

Covey, S. M. R. (2006). *The Speed of Trust: The One Thing That Changes Everything*. New York: Free Press, 125-143.

Stephen Covey, author of the book, "The Speed of Trust: The One Thing that Changes Everything," talks about how trust in the workplace decreases cost and increases speed, productivity, collaboration and innovation. Among other things, "The Speed of Trust" discusses 13 specific behaviors that help build trust with others. Covey considers these 13 behaviors powerful for building trust because they:

- build on enduring principles that govern trusting relationships
- reflect personal credibility
- can be put into action immediately
- can be applied to any relationship.

Several of these different behaviors will be discussed in a series of forthcoming summaries. All of these behaviors build on a few common ideas, which are briefly introduced below before elaborating on "Talk Straight," which is the specific behavior chosen for this summary.

Background: Behavior

- Behavior matters; specifically, what people do very often means more than what they say. Words can be useful to describe to others what they may expect, and, when these words are followed by consistent action, this helps to build trust.
- Behavior can be changed. Most people probably can think of behaviors that they personally have changed, even very difficult ones, so there are many tangible examples of behavior being malleable. The author points out that, "for the most part, the difference between those who change behavior and those who don't is a compelling sense of purpose" (Covey, 2006, p. 129).
- Each of the 13 behaviors can be thought of as existing on a continuum. The optimal balance is to strive for the middle; below that level is ineffective, and going past the optimal spot can take a potentially effective behavior too far.

Background: Trust

- Building trust can be thought of in terms of "trust accounts," and within this concept are a few key points that the author articulates using financial vernacular. These trust accounts are positively affected by trustworthy behavior (deposits), and are negatively impacted by trust-deducting behavior (withdrawals).
- Each trust account we have is different, depending on the people with whom we are working to build trust. For example, building trust may look different with a 3-year-old than with a 30-year-old.
- Each relationship has two trust accounts (since there are 2 people in each relationship, and each person has his/her own trust account based on each person's perception of the trust in the relationship).
- All deposits and withdrawals are not necessarily equal; some withdrawals, like forgetting an anniversary, will be a much bigger deal than forgetting to say thank you for something.
- Withdrawals often make a much bigger impact than deposits.
- Often, trust is most efficiently built by eliminating withdrawals.
- A "deposit" to one person may not be viewed as such by another. For example, being taken to dinner may be seen as a deposit to one person, and an imposition (withdrawal) to another.

Behavior #1: Talk Straight. Tell the truth AND leave the right impression.

- Most people can probably think of situations where they have felt like others were withholding information about facts, opinions or agendas. In fact, only 40 percent of employees believe that their bosses communicate honestly (Mercer Management Consulting study, 2005).

- While distorting facts and leaving out information may convey a message that could be considered technically correct, this practice will leave others with the wrong impression, and will NOT inspire trust.
- While not being outright deceptive, certain communication styles, such as beating around the bush, spinning, posturing, double-talking, and mincing words, may serve to manipulate others and will significantly diminish trust.

Effectively Talking Straight: The Optimum Level.

- Below this optimum level is ineffective. Characteristics associated with *not* talking straight include a lack of courage, a self-focused agenda, a lack of verbal/interpersonal skills, or a failure to focus on outcomes that build trust.
- Characteristics associated with talking too straight include a lack of humility, lack of caring, overbearing style, or insensitivity to consequences. Be sure not to take “Talk Straight” too far, or to use this concept to justify being cruel or brutal in communication.

Talk Straight is best balanced by utilizing skill, tact and good judgment.

Suggestions for Improving the Ability to Talk Straight:

- Preface discussions with a declaration of intent. This is particularly useful in close relationships and/or if you have difficult topics to discuss.
- Ask yourself: What keeps me from talking straight? Is it a fear of being wrong? Unpopular? A lack of courage? Work to identify the reason(s) and recognize the benefits of being honest and the price you pay when you’re not.
- Be aware of your conversation. Stop and ask yourself in the middle of a conversation, Am I talking straight? If you’re not, figure out why, recognize you are paying a price for it, and work on your integrity and intent.
- Get to your point quickly. Avoid lengthy preambles, and recognize that in most cases, “less is more.”
- Involve other people. Let appropriate others know your goal for improving your ability to talk straight and ask for feedback. This will help encourage your growth and development, and will also enlist the help of others who may be able to point out your blind spots.

Succinct Overview:

“Be honest. Tell the truth. Let people know where you stand. Use simple language. Call things what they are. Demonstrate integrity. Don’t manipulate people or distort facts. Don’t spin the truth. Don’t leave false impressions.” (Covey, 2006, p. 143)

“What we say is true and forthcoming—not just technically correct.” –Dell Inc.’s Code of Conduct

Additional Resource:

A good video where the author describes the benefits of increasing trust can be found at the following website: http://phoenix.jobing.com/video_details.asp?Segment=20295&i=45887

“With trust, there is decreased cost, increased productivity, enhanced innovation, increased value, and improved collaboration. Without trust, speed goes down and productivity goes down.”

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