

BUILDING AND BUSTING TRUST

Often one of the most serious ongoing challenges to building trust and ensuring positive relationships with customers, allies, colleagues, government, and employees is what it takes to establish trust in the first place. It is by far easier to recognize the pattern of those behaviors and attitudes that damage trust, or at least bring credibility into question. Put in a more interesting way, trust is a fragile magical substance like the lignin in trees – it's the glue that holds the fiber of relationships together. Trust is the most fragile and vulnerable agent in a relationship.

First, some important definitions:

- × ***Candor:*** Truth with an attitude, truth plus the facts, truth plus some perspective, truth that reflects that there may be other observations on the same set of circumstances and facts, but from different points of reference.
- × ***Credibility:*** Always conferred by others on those whose past behavior, track record, and accomplishments warrant it.
- × ***Empathy:*** The ongoing, often continuous verbalization of regret, embarrassment, or personal humiliation, promptly conveyed.
- × ***Integrity:*** The admiration by others shown toward people, products, companies, even ideas and concepts generated by the attributes of credibility, candor, and empathy.
- × ***Trust:*** Generally the absence of fear, the feeling of reliability and that adverse situations, pain, or mistakes will have less impact or be pre-empted with the aid of the relationship.

It is often assumed that once a bond of trust is established, it is difficult to break. Experience demonstrates that a bond of trust, once established, generally makes reestablishing a relationship easier but the bond itself is fragile. What is truly difficult is trying to develop specific behaviors that can “build” trust. It is easier to identify the behaviors and attitudes that fracture the bond of trust. The most commonly seen trust-busting behaviors are listed and described below.



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James E. Lukaszewski (loo-ka-SHEV-skee) advises, coaches, and counsels the men and women who run very large corporations and organizations. He is an expert in managing and counteracting tough, touchy, sensitive corporate communications issues. The fastest growing portion of his practice involves civil and criminal litigation. He is one of the few who can and truly does coach CEOs.

He is a prolific author (several books, hundreds of articles), lecturer (corporate, college and university), coach, and counselor. He is quoted in publications such as *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Miami Herald*, the *Harvard Business Review*, and industry trade journals. He is a columnist, advisor, or editor for almost every major public relations periodical. His 1992 book, *Influencing Public Attitudes: Strategies that Reduce the Media's Power*, remains a classic work in the field of direct communication. He is an internationally recognized speaker on crisis management, ethics, media relations, public affairs, and reputation preservation and restoration. Visiting his Web site, www.e911.com, is like attending the University of Crisis Management.

An accredited member of the International Association of Business Communicators (ABC) and the Public Relations Society of America (APR), Mr. Lukaszewski is a member of the PRSA's College of Fellows (Fellow PRSA) and Board of Ethics & Professional Standards. He served as a crisis communications advisor to the International Disaster Advisory Committee, Agency for International Development, Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance from 1989 to 1992, and is a civilian advisor to several other federal agencies. He lectures annually at the U.S. Marine Corp's East Coast Commander's Media Training Symposium and was the second recipient of its Drew Middleton Award. He is the recipient of both Ball State University's 2004 National Public Relations Achievement Award and the 2004 Patrick Jackson Award for Distinguished Service to PRSA, and is among the winners of the 2005 *PR News* Lifetime Achievement Award. His name appeared in *Corporate Legal Times* as one of "28 Experts to Call When All Hell Breaks Loose," and in *PR Week* as one of 22 "crunch-time counselors who should be on the speed dial in a crisis."