

The Trust Matters Primer

THE BEST OF THE TRUSTED ADVISOR BLOG VOL. 2



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Charles H. Green

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A COUNTRY MUSIC STAR AS A TRUSTED ADVISOR?



Andrea Howe January 13, 2009 Post #408

“I had no idea I’d walk away having learned something from a country music celeb about being a Trusted Advisor.”

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A COUNTRY MUSIC STAR AS A TRUSTED ADVISOR?

I saw Vince Gill in concert. First time. I was pretty sure I'd enjoy the music, but I had no idea I'd walk away having learned something from a country music celeb about being a Trusted Advisor.

The concert was magical. Sure, the music was good (if you like country, and I will confess I do). Vince is talented, as is his entourage.

But he created something with his band and his audience that turned a good concert into an extraordinary experience of community and connectedness. How? By how he was being: humble, self-deprecating, intimate, vulnerable, and totally transparent.

There were several bands listed on the playbill that night, presumably warm-ups for the Big Guy. At certain time, a lone man appeared on stage, dressed in blue jeans and a T-shirt, and simply started playing guitar and singing.

I kept looking at the program, trying to figure out who he was. I also wondered why this guy was playing a song I recognized as Vince's when the star himself would be on stage in an hour or so. Turned out it was Vince. All by his lonesome. No fanfare, no glitz – just showed up and started doing what he does best.



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At one point he traded his guitar (for which he is known) for a fiddle. I don't remember the song as much as I remember what he said as soon as it ended: "Boy, am I glad that's over!" Everyone laughed, and he shared with us how he is a novice with the fiddle and always nervous about playing it on stage – especially in the company of one of his band-members who is very accomplished with the instrument. He told us that he hates how, due to some recent weight gain, it gives him a triple-chin.

Later, he introduced a song he wrote after his father's death with a story about his father. He knows how to weave a good story, so that made a difference. But what really drew us in was the authentic and loving way he shared about the trials and tribulations of their relationship. We could all relate. There wasn't a dry eye in the house at the end of the song.

I will remember this concert for years to come. Why? Because this country music expert created something magical for me and several thousand of my closest friends because of how he was being.

And I, and you, and every other expert in the corporate world have available to us the ability to have the same kind of impact.

Forget about your decades of experience and advanced degrees – just for a moment. Put aside your To Do list. What possibilities are you going to create for your clients today out of how you are being?



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A COUNTRY MUSIC STAR AS A TRUSTED ADVISOR?

FROM THE CONVERSATION ON THE BLOG:

“Interesting how allowing one’s vulnerability fills the space between people with a personal-ness that engenders warmth, trust, safety, and connectivity...heart-centeredness...not a “mental” thing...”

posted by Peter Vajda

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THE REST OF THE CONVERSATION.

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SALES BENCHMARKING: [WHAT TO MEASURE IN A TOUGH ECONOMY?](#)



Mark Slatin January 23, 2009 Post #417

“Do benchmarks work? Or are they a desperate attempt to CYA at each level of the food chain in the event of a day of reckoning? ”

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SALES BENCHMARKING: WHAT TO MEASURE IN A TOUGH ECONOMY?

To turn the tide on sputtering revenue numbers, sales organizations ratchet up pressure on sellers to hit targets.

Many will seek a fool-proof formulaic antidote. The more scientific it feels, the more control it gives over success—or so they presume.

Some swear by sales benchmarking. Landslide Technologies' SFA (sales force automation) application ensures you can “govern the sales process in an effort to drive large deals through the sales pipeline in a consistent manner.” Just use the SFA application to track your big deals and they'll pump out new accounts like a canning machine on an assembly line.

Do benchmarks work? Or are they a desperate attempt to CYA at each level of the food chain in the event of a day of reckoning?

One recent article from a worldwide sales training company described benchmarking as “a sales rep's GPS, helping to map out routes that were either successful or time-consuming in the past in order to devise a more efficient course”.

Here's their GPS system:

$$\text{CPD} \times \text{CR} \times \text{ADS} \times \text{SP} \times 240 = \text{AS}$$

CPD = Calls Per Day	SP = Number of Salespeople
CR = Close Rate	240 = 240 Days per Year
ADS = Average Deal Size	AS = Annual Sales

To simplify this already-simple model: all things being equal, if you make more calls per day (CPD) or increase your close rate (CR) or increase the average size deal (ADS) or if you have more salespeople (SP), you will increase your AS (Annual Sales).

The author of the article lauds this wildly lagging indicator of performance stating, “their (sellers) improved time management efficiency as the result of this benchmarking model will free them-

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selves up from dependence on marketing departments for leads, support and differentiators.”

I couldn't make this stuff up.

Feeling liberated yet? What a relief! Without burdensome leads, support and differentiators from marketing, sellers can work the levers on the benchmarking formula and land on their AS (don't pardon the pun).

Some of the largest sales organizations tell their team to abide by their model - or else.

Now, let's stipulate that tracking and measuring sales activity is critical to success. Still—too many sales organization have a knee-jerk response to sluggish short-term performance, namely engaging in short-term solutions.

There lies the slippery slope of micromanagement. Knee-jerk short-term solutions to short term indicators. It's a recipe for low trust and high turnover.

Eventually, quality selling activity gives way to “prettying up” the spreadsheet. “My, that's a good looking chart,” says the visiting exec from HQ. Meanwhile, the team is thinking, “those numbers are bogus; plugged into Excel the night before to impress the brass.”

GIGO. Garbage in, garbage out.

When I managed a regional sales organization, corporate decided to split the sales force into hunters and farmers—to improve the “cost of sales” ratio of gross comp to revenue.

We lost a \$10.5 million deal. Why? We severed the relationship between their rep and the procurement director. They, in turn, severed us. We broke their trust, plain and simple.

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SALES BENCHMARKING: WHAT TO MEASURE IN A TOUGH ECONOMY?

What benchmark tracks lost accounts and missed opportunities due to relationship issues? None I know of—yet their impact is an order of magnitude bigger than what benchmarks mark.

Harvey McKay (author of [Swim with the Sharks without Being Eaten Alive](#)) offers a better predictor of selling success than all the formulae, algorithms and sales funnels combined. It's a list of questions he calls the McKay 66. He suggests that relationship-oriented information is king (mostly centered around the client relationship – not their stated needs).

For example:

- #39. On what subjects (outside of business) does the customer have strong feelings?
- #55. What is he/she most proud of having achieved?
- #58. What moral or ethical considerations are involved when you work with this customer?

Doesn't it make intuitive sense that knowledge of answers to these kinds of intimate questions reveal more about our progress with a prospect or account than the number of dials, appointments or calls?

Selling always was and always will be, first and foremost, a referendum, not on process and statistics, but on the loyalty developed between sellers who can build relationships with buyers.



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FROM THE CONVERSATION ON THE BLOG:

“Selling always was and always will be, first and foremost, a referendum, not on process and statistics, but on the loyalty developed between sellers who can build relationships with buyers.”

Mark, This comment is a perfect ending to your column and a near-brilliant observation on relationship selling. It is so good, I am going to repeat it every chance I get - with full attribution - when I do any sales or sales management training or coaching!

posted by James A. Boyd

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SUBTEXT MESSAGING



Stewart Hirsch, February 5, 2009 Post #425

How much easier it would be if all our conversations were the subtext, rather than the text. If we were simply transparent and said what we really meant.

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SUBTEXT MESSAGING

Recently I had a conversation with a friend. He asked me what I thought about a marketing piece he sent me the day before. After our conversation, which was tedious, we analyzed it. Here is part of the conversation we had, and the same part of the one we didn't have:

Sam: What did you think of that piece I sent you yesterday?

Subtext: I'm looking for your big picture thoughts

Me: I liked it

Subtext: Uh. Oh. He wanted me to give him comments.

Sam: Well - what did you like about it?

Subtext: Please give me a little more - your big picture comments.

Me: I didn't read it that carefully - I did think it looked good

Subtext: I feel really badly. He looked at something for me and gave me exactly what I asked for. I should have done more.

Me: [getting defensive] - I didn't realize you wanted me to provide comments - I can do that. Isn't it out already?



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SUBTEXT MESSAGING

Subtext: I really would like to fix this - and I still feel badly - maybe he'll give me another opportunity to make it right.

Sam: Yeah - it's out already. Never mind.

Subtext: All I wanted was a couple of thoughts, and he's trying to make a whole project out of it.

After another couple of minutes of this conversation that went nowhere, we stepped back and I asked what he really was asking. I asked him for the subtext. And I told him mine.

We quickly reached an understanding, and avoided further misunderstanding. He didn't care that I hadn't really read it. He just wanted a little more of the big picture comments.

I had felt badly that I hadn't read it and given him deeper comments, and he didn't even want them.

How much easier it would be if all our conversations were the subtext, rather than the text. If we were simply transparent and said what we really meant.

When I do role plays in workshops I facilitate, I often will stop the action and ask: "What do you really want to say?" That gets to the subtext.

Instead of texting each other, maybe we should start subtexting.

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SUBTEXT MESSAGING

FROM THE CONVERSATION ON THE BLOG:

“It reminded me very much about a series of acting classes I took a few years ago, that was based on something called the ‘Meisner Technique’. We would get into one-on-ones and have rapid fire personal dialogue, with no time whatsoever to frame or consider our response. We wouldn’t set out to be hurtful, but this would sometimes happen... but the point was utterly ‘honest’ responses... at least unmoderated by any of our normal social considerations. It was very interesting, and certainly discomfoting. Some were better than others. I have to say that I found that, and other acting lessons, far more useful for business and employment, than any other business course I’ve done.”

posted by Michael Holt

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WHY **ATTRACTION IS WORTH MORE** THAN RETENTION



Charles H. Green, February 3, 2009 Post #424

Don't focus on retain—that's about the company.
Focus on attract—that's about the employee.
Then live the values.

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WHY ATTRACTION IS WORTH MORE THAN RETENTION

The phrase “attraction and retention” is so entrenched in business-talk that a Google search with quotes around the terms turns up 306,000 hits.

That’s a lot. But it’s dwarfed by the active-voiced “attract and retain,” with 2.07 million hits.

If memory serves, the phrase comes out of the “war for talent,” initiated in 1997 by McKinsey.

Was that war ever won? Apparently not. In 2007, Bob Sutton was announcing “[The War for Talent is Back.](#)”

In fact, as of just a few months ago, McKinsey was announcing [The Return of the War for Talent](#) (“It’s Baack!”).

But, as of two weeks ago, according to search firm Morgan McKinley, the [War for Talent is Over.](#)

The War for Talent has had more comings and goings than Cher

has had farewell tours. So it goes with business concepts that mean whatever you want them to mean.

(For a really wonderful read on the abuse of “war for talent,” read Malcolm Gladwell’s article [The Talent Myth.](#))



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WHY ATTRACTION IS WORTH MORE THAN RETENTION

But I digress. The WFT is fought on two fronts—finding talent, and keeping it. Despite the [eerie parallels with roach motels](#), the language “attract and retain” has stuck.

“Attract” has taken a back seat to “retain,” and it’s not hard to see why. Consider the well-established economics of customer loyalty. Employees form relationships and gain hard-to-replace skills, referred to in distinctly non-human terms as “relationship capital.”

[Yet, just as the best defense may be a great offense, the best retention strategy may be a great attraction strategy.](#)

For one thing “retention” often lives down to the very behavioral language used to describe it. Think handcuffs, golden or otherwise; do-not-compete clauses; hands-off clauses in search firm contracts. More benignly, flex time and use it or lose it vacations.

But more importantly, think what a really fabulous, unbelievable attraction proposition does for retention. Suppose you had

an extraordinary new-hire offer. Tons of money, social good, ambience, benefits, advancement, work-life balance, cachet. Maybe like Google a couple of years ago.

Why would someone leave such a place? Not for money, or promotion, or lifestyle. More typically it’s because their life goals had simply changed.

It happens. Twenty-somethings have kids. Project management loses its appeal after being the meat in too many sandwiches. You cannot “retain” people whose life goals have shifted. And if you keep only the employment contract, they lose their enthusiasm.

But what about the greatest attraction pitch of all—“We Care about YOU.”

If you could believe a firm really cared, if they could prove it to you—wouldn’t you want to join that firm? And stay there, until they were simply incapable of meeting your changed needs?

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WHY ATTRACTION IS WORTH MORE THAN RETENTION

I'm saying yes, of course you would. They catch is, why would you believe it?

Well, suppose the firm paid a recruiter to hire you away from them? Suppose they paid you massive severance packages should you decide to leave? Suppose they developed alumni programs, like universities with "graduates?"

The really fine consulting firms—Bain & McKinsey, for example—truly value their alumni—you are a lifetime member, you're just working the client side as an alum.

But even more sharply, think Zappo's. Here's [one more great Zappo's article](#), from Fortune's January 22 issue

Zappos bribes trainees to leave. Few do. When Zappo's recently had to lay off 140 people, they were extra-generous in terms of severance. They offered 6 months of paid COBRA health care. And so on. Remember, these are not people Zappo's is trying to retain--these are people they're letting go.

eBay gets it. "How you treat the leavers has a strong impact on how the stayers feel about the company," says [Beth Axelrod](#), eBay's SVP of human resources.

Exactly. How these companies attract—a values-based culture that actually values customers and employees, not just their abstract corporate-finance-centric "relationship capital"—directly drives their success at retention.

Don't focus on retain—that's about the company. Focus on attract—that's about the employee. Then live the values.

It's the paradox of trust. If you actually set someone else's priorities above your own, you get back boatloads of what you want.

But only if you're willing to put your motives second. You actually have to care.

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WHY ATTRACTION IS WORTH MORE THAN RETENTION

FROM THE CONVERSATION ON THE BLOG:

“I recently subscribed to your blog after seeing your interview with Dave Stein (great interview by the way.) As I read your words I got goose bumps because you are so right on target. I was in a business the other day where the service was way sub par and posted on the wall was a sign “Our customers are our most important asset.” It’s all about walking the walk and it all begins with how you treat your own staff.”

posted by Steve McCreedy

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MEET THE NEW ASSOCIATES AT TRUSTEDADVISOR.COM



Andrea Howe

Andrea has been in the consulting profession for nearly 20 years. From 1992 to 2000, she worked for AMS, a \$1B technology consulting firm. Today, Andrea's clients include top global firms in accounting, consulting and other professional services

[Read more, or contact Andrea](#)



Mark Slatin

Mark specializes in sales coaching, sales training, strategic planning and executive coaching – highlighting the important role trust plays in high revenues and high profit selling.

[Read more, or contact Mark](#)



Stewart Hirsch

Stewart is head of TAA's Trust-based Coaching practice. After beginning his career as a practicing lawyer, over the last 15 years he has coached several hundred individuals in professional services firms on business development, and on building profitable trust-based relationships.

[Read more, or contact Stewart](#)



Toby MacKelden

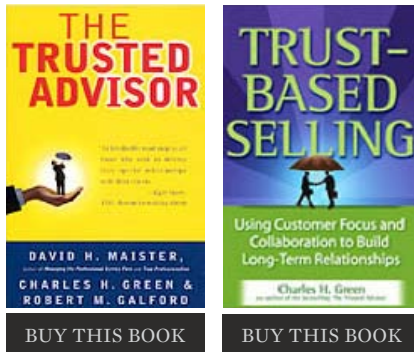
Toby has worked in the communications, financial services and consulting industries on three continents. A former deliverer of SPIN selling and an experienced organizational consultant, Toby is an advocate of the emphasis on trust in selling.

[Read more, or contact Toby](#)

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GET MORE DETAILS



About Charles H. Green



Charles H. Green is a speaker and executive educator on trust-based relationships and Trust-based Selling in complex businesses. He is author of Trust-based Selling (McGraw-Hill, 2005), and co-author of The Trusted Advisor (with David Maister and Rob Galford, Free Press, October 2000).

Charles has spoken before a variety of industry and functional groups. An engaging and content-rich speaker, he has taught in executive education programs for the Kellogg Graduate School of Business at Northwestern, and for Columbia University Graduate School of Business, as well as through his own firm, Trusted Advisor Associates. His work centers on improving trust-based relationship and business development skills for businesses with complex service offerings. Business development, and on building profitable trust-based relationships.

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