

WOMEN OF WITNESS

TIPS TO BETTER RELATIONSHIPS



Every Relationship Rises or Falls on Trust

By Alan Zimmerman

Every lasting relationship—whether with a customer, coworker, or loved one—stands or falls on one thing: trust. Without it, loyalty fades, teamwork collapses, and families drift apart. With it, everything becomes stronger, more open, and more productive.

When it comes to customer loyalty, research from Texas A&M University shows that if customers trust you—if they see you as reliable and consistent—they don't just buy from you, they become enthusiastic supporters.

The same is true at work. If your coworkers see you as honest—even when it's not comfortable—you'll earn a bond of trust that fuels motivation and cooperation.

And at home? Trust is what transforms conversations into openness and families into deeper closeness.

George McDonald once said:

“It is a greater compliment to be trusted than loved.”

Fortunately, trust is not something you're stuck with—it can be built, and if necessary, rebuilt.

Now, here are five proven trust-builders you can start using immediately.

1. Assume the Best About the Other Person. When something goes wrong, don't jump to blame or assume bad intent. Start by assuming the best.

Maybe a coworker wasn't trained properly. Maybe your instructions were unclear. By giving people the benefit of the doubt, you move from pointing fingers to finding solutions—together.

2. Stick Up for the Other Person. Martin Luther King, Jr. said:

“In the end we will not remember the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.”

I once chaired a task force that uncovered misuse of funds. My members promised to back me when I confronted the board—but when push came to shove, I stood alone.

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Their silence taught me that trust grows when you defend others, even when it's hard, and it crumbles when you don't.

3. Refuse to Gossip About the Other Person. You may be tempted to gossip about someone, especially if you're upset with the other person. It may even give you a little relief to vent your frustrations about what this other person has done or not done.

Don't do it! Or be very careful ... because the negative gossip you're sharing about someone almost always gets back to that person. And it usually sounds worse than what you said.

When that happens, you seriously weaken the very trust you are trying to build with the other person.

4. Keep Your Promises to the Other Person. Nothing builds trust faster than keeping your word—and nothing destroys it faster than breaking it.

The Center for Creative Leadership found that executives who failed to reach the top shared one fatal flaw: they didn't keep promises.

Think about it. No one ever forgets a promise. You tell your child you'll take her to the amusement park and she'll remind you fifteen times that "you promised." You tell a colleague that you'll get back to him and he sees it as a promise. And it doesn't work to go back to that colleague and say you forgot or you got busy. In his mind, you broke your promise, and the trust between the two of you was damaged.

5. Stick with the Other Person. Trust deepens when people know you'll stand by them.

Don't be like the woman who rushed home from work and exclaimed to her husband, "Pack your bags. I've won the lottery!"

The husband excitedly asked, "Should I pack clothes for warm or cold weather?"

She replied, "Pack 'em all. You're leaving!"

What's needed is the kind of commitment demonstrated by author Max Lucado's parents. His parents came to every one of his sixty Little League games. They never missed, even though he only got two hits in all his years of playing. As Max later wrote:

"Their commitment was deeper than my performance."

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Put another way, their commitment wasn't tied to his performance; it was tied to him. It's that kind of sticking with someone that builds trust.

The Bottom Line

Trust takes time, like laying brick after brick to build a fortress. Each choice—assuming the best, defending others, refusing gossip, keeping promises, and showing loyalty—adds another layer of strength to your relationships.

Over time, those layers form an unshakable foundation for loyalty, teamwork, and closeness in every area of life. That's why trust changes everything.

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