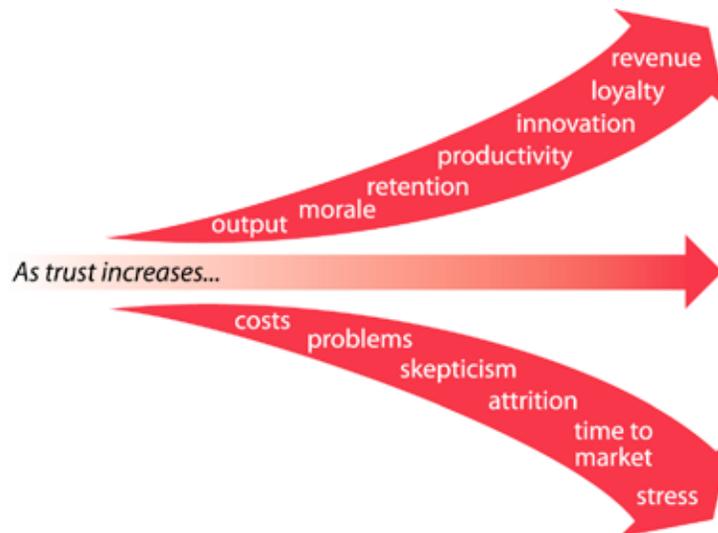


# THE REAL CRISIS AND 8 WAYS TO BEAT IT

by David Horsager



**W**e are in a crisis. World Economic Forum leaders recently declared that our biggest crisis is not financial but a lack of trust and confidence. We are in a trust crisis and few people really understand the bottom line implications. Not only does it affect credit and government relations, but it also affects every relationship and organization.

A recent Gallup poll shows that America's confidence in nearly every major societal institution is declining. Pull out any newspaper and you will see countless examples of how trust is violated every day. Collectively, we no longer trust major corporations, banks, government, the media, public schools, nor organized religion. Doing business in this suspicious climate is extraordinarily difficult, and the degree to which people trust you and your organization is quite literally the difference between success and failure. Professor John Whitney of the Columbia Business School stated that, "Mistrust doubles the cost of doing business. I think it costs even more."

Without trust, leaders lose teams and sales people lose sales. Without

trust, local government leaders lose productivity, retention of good people, reputation, morale and revenue. The lower the trust, the more time everything takes, the more everything costs, and the lower the loyalty of everyone involved. However, with greater trust comes greater innovation, creativity, impact, freedom and morale.

In our ever-expanding global community, our ability to reach across borders has created amazing opportunities, but there is a challenge. Those opportunities do not always come easily, as we struggle to learn about the unfamiliar and wonder if we can trust what we do not yet understand.

Trust is not just a "soft skill" - it is the fundamental key to lasting success. Though it may appear intangible, it is actually a measurable competency that can deliver real results in both personal and professional lives.

No matter your position in life - parent, CEO, government official or soccer coach - your ability to inspire trust has a direct impact on your influence and success.

There are eight pillars that are identified in my research that are key to building and supporting trust.

**Clarity:** People trust the clear and mistrust the ambiguous. Clarity requires honesty. With honesty comes the need to share your vision, your purpose, and your expectations. Once people have a good understanding of what you stand for, where you want to go and the role they play in your vision, it is easier to trust in your leadership.

**Compassion:** People put faith in those who care beyond themselves. Show that you can look beyond your own needs and wants. Trust and the ability to show empathy go hand in hand. There is a reason why we still hear, "people do not care how much you know until they know how much you care."

**Character:** People notice those who do what's right over what's easy. It is a complex word, but for our purposes, let us consider the two main components - integrity and morality. With integrity, you are being consistent with your thoughts, words, and actions. Add that to a strong moral compass, a sense of right and wrong, and you are giving people someone they can trust.

**Competency:** People have confidence in those who stay fresh, relevant, and capable. Knowing how to do your job well matters. Whether it is a dentist giving you a root canal or the mechanic replacing your transmission, you want to know they are competent and capable of doing their job. The same applies to you. If you want people to trust you, make competency a priority.

**Commitment:** People believe in those who stand through adversity. In this instance, actions definitely speak louder than words. So if you say something matters to you, be prepared to show it to the people whose trust you want. It can mean demonstrating tenacity and stubbornness, and making it clear you will see things through to the end.

**Connection:** People want to follow, buy from and be around friends. It's easier to trust a friend than a stranger, so look for ways to engage with people and build relationships. You can start by learning to ask great questions to determine the common ground you share. We find it easier to trust when we sense that we connect in some area.

**Contribution:** People immediately respond to results. By giving of yourself and your talents, you are investing in others. And if you are serious about making a difference, you need to invest in the actions that will make your vision a reality. People trust those who actually do as opposed to just talking about doing.

**Consistency:** People love to see the little things done consistently. While all the pillars are important for building trust, failing to be consistent can undermine your efforts. Think of consistency like a savings account. Put a little in each day and over time, it will pay you back in safety and security. Remember: it is unlikely that you will get one, big chance to be trusted. Instead, you will have thousands of small ones. Like the savings account, when you respond consistently you will see the results build up over time.

All of these pillars are the core to being a trusted individual or organization. Without consistency these pillars do not matter. Let us take clarity for example. Your organization can have a very clear effective vision and mission, but if you're not sharing it at least every 30 days consistently, then



your team does not know it. Same with commitment, you can make a promise to lose 50 pounds in five months, but if you are not consistently following an eating plan and exercising, by the end of five months, your results won't be what you hoped.

If you want to implement the trust edge into your life or organization you must be consistent in each pillar. When this happens trust increases, as well as output, morale, retention, productivity, innovation, loyalty and revenue. Without trust costs are high and skepticism and attrition increase. A lack of trust really is your biggest expense.

Right now we have an opportunity to be agents of change. We cannot regain trust in business or government if we do not trust each other. It starts with you. It is through individuals that we can rebuild trust in our communities and our institutions. Have the courage to act on what you know to be true - that trust is the foundation of all genuine and lasting success. □

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**Learn more about the eight pillars of trust and the opportunities for local government success at the MML Annual Conference Keynote Address in St. Louis on Sept. 13, 2016!**