late to work at some point, or had to ask for an extension on a deadline. Like I've said before, no one is perfect. And, if you have a solid track record of delivering on promises, you'll have earned a stock of idiosyncrasy credits. Think of these credits as a sort of bank account, but for trust. Improving your reputation adds credits, but you've got to pay for your mistakes. Serious mistakes can quickly drain your account, while smaller mistakes can be built back up with patience, time, and careful attention to spending. So, hopefully you have a positive balance and some credits saved up for when you need them, because, if you want to do anything in the business world, you first need to understand and build trust.

If you remember nothing else from this episode, here are some key takeaways: Number one, trust is the building block of all relationships. It's tricky to navigate, and involves risk. Number two, pay attention to how your actions are perceived and make sure they're being recognized. Building your reputation takes time and effort, but it pays off. And, number tree, cognitive trust can be earned from competence, intent, and integrity. So, use that to place your trust in the right people and earn the trust of others.

Like we said, cognitive and dispositional trust are just part of the puzzle. Next time, we'll talk about how emotions can influence trust, and what else you can do to make sure you're trusting people for the right reasons.

[Outro]

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