



The Baron
Group, Inc.

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Building Trust—The most important characteristic of all

When you interview clients and ask them what they expect from the salespeople who call on them, many of the responses are predictable. They want you to know your stuff (Credibility). They want you to be able to relate to them (Empathy). They want you to be aware of their concerns (Sensitivity). They want to enjoy working with you (Affability). They want to be confident that you will deliver (Dependability). And they need to believe what you tell them (Sincerity).

We hear these all the time. So do you. When you ask your clients what they expect of you, these are among the responses you will get.

But the response you hear most often is really a combination of all these behaviors. And that of course is **trustworthiness**. If they don't trust you, they won't do business with you. It is no more complicated than that. Trust dwarfs everything else.

That is why trust is so important. We use the "Trust Formula" that Bill Cope and John Philipp at Syntectics® Inc. developed years ago. The original version of the formula looked like this:

$$\text{TRUST} = \frac{\text{Credibility} \times \text{Intimacy}}{\text{Risk}}$$

Of course, it's hard to quantify something as intangible or amorphous as trust. But the formula works. As we demonstrate credibility it becomes easier for others to trust us. As we develop intimate relationships, others want to trust us. Yet as the formula suggests, as risk increases, trust becomes more difficult.

We can control the *numerator* of the equation. The behaviors listed previously all contribute to demonstrating credibility and intimacy. We know how to demonstrate the behaviors in the numerator.

It is the *denominator* that challenges us. That is harder to control. The risk of doing business with us will always be there with a prospective client. When they decide to do business with us there is a "transfer of power." As a prospect they hold all the cards; once they decide to do business with us they are dependent upon us. That becomes risky.

So we constantly need to ask ourselves how we can reduce the risk for that potential client. Here are three ways to do that:

- **Start Small**—That first piece of business doesn't have to be huge. Ask the client to "test market" what we can do.
- **Parallel Situations**—Clients love to hear how others had similar concerns and how they dealt with it.
- **Share the Risk**—Assure the client that you "have skin in the game"—that if things go awry, you will pay a price, as well. It is not just *their* risk.

The list goes on. Add to it yourself. But keep in mind that risk management is a key variable to consider when you attempt to develop trusting relationships with clients.