

NLE Quick Tip: Relationship Building

Instilling trust and effective communication in building relationships is key with clients, candidates, customers and anyone else. Trust (or lack of trust) can be visualized on a continuum. There are positive things we do that build and increase trust; there are also negative things we do that erode or diminish trust. You can think of the continuum like a bank account. In relationships we continually either make deposits (which increase trust in our account) or we take withdrawals that diminish the overall trust in the account.

When seeking to increase trust in a relationship, it's always important to remember the platinum rule. Most of us are familiar with the Golden Rule – “*Treat others as you want to be treated.*” The platinum rule says “*Treat others as they want to be treated.*” In this quick tip, Mark reminds us to remember that trust is built with a commitment to consistently increasing the positive actions in your relationships.

Meeting: “Relationship Building”

(Facilitator): Much of what Mark talks about with trust stems from having mutual expectations of what others can count on from you and what you want to be able to count on from others. Seems straightforward, right?

Establishing mutual commitments is the key to a meaningful relationship. This is true for personal relationships, relationships with clients, and relationships with employees. The bedrock of a meaningful relationship is trust, and trust is solidified or broken based on reliability in the form of honoring our commitments. We have all heard expressions like, “*his actions spoke so loud, I could not hear his words*” or, “*she says what she will do, and does what she says.*” Spouses, friends, co-workers, and our employees do not have a rule book for correct behavior by either themselves or by us unless we get one from them, give them one, or co-create one.

The easiest way to create this blueprint? Solicit feedback from those around you! This is your audience of judges, and they will give you the answers to the test. Ask questions and be open to receiving feedback – some starting questions are offered up below:

- Who would you say is the best boss you've ever had (present company excluded, of course)? What characteristics or qualities did they have that stand out?
- What would you replicate from previous companies or departments in which you've worked?
- What do you most appreciate about the leadership of our organization/team?
- As coworkers/colleagues/leaders/recruiters, what are we not doing that we should be?
- If you became CEO tomorrow, what is the first thing you would change? Why?
- What frustrates you most when it comes to interactions with coworkers/recruiters/leadership?
- What is our common vision for the future of our firm, and does each person know specifically their part in the execution and achievement of that vision?
- What are some positive actions we can take to build more trust with those within our walls? (remember that a lack of trust does not necessarily equate to dishonesty, rather a lack of communication or expectations)

Of course, this same type of exercise could also be conducted for relationships with candidates and clients in your market!

From that feedback, come up with a list of five or ten expectations to which you know you can be held accountable. Make the expectations quantifiable, so that issues will not arise with relativity. Do not commit to something in which you will likely fall short; this should be set in stone on both sides and waver only for special exceptions or with permission from the other party. The key is that you cover what your team/colleagues can count on from you in your professional relationship, and that what they can count on from you are things that matter to them.

The following are examples of commitments that could be modified for your own professional environment, and made as quantifiable as possible:

- **Go to the Source:** I will have the courage to respectfully confront (to provide feedback) and be confronted (to receive feedback). I will provide you with honest guidance regarding your performance on a consistent basis, and do so in a private environment.
- **Career Path Blueprint:** I will provide a career path with quantifiable benchmarks, and educate you as to the vision I have for you and your contribution. I will see potential in you that you may not yet see in yourself, and remain committed to your professional development.
- **Mutual Accountability:** In service of your long-term potential, I will hold you accountable to doing the things you said you would do. I will invite feedback consistently about my leadership abilities, our team's dynamic, and how things can improve.
- **Timely Response:** I will respond to all emails promptly and will not cancel standing meetings unless there is a true emergency or unavoidable last-minute conflict.
- **Consistency:** I will have times of being intensely focused on a project or unavailable at times, but I will not allow myself to have any passive aggressive or "bad days." You can count on my consistency as a leader and colleague.

What can others in your office trust you for, and how?

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