



## 10 Tips to Build Trust with Your Boss

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPLP

How much better off would you be if your boss trusted you more in the future? There are literally hundreds of things you can do to increase the trust that your boss has in you. Here are ten of my favorite ideas to consider. If you do all ten of these things, chances are you will enjoy a healthy trust level with your boss.

**1. Be Trustworthy.** In every situation, you need to show integrity and commitment to do the right thing. If there is a lapse, the boss might not pin you down immediately, but each minor slip or major gaff is going into the cerebral cortex of the boss for evaluation. You can tell when things are not going well by the way the boss acts toward you. It is almost like that instinctive feeling you have when your mate is angry with you. Nothing needs to be said overtly; you just know. Pay attention, and if there is the possibility of damage, get some remediation going quickly.

**2. Show More Trust.** My "First Law of Trust" states that if you want to see more trust coming your way in a relationship, you need to extend more trust to the other person. Trust is reciprocal, and normally extending more trust will cause an automatic reaction in the direction of higher trust toward you.

**3. Increase Communication.** Voids in communication work to deteriorate trust for several reasons. First, the boss may become distracted by other things and not feel as close to you. Second, if there is some doubt about how you are reacting to things, many bosses will assume the worst. Third, the boss may hear things from others about you that are not true or are distorted in some way. You need to ensure there is enough air time to keep the relationship fresh and positive. The caveat here is to avoid being a pest. It is a fine line from not having enough interface to over communicating. If you are in doubt, just ask your boss if your pattern of communication is close to optimal.

**4. Clarify Expectations.** You may be doing great work but not be dead center on the objectives of your boss. That actually puts your efforts slightly at cross purposes to the boss. If you start getting some pushback or more micromanaging than in the past, you

are likely off on a tangent relative to your boss's desires. Get this corrected as soon as possible.

**5. Don't Assume.** When we presume to know what the boss is thinking, we sow the seeds of lower trust. Human beings have a unique way of not divulging full intent, so by assuming you know exactly what the boss wants without verification, you are taking a big risk. You may be able to get away with it for a while, but sooner or later you are going to disappoint. It is far better just to verify you understand the intent of your boss whenever there is a potential lapse.

**6. Call Out Trust Issues.** Do it delicately so as not to offend. If your boss is taking shortcuts or doing marginal things in terms of ethics, it is important to have a channel to ask questions. Use Socratic Questions rather than accusatory statements as a preferred approach. For example, rather than saying, "I think you are wrong to move some of the inventory into the sales category for this month," a far wiser approach might be, "In what ways might the auditors misinterpret our motive if they discover we moved some inventory into the sales category?"

**7. Admit Mistakes.** Occasionally you will make a mistake. When you do, it is usually a good idea to admit it to your boss. I learned that lesson early in my career when I made a serious blunder that my boss would not have known about if I did not reveal it. I immediately blew myself in by saying, "You would never know this if I did not tell you, but here is what happened..." That little speech made a material difference in my career for the next 25 years. Nothing shows integrity and builds trust faster than to fess up to something that would never be discovered if you did not reveal it.

**8. Watch The Body Language.** Most of the clues that you are going off course with your boss in terms of trust will not come verbally or even in e-mails. The information will come "in between the lines," and you must be adept at picking up the signals. Particularly watch for changes in body language. In electronic communication, the body language is there if you know how to read it. Watch for the use of pronouns and distribution changes. Those areas often contain vital information. Also watch the speed of returned messages. A change there is a signal that needs to be understood. Sometimes it is a simple case of overload, but other times it is a manifestation of lower trust.

**9. Show Appreciation.** Do not go overboard and become an overt sycophant, but do have an attitude of gratitude when the boss does positive things for you. In this area, the observation of body language is particularly critical. Watch for changes in gestures to recognize if you are laying it on too thick.

**10. Care About Your Boss.** In the hubbub of daily activities, it is easy to forget that your boss is a person with hopes and dreams. Get involved in his or her personal goals

in a prudent way. Find out about the family situation, if that is acceptable, and inquire about how things are going. Do not do this in a manipulative way but in a sincere caring way. People do nice things for people they like. If you truly care about your boss, that will encourage a reciprocal feeling within that person, and the relationship will grow stronger.

There are dozens (perhaps hundreds) of other ways you can enhance the trust level with your boss and build a strong relationship that will endure. Follow these ten rules and you will be well on your way to a healthy relationship. That philosophy the cheapest and most effective insurance policy you can acquire in any organization.

Bob Whipple, MBA, CPLP, is a consultant, trainer, speaker, and author in the areas of leadership and trust. He is the author of: *The Trust Factor: Advanced Leadership for Professionals*, *Understanding E-Body Language: Building Trust Online*, and *Leading with Trust is Like Sailing Downwind*. Bob has many years as a senior executive with a Fortune 500 Company and with non-profit organizations. For more information, or to bring Bob in to speak at your next event, **contact him at** [www.Leadergrow.com](http://www.Leadergrow.com), [bwhipple@leadergrow.com](mailto:bwhipple@leadergrow.com) or 585.392.7763

