



Think More Expertise Will Make You More Trusted? **Think Again.**

Do men perceive themselves as more trustworthy than women? Do we become more worthy of trust as we age? Can you trust some industries more than others? These and other trust-related questions are answered in a new study conducted by Trusted Advisor Associates LLC, a management consultancy focused on the role of trust in business.

The data are based on more than 12,000 responses to the company's Trust Quotient quiz—a proprietary self-assessment instrument that measures trustworthiness as a composite of four components: credibility, reliability, intimacy and self-orientation. Each respondent's trust score was determined by answers to 20 questions—five questions for each of the four components—which were then combined to produce an overall trust score on a scale from 20 to 100.

The work of Charles H. Green, founder of Trusted Advisor Associates LLC, has centered on a model of trustworthiness based on these four components:

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- **Credibility** – the words we say, the skills and credentials we bring, and the way in which people experience us make people trust us

The study represents the largest ever on the subject of trustworthiness, and the implications of the findings bring some much-needed definition and texture to the broader dialogue around issues of corporate ethics, integrity and trust.

- **Reliability** – the actions we take, our predictability, and the ways in which people find us reliable make people trust us
- **Intimacy** – the extent to which people feel they can confide in us, and perceive us as discreet and empathetic make people trust us
- **Self-orientation** – the more people feel we are focused on ourselves, rather than them, the less they trust us

KEY FINDINGS AT A GLANCE: TRUST RATINGS BY GENDER, AGE AND JOB:

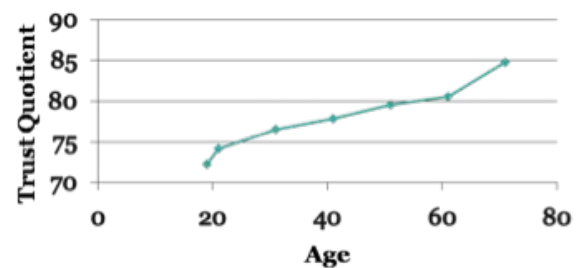
What was the average trustworthiness of all respondents?

The average trust quotient across all 12,857 respondents was 80.1 (on a scale of 20 - 100).

Who are more trustworthy—men or women?

Overall, there is very little difference: women rated themselves as slightly more trustworthy, at 80.7, vs. 79.6 for men. However, the differences are instructive: women and men score almost equally on credibility and self-orientation, and women have an edge in reliability—21.0 vs. 20.6. The big difference comes in the factor of intimacy, where women on average are 0.6 points higher—20.0 vs. 19.4. Thus most of the gender difference derives from higher scores at the key factor of intimacy.

Does trustworthiness increase or decrease with age?



One of the strongest correlations in the

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Trust Quotient (TQ) study is the linking of trustworthiness and age. The older we get, the more trustworthy we are (or at least think we are). Interestingly, the increase in over-

all TQ is driven by nearly equal increases in each of the component scores, indicating that as we age, we feel that we have become more credible, more reliable, better at intimacy, and less self-oriented. These are not innate, unchanging characteristics; all can be improved.

How does trustworthiness vary by industry or job?

Overall, there are few discernible patterns at the job and industry level. As a broad statement, those with jobs requiring high personal interaction (general management, training, sales) tend to rate higher than those in more solitary roles (research,

accounting, legal). The same loose pattern holds true when looking at results aggregated by industry. Higher scoring industries include medical care, retail banking, real estate, and consulting.

These data underscore that trustworthiness is a personal attribute, distributed broadly across industries. It also suggests a large opportunity—no matter what industry you're in—to differentiate by building businesses with higher concentrations of trustworthy people.

What components are people strongest and weakest in?

On average, the greatest strength for participants is reliability. For 53% of respondents, this is the highest (or tied for the highest) subcomponent. In contrast, intimacy and self-orientation had the lowest overall component scores; only 28% of respondents lead with each of these areas.

What is the relationship between trust component scores and the overall trust quotient?

An interesting finding in the data is that the more consistent the trust component scores,

The greatest opportunity for differentiation by trust lies not in the rational attributes of trust—credibility and reliability—but in the non-rational, or soft, side of trust—increasing intimacy and lowering self-orientation.

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the higher the overall trust quotient. The highest trust quotient shows up in those who have balanced component scores—they averaged 87.2, vs. the 80.1 average. The higher the standard deviation between component scores, the lower the trust quotient total. This suggests the importance of integrity. We do not trust those who seem erratic or inconsistent. They do not seem whole, or integral. An even blend of the four trust components is more effective than being off the charts in one or two areas.

BEHIND THE NUMBERS—WHAT TRUST TEMPERAMENTS™ TELL US ABOUT WHERE COMPANIES ARE GETTING IT WRONG

The overall Trust Quotient is calculated from four subcomponents. Analyses of

patterns in these subcomponents and how they interact yield the most notable and counterintuitive findings of the survey. They suggest that the most effective trust-building strategies are not what most people focus on.

As noted above, balanced subcomponent scores led to higher overall Trust Quotients. For approximately two-thirds of respondents, however, there was a clear “leading pair” of components, indicating areas of strength and opportunity. From the survey results, Trusted Advisor Associates LLC has developed tangible descriptions of six distinct Trust Temperaments™ as indicators of someone’s natural inclinations when it comes to building trust. They are made up of the six possible combinations of top two trust component scores.

By focusing on the two top scoring components, the six Trust Temperaments reflect different strategies people have for being trustworthy. They provide an answer to the question “Why should I trust you?” For the Expert, the answer is “because I know how to do this and you can count on me to get the job done.” For

The Expert: Strongest in Credibility + Reliability

The Steward: Strongest in Reliability + Low Self-orientation

The Doer: Strongest in Reliability + Intimacy

The Connector: Strongest in Intimacy + Low Self-orientation

The Professor: Strongest in Credibility + Low Self-orientation

The Catalyst: Strongest in Credibility + Intimacy

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the Connector, the answer is “because you know you can confide in me and that I am focused on what’s in *your* best interest.”

KEY FINDINGS IN COMPONENT SCORES

By a wide margin, the most common Trust Temperament across the over 12,000 respon-

These findings also suggest that conventional thinking about trustworthiness being an innate trait—rather than teachable skill—is not accurate.

dents was the Expert—those whose trustworthiness is based foremost on Credibility and Reliability. However, the data show that this is one of the least effective trustworthiness strategies. That is, the Experts’ Trust Quotient scores in aggregate are

among the lowest Trust Quotient scores of all the Temperaments. Only the Professor type (Credibility + low Self-Orientation) scores lower.

Intimacy is the shared component in three of the four highest scoring Temperaments. The Doer (strongest in Reliability + Intimacy) led the results. This is the person we think of

as the PTA President, the one who gets things done. Remember that over half the respondents to the survey lead with Reliability; when combined with intimacy, or an ability to connect with other people and make them feel safe, it’s a powerful formula for building trust.

TRUST TEMPERAMENTS™

Trust Temperament™	Ranked by Frequency of Occurrence	Ranked by Effectiveness
CR - The Expert	1	5
RS - The Steward	2	4
RI - The Doer	3	1
IS - The Connector	4	2
CI - The Catalyst	5	3
CS - The Professor	6	6

“Frequency” is occurrence among over 12,000 people who have taken the Trust Quotient assessment. “Effectiveness” is a ranking of their overall scores on the 20 TQ questions.

Intriguingly, Trust Temperaments that include credibility as one of their components tended to score lower. This suggests that skill mastery and knowledge are the least effective means for building trust. Ironically, this is

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what most companies instinctively emphasize when they first think of trust.

GOING AGAINST CONVENTIONAL WISDOM: TRUST *CAN* BE TAUGHT

Some business leaders make the case that to improve performance, people and businesses

By focusing on even minor improvements in their weak components, they can see a major impact on their overall ability to build trust.

USING THE DATA TO IMPROVE YOUR BUSINESS: MEASURABLE AND RAPID IMPACT

Companies can use these findings to make a measurable—and rapid—impact on their trustworthiness; the data offer insights into the steps that will produce the greatest return.

- Credibility (credentials and skill mastery), which most companies put a premium on, is the least helpful in building trust. More skills training simply won't build trust relationships.
- Intimacy skills, however, can be quickly taught and offer perhaps the best path forward for companies to make a real and sustained impact on the trustworthiness of their people. Most companies, however, do little to develop the intimacy skills of their people, which is a missed opportunity, according to Green. "The skills of intimacy are among the most learnable. It is easier

Corporations are unwittingly emphasizing the least effective trust strategies in their training, evaluation and overall people development.

should leverage their strengths rather than concentrating on fixing their weaknesses. This makes a great deal of sense in areas of skills mastery. But when it comes to trust, the opposite is demonstrably true. By focusing on their weaknesses, individuals can make disproportionately

large and rapid improvements in their trustworthiness, because improving weaknesses has the effect of lowering standard deviation, thereby increasing perceived integrity. By becoming aware of an imbalance in their trustworthiness strategies, individuals can strengthen their overall trustworthiness.

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to learn to listen and to empathize than it is to gain an advanced degree.”

- Building a culture which helps individuals lower their self-orientation, look at the longer term and work collaboratively also helps in building trust relationships, and can allow companies to reap the benefits of stronger client relationships and greater trust among team members.

The study findings clearly suggest that companies need to focus more on soft skills. They also function as an indictment, of sorts, of the American system of management, with its focus on competition, metrics and processes to the exclusion of other factors—such as character, integrity and honor.

The bottom line is, if companies want to become more trustworthy they need to broaden their view of what their most powerful and valuable strategies and assets are. Emphasizing the development of such soft skills as intimacy and decreasing individuals’ self-orientation have tremendous potential to help companies build trustworthiness, and through building trust relationships, build

their business.

About Trusted Advisor Associates LLC



[Trusted Advisor Associates LLC](#) is a management consultancy with a world-wide practice in helping individuals and organizations become trusted advisors to their clients and customers. Trusted Advisor Associates offers services in [Trust Diagnostics™](#) at the individual and organizational levels, learning programs, and executive coaching.

The company was founded by [Charles H. Green](#), author of [The Trusted Advisor](#) (with David Maister and Robert Galford) and [Trust-based Selling](#). Charles H. Green is an original thinker on the subjects of business culture, management mores in a flat world, collaboration, innovation and the central role of trust. Charlie spent over 20 years of his career at major consulting firms before forming Trusted Advisor Associates. A graduate of Harvard Business School, he combines a rigorous intellectual discipline with humor and practical, lively advice for individuals, businesses and the world at large.

[Sandy Styer](#), also a graduate of Harvard Business School, has spent most of her career in the corporate world, developing new products, bringing new ideas to market and leading organization change. She heads the [Trust Diagnostics™](#) practice at Trusted Advisor Associates LLC. To learn more about assessing and building trust within your organization, contact Sandy.

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About Soliant Consulting



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