

The Trust Matters Primer

THE BEST OF THE TRUSTED ADVISOR BLOG VOL. 11

Our goal at Trusted Advisor Associates is to help people and their organizations become more trustworthy and trust-enhancing. It's always exciting when we meet people who believe as we do. It's even more exciting to talk to those who have found success by applying the same principles we talk about.

This month we place a spotlight on real trusted advisors, success stories of real professionals who make trust part of the foundation of their business strategies. The Trust Primer Volume 11 features three powerful interviews. In [Books We Trust: You're Working too Hard to Make the Sale](#) we talk to the son of author Bill Brooks. Then we speak to Chip Grizzard in [Real People, Real Trust: A CEO You Should Know](#) and finally we end with [Trust, Sales and Getting Real: Interview with Author Mahan Khalsa](#).

Each of these three people demonstrate in their own unique ways how concepts of trust have played out for them in sales and leadership careers.

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Books We Trust: [YOU'RE WORKING TOO HARD TO MAKE THE SALE](#)

[CHARLES H. GREEN](#) ON MONDAY, MAY 2, 2011

This is the first in a new series called Books We Trust. We expect to publish it irregularly, but about monthly.

The first book was a no-brainer for me. You've probably never heard of it; it was not a best-seller; it ranks about 900,000 on Amazon (not high). But I'm telling you: it is a wonderful book. [It's called, You're Working Too Hard to Make the Sale](#), by Bill Brooks and Tom Travisano.

I came late to the study of sales (though early, and miserably, to selling itself). None of it made much sense to me; it all seemed either excessively hormonal, abstract, or manipulative. It all felt vague—a feast of gratuitous

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adjectives and amateur psychology.

I persisted, reading books I won't mention, which only made it worse. Then one day, I came across [You're Working Too Hard](#), by two folks I'd never heard of.

It made everything click for me. Suddenly I could make sense of trust, influence, psychology, money, fear, and closing.

One of the points the book made was that the concept of "needs" had gotten overused. Everyone, they said, was focused on identifying needs and generating a complete picture of what the clients needed so that they could consultatively package and sell a solution that fit the specs of what the client really needed.

I had always felt something was lacking in that formulation (Years later, [John Caddell](#) wrote, "No one ever bought a value proposition"), putting more words to my feeling—but that was later). Brooks nailed it down, with page after page making fun of the penchant for identifying needs.

It was "wants," he insisted, that motivated buying behavior, not needs. Needs included toothpaste, bicycles, audits and CRM systems. But wants—that was different. Wants included a myriad of hopes, wishes, fears, desires and

aspirations. If a seller could connect on that level, the story went, buyers would transfer the purchase of their "needs" to those who had made the wants connection.

The data were astonishing. Trivisano in particular—a former political consultant and pollster, I believe—had crafted the research to explore exactly that thesis. And, they'd done it across several relevant business sectors, including CEOs of small entrepreneurial companies and CIOs.

[I knew how serious, educated people made big dollar decisions for serious investments in major services, and the rational, deductive model of decision-making that I had been taught simply did not bear resemblance to the undeniable parade of actual decisions I had seen. This book explained it.](#)

And the punch line was marvelous: you didn't have to satisfy people's wants to get the sale—who would believe a salesperson could deliver on a buyer's wishes, needs, hopes fears and aspirations? It was enough that you connected; that they felt understood, that someone "got" who they were. That, the research said, powerfully drove sales.

It was a eureka book for me. It meant you could be a real, genuine, flawed, warts-and-all human being—and still sell. As long as you could connect to

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the real person on the other side of the table. Faking it did not work; self-obsession did not work; the answer didn't lie in process or in mastery of closing lines, or even of the collection of questions and needs. It lay in understanding the human being in front of you. Suddenly I liked selling.

Co-author and researcher Tom Travisano died a few weeks after the first edition; lead author and more famous sales consultant Bill Brooks carried on with [The Brooks Group](#) in North Carolina. Brooks himself passed on in 2007, but his company is aggressively continuing, even prospering, through the efforts of his sons Jeb and Will.

I spoke with Jeb recently.

CHG: This book was one of the top three sales books I ever read, and the one that had the most impact on me. How did your dad come to write it?

JB: First, we're touched, thank you. Dad wrote over 20 books, but we always thought this one was the sleeper. He wrote them all longhand, on yellow pads, by the way. This was maybe the 6th or 7th book for him. It was released twice, first in 1995, then 2005.

I was young when I first read it. I thought, "What's the big deal?" It seemed so common sense, so obvious.

CHG: I had that feeling too just recently, re-reading it. But at the time, for me, I had to work at it to get it. It sounded simple—maybe I just couldn't accept that it really was that simple.

JB: Dad said that back then, everyone was focused on needs, needs, needs. He made a lot of fun of "needs-based selling" in that book. He felt that [Frank Bettger](#) had it right years before—the idea that if you could show people what they really wanted, they'd move heaven and earth to get it. When dad got together with Tom Travisano, a skilled political researcher, they set out to prove it, and to prove that the dominant needs-based sales mantra missed the boat.

CHG: I still hear a lot of focus on needs; this book needs a rebirth. I always remember how they collapsed the key insight into one critical sentence: "Buyers are eager to buy what they need from salespeople who understand what they want." Almost every word in that sentence is significant.

JB: Other insights included "People buy the salesperson, not the product," and "the opening is where the sale is made, not the closing."

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CHG: And the research is solid: thousands of buying situations, blinded studies, both complex and simple B2B products and services. But let me ask you: in today's sales 2.0 world, do you think his findings about buyer motivation are less relevant, or perhaps more?

JB: Without a doubt—even more relevant. In Sales 2.0, the buyer is supposed to be in control, and that's true—but the buyer still doesn't know what they want. If anything, they're more confused by all the data, because they think they should know. So because it's easier nowadays to find all your needs, that means it's even more important to find someone you trust, who understands your wants.

I recently had to buy a health care plan for our business, and it was tough. I didn't know much, and I didn't want to do the wrong thing, I didn't want to upset people, and so on. In fact, I had a lot of wants. And guess who I went with? The person who worked hard to find out what I wanted, without making me feel stupid. And you know what? That is just plain, simple how it works. That's what dad and Tom said so clearly. It sounded so obvious not because it was obvious—they had to uncover the truth to say it so plainly.

CHG: How do you and your brother think about that book these days, besides being proud of it?

JB: We live the values he talked about: Integrity and Intense Customer Focus. We're a sales-driven company, meaning we deliver on buyer wants. And that's what he talked about.

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Real People, Real Trust: [A CEO YOU SHOULD KNOW](#)

[ANDREA HOWE](#) ON WEDNESDAY, APRIL 27, 2011

[Chip Grizzard \(@chipgrizzard\)](#) is the CEO of Grizzard Communications Group, a nonprofit marketing and fundraising agency. Chip is the fourth-generation member of the Grizzard family to work at the 91-year-old company.

Discover Chip's candid replies to questions about what it really takes to be a Trusted Advisor and how to create a company that leads with trust, every day.

Real People, Real Trust: A CEO YOU SHOULD KNOW

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Seven Key Traits of a Trusted Advisor

I first met Chip in January of this year when he brought me in to teach his top 35 leaders about Trust-Based Selling. It was clear from the moment we met that he's a very principled man with a real commitment to being the kind of leader that others want to follow.

When I interviewed Chip for this article, I asked him what he sees as the fundamental attributes of a Trusted Advisor. His answers highlighted seven key traits:

1. Keep your promises. “You gotta do what you say you're going to do. So many times people will casually say, ‘I'll send you that’ or ‘I'll call you about this.’ I routinely make mental notes about how often people follow through on their promises. It's about 50% of the time or less. That drives me nuts and definitely impacts my perception of someone else's trustworthiness, so I work hard to be sure I keep my promises. I watch my words a lot and don't make off-hand comments. If I say it, I'll write it down or get a text message to help me remember. And then I'll do it.”

2. Focus on others' success. “The only way I'm successful is if I make others successful. You can't fake caring about what others think or what's important to them.”

3. Stay in it for the long haul. “You can't look for a short-term gain; you have to do what's right for the long-term. We have a 60-year client relationship in one case; other clients have been with us 20 and 30 years. This is unheard of in our industry. We give them all we have and they know we're in it with them.”

4. Treat people right. “It really is so simple. Just treat people right. It doesn't get any simpler. If you do that, then great things happen. The day we're fired from one client is the day we start working to rebuild that relationship and win that business back. We always end a relationship as positively as we can. Any time you take a hard approach, you burn a bridge. Some agencies in our space take the harder approach. They carry that with them forever. We always strive to be fair—to ourselves as well as our clients.”

5. Persevere. “It might take 10 years to fix something, or to win someone's business. So be it.”

6. Never compromise. “Compromise is not negotiable. It's not even something I think about. Our industry is very small and people move around a lot. News travels fast about how you treat others. Personal integrity matters.”

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Here's the seventh, which I'm adding to the list on Chip's behalf:

7. Modesty. Chip didn't speak of this trait directly; he demonstrated it. At the beginning of our interview, this very confident and highly successful leader said, "I hope I can help you. Please don't feel like you have to use my answers if I don't give you exactly what you need." An hour after the interview was over, he emailed me a note to thank me for my time.

Moments of Truth

I asked Chip to talk about tough times in Grizzard's very long history of exemplary client relationships. He shared one particularly poignant story.

"We made a big mistake once. Our client had a big media plan that coincided with our direct mail drop. Because of our mistake, the mail arrived in homes before the big media push. In the client's mind, this hurt results. He called and said, 'This is very disappointing. We've done all this planning and you've let us down.' I asked him what would make him feel like we addressed the situation to his satisfaction. He said, 'I don't think we should pay for this mailing.'

"There was a fair amount of money at stake. Right away, I said, 'No problem, done.' As painful as it was, it was the right thing to do. Ten years later, he's still a client, despite having moved around to different organizations and

locations. And every time I see him—every time—he says, 'Do you remember when we had the problem with that mail drop and you took care of it?' It had a huge impact on him, and he became a lifelong client as a result."

Creating a Culture of Trust

Grizzard was recently named "[Top Workplaces 2011](#)" in Atlanta. The evaluation for the program was based on feedback from a survey that 94% of Grizzard employees completed (exceeding the average company response of 55%). This top honor is a direct result of the honest feedback in a number of areas related to Grizzard's culture, such as organizational values, strategic vision, leadership, operations, pay and benefits and overall work environment and experience.

[I asked Chip to share any advice he has for executives who are trying to create a culture of trust in their organizations. His response boiled down to one thing: being a strong role model. And from Chip's perspective, it starts with him.](#)

A Matter of Personal Integrity

"I never send a mixed signal related to integrity; my staff never sees me do it one way this way this time and another way another other time. Some people try to play both sides of the fence—to turn on the relationship charm and do the right thing at some points. But it's not a part-time thing. You have to live it every day. It has to be real. And it's not just a business thing.

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“I just came back from a client conference where I saw people doing great things with clients during the day and crazy stuff at night with colleagues. Even if clients don’t see that, well, then your co-workers doubt your character. You can’t turn it on and off. You have to be consistent all the time—in your personal life, your social life, your professional life. I talk to my staff when I see them doing things outside of work that leave me concerned. Integrity applies to all aspects of your life.”

Teachable Moments

Chip made mention of a discussion his leaders were having during the program I led on Trust-Based Selling for Grizzard. The question on the table was: [Are there ever times when you shouldn’t tell a client the whole truth?](#) Chip was in the room at the time (role modeling that he, too, had things to learn and it was worth his time to spend two days in a classroom). He reminded me what he said that day.

“My answer to that was simple: If you’re expending any energy on the debate, then it probably means you already have your answer about whether or not it crosses the line. I said it that day in front of all 35 of my leaders in the room, and since then I’ve heard two people repeating the same thing when talking to their staff. Teaching moments are key to living our values and our culture. They start with me.”

Recovering from Mistakes

I asked Chip what happens when he makes a mistake. Here’s what he said: [“I hope I’m not making a lot of integrity mistakes. I might make mistakes on how we’ve resolved a particular situation. In that case, I look back and acknowledge it, and apologize if necessary. I own it, try to explain it, and try to rebuild the relationship. I put in the time, the work, and the commitment to turning a situation around.”](#)

Going the Distance

Chip is not only a leader with an impressive track record, he’s also an endurance athlete with a long list of sports accomplishments. Chip has competed in over 100 triathlons, including the Hawaii Ironman and Escape from Alcatraz Triathlon. I asked him what connections he saw between his athletic efforts and his success as a leader. His answer was inspiring:

“It’s very easy to not want to get up at 4 a.m. and go workout sometimes. If I stay up too late and do something dumb and I’m in the middle of training for an event, well, I get my butt out of bed and go suffer (laughing). On the endurance sports side, my work ethic and my passion make a difference for me. The same is true on the business side.”

May we all have the wisdom and tenacity to walk a mile—or run 26.2—in Chip Grizzard’s shoes.

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FROM THE
CONVERSATION ON
THE BLOG:

“What a refreshing story! There’s something about Chip – a sense of “purity,” a sense of clarity of self, and I’ve been trying to find a descriptor for a day now and it alludes me...ugh! but purity and “clean” are the closest I can come right now...”

—Comment by Peter Vajda

CLICK [HERE](#) TO READ (AND JOIN IN)
THE REST OF THE CONVERSATION.

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Trust, Sales and Getting Real: INTERVIEW WITH AUTHOR MAHAN KHALSA

[CHARLES H GREEN](#) ON WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23, 2011

Mahan Khalsa is one of the more respected names in the field of complex sales. When I set out to write *Trust-based Selling*, there were three books foremost in my mind: *Let's Get Real* or *Let's Not Play*, Khalsa's 1999 book, was one of them.

FranklinCovey bought his business, and he went on to head their Sales Performance Group. More recently, he has become the head of [Ninety Five 5](#), which combines sales techniques with change management and the science of expert performance.

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Trust Quotes: Interview with Experts in Trust

CHG: First of all, Mahan, thank you very much for speaking with us here today. I have long admired your work from afar, and I'm personally delighted to make the connection.

I want to focus mainly on trust as it relates to sales and business change, but let's start more broadly. I did not start off in sales, and neither did you, if I'm correct? How did you come to be involved in the field of selling?"

MK: My first encounters with selling were painful. I was working my way through college and needed a job, and took a position as a door-to-door salesman. I've written about it at greater length but I'll summarize it by saying one of the happiest days of my life was when I got a job in a factory. I promised myself that I'd never be involved in sales again.

What I had experienced was abusive to both buyer and seller. Both were sullied. I don't project my personal history on others who have had great experience in sales right from the beginning – or overcame early negative experiences in route to great success. That was just my experience.

I actually made it through college, and found myself the director of a residential yoga and meditation community. We arose at 3:30 a.m. each day, took a cold shower, and did two-and-a-half hours of yoga and meditation. I would

have been happy doing yoga and meditating all day long.

However, part of the lifestyle was to take what you gained from your morning discipline and apply it in the everyday world. We had a lot of energy and motivation but lacked knowledge of how to run businesses. To remedy that, I was fortunate enough to get accepted at Harvard Business School, which was nearby.

Following my MBA, I founded a computer systems company. When it came to the moment when we actually had to sell something, that was a crisis and a conundrum. On one hand, it was my company, I felt it was up to me to bring revenue in. On the other hand, my experience in sales had led me to believe that you could be either a salesperson or a spiritual person but not both.

The combination was tricky. There were times I felt very honorable—and failed miserably. There were times I was successful in getting immediate revenue—and compromised my values and probably my long-term relationship with the customer. There were times I thought I had it all together—and still fell flat on my face. Yet eventually, everything started to come together. Not only was I successful at that which I once feared and hated, it became what I most enjoyed.

I thought others might benefit from what I had learned. I designed and taught

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a course for Arthur Andersen partners, which was successful and over time became the firm's worldwide model for face-to-face selling.

Luckily, one of my later clients was FranklinCovey. They valued what I brought to the table enough to purchase my company in 1999. It has been an excellent relationship for all concerned. My Sales Performance Group colleagues and I have worked with tens of thousands of salespeople and consultants from some of the world's most successful companies. The Helping Clients Succeed coursework has been taught in over forty countries in nine different languages. We have coached and consulted on initiatives involving many billions of dollars of sales.

Despite our success, something important was missing. Companies weren't getting as much of the sustained improvement we all hoped for. As it turns out, training, by itself, no matter how good it is, starts fading the moment the trainer leaves. Several of us formed [Ninety Five 5 LLC](#). Ninety Five 5 concentrates on execution and measurable results, using training as only one part of a systemic improvement initiative. We've been able to build on the well received content developed with FranklinCovey and produce impressive results with companies willing to move beyond sales training to get serious about real world sales transformation.

CHG: The subtitle of your book originally was, "The Demise of Dysfunctional

Selling, and the Advent of Helping Clients Succeed." What did you mean by 'dysfunctional selling?'

MK: I count as dysfunctional those actions and behaviors that ultimately serve neither seller nor buyer. Since most people are both sellers and buyers in their lives, most can fill in their stories of what this means. Put in all the things you hate when sellers try to manipulate rather than serve your interests. Put in all the things you hate when buyers ask you to do things that don't seem to make sense to either party or that aren't likely to result in them deciding in your favor or even deciding at all. Put in all the things that detract from rather than aid in producing both the results and relationships to which both parties aspire. Unfortunately, the lists can be long.

[Most professional sellers have good intent. They know manipulation and deceit hurt rather than build long-term sales success. They know that building trust is essential to both creating and capturing value. So they eliminate a lot of what would otherwise be dysfunctional—no surprise there. Yet most also consistently engage in actions that are not value-adding—for them or for their customers. Even when great intent is present, there is a lot of room for improvement in eliminating dysfunctional behaviors.](#)

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CHG: I notice your recent editions changed the subtitle to “Transforming the Buyer/Seller Relationship.” Anything noteworthy behind that change?

MK: The new title goes to the essence of what we are about—creating a substantial improvement in the mutual success and satisfaction of both buyers and sellers. We feel there are ways of interacting that better benefit both parties and that doing so is a good contribution to the kind of world we want to live in.

CHG: I [asked Neil Rackham](#) if there was one, over-arching biggest single problem in the field of selling, and he said yes—for him it was the tendency to jump to solutions before having completed the questioning process. Do you yourself find an over-arching ‘missing link’ in the field of sales?

MK: I would certainly rank “pre-mature solutions” at or near the top of my missing links list. Almost all of us have room for big improvements in our ability to “seek first to understand” before we “seek to be understood.” And the challenge is being able to gain access to and skillfully develop that understanding with the key decision makers and influencers, many of whom seem to be hidden away from those who are trying to understand them.

Looking a little more holistically we could say the missing link is the ability to successfully blend excellent inquiry with excellent advocacy—to do a superb

job of matching our story to the client’s story. Good inquiry is essential and most often the more undeveloped portion of the balance—and it is still only part of the equation. I’ve seen people get good at inquiry and still not be able to convert on advocacy.

I’ve also changed my view a little bit on what the true missing link is. I now feel the biggest over-arching problem is that 80% or so of all salespeople fail to get substantially better, year after year. They may get more comfortable, they may make the minor improvements they need to make just to stay even. However, as Geoff Colvin states in [Talent is Overrated](#),

“Extensive research in a wide range of fields shows that many people not only fail to become outstandingly good at what they do, no matter how many years they spend doing it, they frequently don’t even get any better than they were when they started.”

The need for growth in most companies never stops. Unfortunately, the growth of sales people does. That creates a “growth gap” that most companies try to fill with quantity (more salespeople) rather than quality (better salespeople). The missing link is not more good stuff, it is getting good at good stuff.

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CHG: A fascinating insight. To that point, you have talked about how you integrated sales with change management and the science of expert performance. How did you come to make that connection? And what is the link with sales and change management?

MK: We hold two beliefs that happen to be backed by considerable data, research, and direct experience:

1. Deliberate practice is the key to improvement.
2. A supportive environment is the key to deliberate practice.

Deliberate practice, while not a particularly sexy phrase, is the term commonly used in the science of expert performance to describe the single most common and powerful attribute of top-flight performance in almost any field. It contends that the quality and quantity of mindful practice and application is what separates star performers from the decent, average, and poor performers. (Geoff Colvin's aforementioned [Talent is Overrated](#) is a good read on this topic).

Deliberate practice is not ordinary practice. As Edward Deming once said, "It is not enough to do your best. You need to know what to do and then do your best." So the quality of the practice and application is as important as

the quantity of practice—and the quantity is essential.

What I find liberating and motivating about the research is that everything, repeat everything, we need to do in order to get really good at sales is learnable—if we are willing to practice. It doesn't have to do with our DNA, our native IQ, our personality type or social style, our years of experience. If we are willing to engage in a high number of repetitions of quality practice we can become as great as we want to be. That's powerful.

CHG: That really is powerful. I've always felt that people's capacity for change is grossly under-estimated, but I confess I like hearing your scientific tone in expressing that truth. Reminds me of [Gladwell's 10,000-hour rule](#). How can companies encourage it?

MK: If an organization feels a strong need for its salespeople to keep growing their performance, and they see deliberate practice as a key lever to realizing that growth, the next issue is how to align the organization to make deliberate practice a way of life that is encouraged, expected, and rewarded.

That's where the field of change management or "systemic alignment" comes into play. Leaders in organizations have many levers they can pull that will influence what behaviors their people adopt and apply. Coordinating how and when those levers are pulled is a key to moving a sales force rather than

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just the top 10–20% who will make sure they will grow no matter what is happening around them

CHG: I like the idea that you focus heavily on beliefs: you highlight five (my favorites: ‘move off the solution,’ and ‘world-class inquiry precedes world-class advocacy’). This focus on beliefs, and on relationships—your subtitle is “Transforming the Buyer/Seller Relationship”—seems to me to have, for lack of a better term, a spiritual bent to it. Am I right?

MK: I would say the focus on beliefs is practical, powerful, sometimes transformational, and for most people, under developed. I might go as far to say that sales is the process of understanding and influencing beliefs, our own and those of others. I’ve not thought of it as spiritual per se, though depending on how someone defined “spiritual” it may have a fit.

Most of us have heard the phrase, ‘people buy based on emotion and justify with facts (or rationale).’ Various neuroscientists and cognitive psychologists have given scientific support for this conventional wisdom.

I would modify the statement a bit and say people decide based on beliefs—what they believe to be good or bad, right or wrong, useful or not, meaningful or not important, high ROI or low, and so on. How they see the world through their beliefs determines what they do—which in turn determines the results

they get. Those beliefs could be emotional, or based on what a person believes to be fact—whether those beliefs are corroborated by empirical data or not.

For many people, the beliefs that underlie their actions and decisions are unconscious or at least not clearly articulated. And when selling to multiple people, the beliefs may be conflicting as well as unclear. So the better job we do of understanding, articulating the key beliefs the client needs to resolve, both intellectually and emotionally, the better job we are likely to do demonstrating how we and our solution can address those beliefs. Understanding and clarifying beliefs goes to the heart of inquiry and addressing them goes to the heart of advocacy.

Too often both our inquiry and advocacy deal with the so-called ‘facts.’ However, as a University of Michigan study claims, “facts often do not determine our beliefs, but rather our beliefs (usually non-rational beliefs) determine the facts that we accept.”

Or as Annette Simmons claims in [The Story Factor](#), “People make their decisions based on what the facts mean to them—not on the facts themselves. The meaning they add to facts depends on their current story [their beliefs]. Facts don’t have the power to change someone’s story. Your goal is to introduce a new story that will let your facts in.”

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So yes; I believe the focus on understanding and addressing key beliefs is critical to helping clients succeed.

CHG: Stephen MR Covey, Jr., author of [The Speed of Trust](#), is a colleague of yours. What do you think is the most powerful point he makes about trust?

MK: I think his most powerful point is that trust can be built on purpose. It doesn't have to be an accident of circumstance or personality mesh. Trust with others—and in ourselves, for that matter—can be exercised like a muscle. When you apply Deliberate Practice to consciously build trust, trust becomes a reality with more and more people in more and more situations—to the benefit of all concerned.

CHG: Let's focus on trust. It's easy to get lost in various permutations of trust, but how do you see trust's role in selling? In change?

MK: It's hard to come up with something more original than the obvious—when you have trust everything goes faster, costs less, and produces superior results (usually). Typically, we find that three things flow together, up or down: trust, value, and the flow of meaningful information. If you have two you can usually get the third. Trust is hard to measure, and value is a lagging indicator. However, the flow of meaningful information (beliefs and facts) from the right people (decision makers and influencers) is a good leading indicator of whether

trust exists and value will follow.

CHG: Let me just interrupt there, sorry. In my jargon, what I hear you saying is that transparency is a driver for increasing the odds that a would-be trustor will perceive a would-be trustee as trustworthy—thus creating trust. Yes?

MK: A little complex, but yes. As you say, there are many definitions, permutations, elements to trust—it has multiple and complex equivalents. Your trustworthiness equation is certainly a good, well-tested definition. People have to trust that what you will do will really get them the results and relationships they want. They have to trust that you will actually do what you say you will do, and trust that what you do will be performed in their best interests—or that your best interests are best served by helping them get their best interest met, which indeed certainly seems to be the case. Blinding flash of the obvious—to gain trust, you have to be trustworthy.

I think that in inquiry, a key skill is to consciously, with our words and behavior, create a container of safety where people can freely express what they think, feel, believe to be true. And if the container is really strong and expansive, they will allow us to question, examine, and offer alternatives to those beliefs. Most only are willing to do that if they feel the information they share will be used for them rather than against them—they have to trust our intent, our purpose in asking questions.

Trust, Sales and Getting Real:

INTERVIEW WITH AUTHOR MAHAN KHALSA

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CHARLES H. GREEN
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23, 2011

I sometimes say intent is more important than technique—perhaps another way to express the old axiom that people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. The good news is that you can get crystal clear on your intent and how it is mutually beneficial, and you can practice becoming completely congruent with that intent before picking up the phone or walking into a room.

CHG: I find people first want to know the 'magic phrases' to use, and it's really not a matter of words only.

MK: You can communicate your intent without even saying a word. When people can sense that your intent serves their best interests, they are willing to open the trust valve at least a little. If that little bit is rewarded, they can risk a little more, and so on. If the risk is continually rewarded, trust grows. Of course, as you well know, all the hard earned work can vanish suddenly if the bond is broken. So constant attention to language and behaviors is critical—and learnable, and improvable.

As far as the role of trust in change, I feel the key is that if everyone in the organization feels the best way of improving our numbers is to focus first on improving our client's numbers, the basis of trust will be institutionalized. Jack Welch once said,

“One thing we've discovered with certainty is that anything we do that makes the customer more successful inevitably results in a financial return for us.”

To create a trust-based organization everyone has to believe that our self-interests are served by helping our customers reach their self-interests. When that belief permeates an organization and is backed by action, process, and rewards—not just value statements—trust can become a competitive advantage.

Often, in large organizations, the further away executives are from the customers, the more they focus on salesperson activity or quantity-based leading indicators (numbers of calls, number of proposals) versus quality-based leading indicators (flow of meaningful information). Perhaps they don't trust the quality can be improved and that pulling the quantity lever is their best choice. They concentrate on improving the seller's numbers (high self-orientation) rather than the buyer's numbers (high other-orientation) and they put into place reward and reinforcement systems to reflect that emphasis. As buyers, we can feel where that focus is placed, and ironically, when it is on the seller's numbers rather than our own, we are less likely to take action to improve their numbers.

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Customer focus is not just a tag line. It is a passionate, all consuming orientation that can guide everything we do. Importantly, it helps us stay away from what I called “dysfunctional” selling and push back with both courage and consideration when customers ask us to do—or to not do—things which would help the client succeed.

CHG: You have the ear of a lot of people—some of whom even read this blog! What would you suggest are the top few things people can do as individuals to increase trust in the workplace?

MK: Well, of course before I’d want to give someone any advice, I’d want to make sure they wanted it and would want to understand their specific situation. And I’d want to make sure I was following my own advice before I’d advance it to others. So here are three things I tell myself—and we at Ninety Five 5 tell each other:

1. No Guessing. If people are going to trust you to help them get what they want, need, and value, you have the obligation and right to understand their beliefs as to what that really means. Remember, beliefs are often unclear or not well articulated. If you guess about what they want, don’t have mutual clarity on the outcomes and rewards, don’t understand what has or will stop them, don’t know how they will make a decision, or what resources they will apply to getting a solution that meets their needs, you will likely

miss the (undefined) target and trust will suffer.

2. Say it, Do it. Build the power of your word. You don’t have to say, “I promise.” If you say it, it is your Word, and your Word is your bond. If you say it, do it. Period. If you find it is going to be a challenge to meet your word, communicate the difficulty to the other person. Let them agree to a change or say they need you to meet your word. If you need to meet your word, meet it. Period.
3. Be Clear. Be crystal clear on your intent and how it serves the interests of the other person(s)—even as it serves your own. Before any interaction, clear out any internal or external pressures that might cause you to be incongruent with that intent. Let your intent manifest with clarity and congruency through what you say, how you say it, what you look like, and what you do. Be so clear that it becomes easy and natural to be fearless, be flexible, and have fun.

Or maybe just be the kind of seller you would love to have if you were the buyer. One you could really trust.

CHG: A perfect note to end on. Thanks so much, Mahan, it’s been very enlightening.

The Trust Matters Primer

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SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

Charles H. Green, co-author of [The Trusted Advisor](#) (Free Press, October 2000) and [Trust-Based Selling](#) (McGraw-Hill, December 2005) presents and speaks on the nature of trusted client relationships in business, with experience built from 25 years of consulting to the professional services industry. His presentations are rich with real examples, as well as drawing from current business events. He speaks effectively before any size group. Dynamic and literate, his talks are fact-based, provocative, and highly practical. [FIND OUT MORE](#)

SEMINARS AND COACHING SERVICES

Helping people become trusted advisors is the core of our work. We customize client relationship strengthening programs for your firm by building from two basic templates: [Trust-Based Selling™](#), and [Building Trusted Advisor Relationships](#).

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

In November we launched the [Trusted Advisor Mastery](#) program. A hybrid of personal coaching, group online discussion, and customized webcast content delivery, it represents a fast-track approach for professionals who are serious about getting very good, very fast, at the mindsets and skillsets of a Trusted Advisor and of Trust-based Selling. For more information about the program, visit this [Introduction to the \[Trusted Advisor Mastery program\]\(#\)](#).

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To get your name on the list for an opening in the next session, email us at mastery@trustedadvisor.com

The Trust Matters Primer

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SERVICE OFFERINGS

TRUST DIAGNOSTICS

We believe that both people and organizations can become more trustworthy — if they have the right tools. And we believe that building trust builds business.

We offers services for diagnosing the trustworthiness of individuals and organizations, and the tools for increasing that trustworthiness. All are based on the work of Charles H. Green in the area of trust over the last 12 years, including the [Trust Equation](#) and the [Trust Principles](#).

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

TRUST ROADMAPS

Where can the power of trust best work for your organization? Exactly how can you build more business by building more trust within and around your organization?

The Trust Roadmap™ is a tool for assessing the trustworthiness of an organization. Based on the four [Trust Principles](#), it highlights dimensions where your company or organization is already strong on trustworthiness, and areas where trust can be improved.

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

TRUST WORKSHOPS

Do your professionals shy away from “selling?” Do they rely solely on their expertise to sustain client relationships and to build new business? Is the effectiveness of your organization limited by a lack of trust among your people?

Lively, interactive, and practical, our workshop learning programs are based on real-life problems the participants bring to their sessions. Each program is a customized session for you based on our core programs.

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TRUST-BASED COACHING

Trust coaching is executive coaching with a point of view. It’s based on the four factors of the Trust Equation, and works to help you or your executives gain confidence in selling, build trust-based relationships, and perform at your highest levels.

Our coaches combine coaching expertise with business experience, and are willing to challenge executives throughout the coaching process.

[Contact us](#) to discuss how coaching can benefit your team or organization.

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

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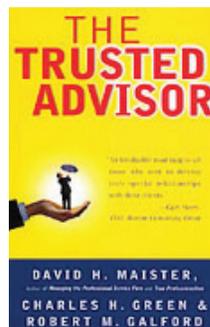
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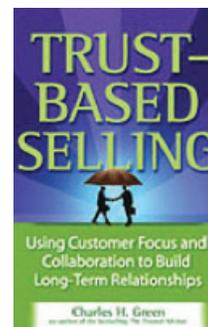
Charles H. Green is a speaker and executive educator on trust-based relationships and Trust-Based Selling in complex businesses. He is author of [Trust-Based Selling](#) (McGraw-Hill, 2005), and co-author of [The Trusted Advisor](#) (with David Maister and Rob Galford, Free Press, October 2000). Charles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

CHARLES H. GREEN BOOKS



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- » Increase sales results
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- » Build deeper and more satisfying personal relationships with people who matter

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