

# 82 Ways to Build your Trustworthiness with Clients

**Four ingredients** that turn any client interaction into an opportunity to exceed expected results while simultaneously building trust. Based on the [Trust Equation](#) from “The Trusted Advisor” by David Maister, Charles Green, and Rob Galford.

Credibility exists in the domain of words. It is created through your credentials, your truthfulness, and how you present yourself.

**Credibility**  
WORDS  
“I can trust what she says about...”  
Credentials  
Truthfulness

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|---|---|
| 1. Be diligent about researching your client  | 10. Offer your point of view when you have one                                    |
| 2. Know about industry trends and info, business news                               | 11. Share the “why” behind your point of view                                     |
| 3. Take the initiative to expand your knowledge                                     | 12. Be articulate and thoughtful when you express yourself                        |
| 4. Ask great questions  | 13. Find ways to demonstrate your expertise; don’t just talk about it             |
| 5. Write about your areas of expertise—articles, blogs, white papers                | 14. Say “I don’t know” when you don’t know  |
| 6. Express your passion for your subject  | 15. Never ever lie  |
| 7. Host an event that brings key stakeholders together; be the moderator            | 16. Report regularly on project progress/measures                                 |
| 8. When you present, practice practice practice so your delivery is relaxed         | 17. Combine your words with presence—a firm handshake, eye contact, confident air |
| 9. Use metaphors, stories, and vivid examples to share your ideas, prove your point | 18. Be humble; remember there is always more to learn                             |

Reliability occurs when you prove yourself to be dependable and predictable over time.

**Reliability**  
ACTIONS  
“I can trust him to...”  
Dependability  
Predictability

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 19. Set expectations up front and report on them regularly  | 25. Create documents and deliverables with a consistent look and feel                 |
| 20. Be prepared for meetings  | 26. Be rigorous about using good business practices, such as meeting agenda and notes |
| 21. Be at least on time if not early  | 27. Use others’ terminology and templates   |
| 22. Be unbelievably responsive  | 28. Establish routines in your relationships (regular meetings, emails, etc.)         |
| 23. Make lots of small promises and consistently follow through   | 29. Reconfirm scheduled events  |
| 24. Announce changes immediately and acknowledge the impact—especially when you won’t deliver as promised | 30. Only cancel if you absolutely must  |
|   | 31. Dress appropriately   |

**Intimacy**  
SAFETY  
“I can trust her with ...”

Intimacy exists in the domain of *emotions* and emotional connectedness. The connected consultant visibly demonstrates both empathy and discretion, which makes it possible for clients to flourish in a comfortable and safe working environment.

# 82 Ways to Build your Trustworthiness with Clients

**Discretion**

**Empathy**

**Personal Risk-Taking**

- 32. Be relentlessly discreet; honor confidentiality
- 33. Address your client by name
- 34. Adopt a friendly tone
- 35. Use colloquial language
- 36. Share something personal
- 37. Ask something personal
- 38. Tell your client something you appreciate about him/her
- 39. Send a hand-written note of acknowledgment/thanks
- 40. Be willing to show your emotions (elation, frustration, etc.)
- 41. Ask others about their feelings
- 42. Acknowledge uncomfortable situations
- 43. Be candid—Name It and Claim It!
- 44. Don't gossip or promote relationship "triangles"
- 45. Think in advance of how your client is likely to react
- 46. Make the first move
- 47. Ask open-ended questions
- 48. Use expressive/friendly body language
- 49. Practice different ways of asking difficult questions or making difficult statements before you deliver them
- 50. Take responsibility for mistakes
- 51. Hold others accountable
- 52. Write your next proposal *with* your client
- 53. Talk more with your eyes, ears and body, and less with your mouth
- 54. Be empathic in all your interactions; practice Three-Level Listening
- 55. Celebrate success with your client
- 56. Extend yourself—e.g., Invite your client to meet you outside of work, share a meal
- 57. "Be yourself. Everyone else is already taken."

Other-oriented consultants are relentlessly focused on their client's wants and needs at all times. Other-oriented consultants are also committed to making sure that any and all interactions are all about the client—not about the consultant.

**Other-Orientation**

**FOCUS**

**"I can trust that she cares about..."**

**Motives**

**Attention**

- 58. Find out how your project team defines success and how you can help them achieve it
- 59. Don't jump to problem-solving—slow yourself down by counting, taking notes, vocalizing expectations
- 60. Set aside the "spin"
- 61. Let go of trying to appear clever, bright, witty
- 62. Be self-deprecating
- 63. Confront issues as they arise—being preoccupied with them keeps your attention on your own preoccupation
- 64. Answer direct questions with direct answers
- 65. Give voice to your fears
- 66. Know your own traps/triggers and manage them well
- 67. Don't interrupt
- 68. Watch a tendency to name-drop
- 69. Call your client just to find out how he/she is
- 70. Eliminate your jargon from your conversations
- 71. Put the PowerPoint deck aside
- 72. Spend time in your client's shoes—imagine what it's like to be him/her; role play with a colleague
- 73. Cultivate an attitude of curiosity—think in advance about what questions you want to ask
- 74. Practice "thinking out loud" with your client
- 75. Let someone else have the last word
- 76. Be really honest even (especially) when it makes you look bad
- 77. Give others credit for successes
- 78. Skip the "blame game"
- 79. Take responsibility for failed communications
- 80. Deliver "early and ugly"—collaborate and iterate
- 81. Be willing to make a referral to your competition
- 82. Step down when your heart's no longer in it