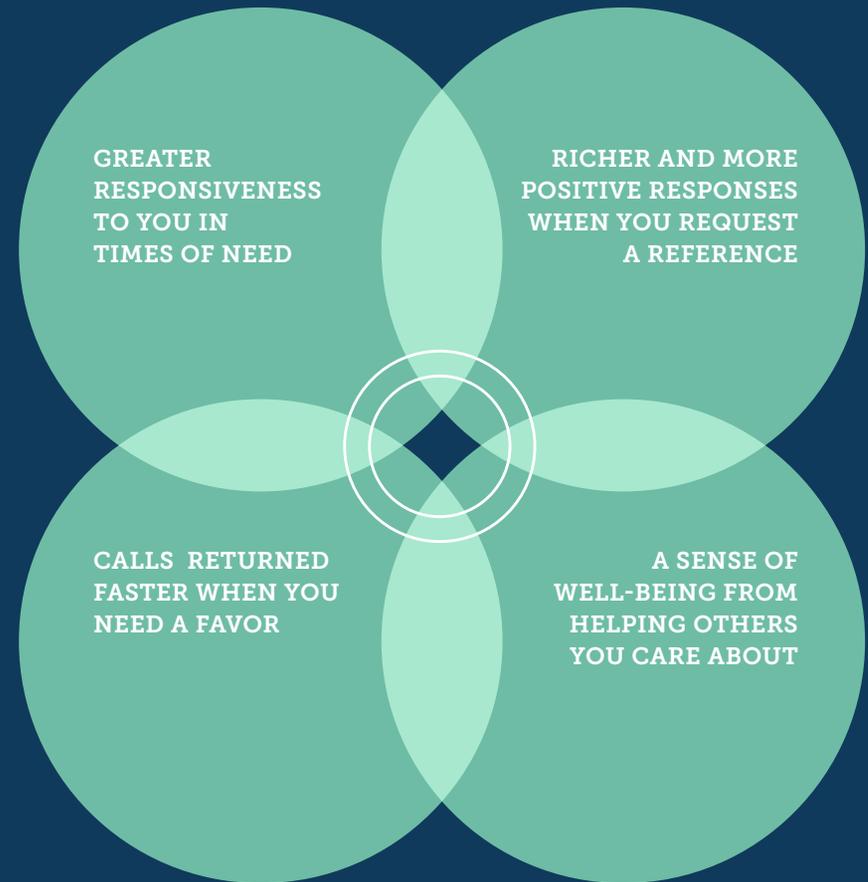

THE DOS AND DON'TS OF Trust-Based Networking

Abstracted from *The Trusted Advisor Fieldbook: A Comprehensive Toolkit for Leading with Trust*, by **Charles H. Green** and **Andrea P. Howe**. John Wiley & Sons, Inc. October, 2011.
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{ HOW TRUST-BASED NETWORKING MANIFESTS ITSELF }



The Dos and Don'ts of Trust-Based Networking

The goal of most business networking is to make new connections to get more business. The goal of trust-based networking is to help *other* people develop *their* businesses. It goes beyond transaction-based free-market economics by including a pattern of ongoing, reciprocal favors and mutually beneficial obligations that is naturally self-reinforcing.

Technology has changed some mechanics of networking, but not its fundamental nature. Trust-based networking is still about focus on the other: listening, respect, low self-orientation, and transparency.

When you are networking with trust, you are also leading with trust. And as a collateral side effect, when you behave this way your own business benefits as well.

Trust-based networking manifests itself in ways including:

- Greater responsiveness to you in times of need.
- Richer and more positive responses when you request a reference.
- Calls returned faster when you need a favor.
- A genuine sense of well-being that comes from helping others you care about without strings attached.

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Ten Best Practices for Trust-Based Networking

1. Be present. The key to great networking is paradoxical in the same way that trust-based selling is paradoxical: If you focus on the other person, the benefits to you happen as a secondary effect. Just be there with the person you are talking to. Be interested

in what he has to say, be curious about what interests him, and be generous with your attention. What you take away from a networking interaction is directly related to what you give away during a networking interaction. Give the gift of your attention.

2. Recognize others' contributions.

Nothing else in your networking strategy is more important than

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overtly recognizing others. Both internal and external communications can be used to recognize, mention, or elevate their work. Give credit, give thanks, and give public praise.

3. Collaborate. Establishing a joint project is the business equivalent of socializing: You develop a relationship while engaged in a supposedly non-relationship activity. The subject matter on which you collaborate serves as the social lubricant. By working together you foster connection.

4. Talk about yourself less and your partner more. High self-orientation and shameless self-promotion alienate others and create a disconnect. When you do

talk about yourself, maintain your partner focus: Frame your comments in terms of bringing value. Do not dominate the conversation—in that way you earn the right to be heard. Not sure if you are getting the balance right? Ask a friend for help.

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5. Add value. There's a reason samples selling is so powerful: Nothing beats personal experience of a product or service. So be open to ways of adding value from your product or service while interacting in a networking situation. Rather than talk about how great your products or services are, offer practical information and advice to suit your partner's specific situation—when asked.

6. Diversify your network. You can easily get stuck in ruts, such as hanging out only with people just like you, or those above you who can do you a favor, or those who look up to you. For everyone's benefit, mix it up.

7. Research. Do a little advance work. Information is widely available and it is a fundamental sign of respect to do your homework. On a regular basis and certainly before any explicit networking event, make the effort to learn about the people you want to meet.

8. Make introductions. The purpose of trust-based networking is to help others: One of the best ways you can help others is to help them build their networks. Review your connections from time to time: Who among your relationships might benefit from being directly connected with each other?

9. Take better notes. You may wish you had better recall of past networking interactions. The notes you scribbled on business cards are hard to read; the notes you meant to take after a phone call never got taken. Trust-based networking thrives on having a rich memory—the quality of your relationships improves, as well as your ability to provide detail and context

in the introductions you make to others. Nurture your relationships by helping your memory. Get into the practice of taking notes immediately after your interactions and using better media (typed, not pencilled; accessible, not filed away; these days, go for cloud-based solutions like Evernote).

One of the best ways you can help others is to help them build their networks.

10. Keep making contact. The purpose of networking is not to capture a name for your database, but to develop a relationship. To define your relationships solely in terms of numbers is to dehumanize them. The true tools of networking are lunch dates, drop-in visits, calls, e-mails, handwritten thank you notes, congratulations, thinking-of-you's—in short, human contact—not business card scanning software or integrated databases.

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Online Networking

The principles of networking don't change from offline to online. Concentrate on helping other people first and you won't go far wrong. That said, the nature of the medium does create specific dos and don'ts.

1. DON'T get down to business too soon.

Human interactions have rules of etiquette and jumping too quickly to business can be perceived as rude. It takes some time to get to know people, even online. Find out

where the line is on a specific medium, in a specific community, in your specific industry or culture, and with your specific audience, and don't cross it. If you cross it, you are spam.

2. DON'T promote yourself too much or too aggressively. People know you are in business, they all know you are networking. You don't have to push it in their faces every minute. Take some time to get to know who you are talking to. Talk about the subject matter, not about your expertise. Many people offline obsessively turn every conversation to themselves. It's even easier to do online, with fewer cues to counteract the inclination. Be aware of how much you talk about yourself while networking.

3. DON'T fake sincerity. There is a level of sincerity that is unique to a one-on-one interaction. Once you change modes from one-to-one to one-to-many, something changes. Just as many trust issues are best dealt with individually, watch out for presuming an individual level of intimacy when dealing with groups.

4. DON'T connect indiscriminately.

Views on what it means to “connect” or to “friend” or “follow” online are changing. If you are inclined to connect with everyone, you may easily offend those who are more selective. At the very least, you may reduce the perceived value of connecting with you. Learn the cultural norms and expectations

of the people you truly want to connect with and respect them.

5. DON'T confuse party lines with private lines.

In the U.S., before World War II, most households acquired telephone service through a party line, a single phone line shared with several neighbors. Radio and movie comedies had fun with the social implications of people listening in on conversations that were supposedly private. Remember how many people you're talking to and who they are. Discussions appropriate for one person or a small group may not be something everyone who, say, follows you on Twitter or is your “friend” in Facebook needs, or wants, to see.

1. DO engage. Start a conversation by commenting on other people's websites and broadcasts, either directly or through other connective programs. If you have ever started a new blog or online venture, you know how good it feels when other people show up to support you by leaving comments or participating actively in other ways.

2. DO return comments. This is an exact translation of the more general trust recommendation to "return calls unbelievably fast." Most Web commenters don't expect instant response, but a good guideline is to reply to people within 24 hours. Reciprocity and interaction foster great connection and help transform isolated interactions into relationships.

3. DO pin the credit on someone else.

Use all your communication tools to acknowledge real contributions. Pin the credit on someone for good things well done. Don't just rebroadcast the interview someone did with you—thank them for doing so, publicly. Share information about the good things that other people are doing. Link to other people and send them traffic as a form of recognition and appreciation. Recognition at the media level mirrors the role that listening plays, as a sign of respect, in one-to-one conversations.

4. DO collaborate. Collaboration can work in three ways: contributing to other people's projects, inviting people to contribute to yours, and launching online projects together. Collaborating can look like:

- Acting as the guest host for a blogger when she goes on vacation.
- Submitting work to quality aggregator sites—those that collect and share content from diverse sources.
- Interviewing people for your newsletter or website.
- Launching a new project like a podcast with a strategic partner.

5. DO increase your other:self ratio.

Generous gestures are harder to read at lower levels of interaction, and your comments are much more likely to show up out of context. Hence you need to increase the ratio of comments about others to comments about yourself.

6. DO set knowledge free. Be generous with sharing your information. Make case studies, whitepapers, and articles available on your website. Give away free samples of your expertise—this might take the form of online diagnostic tools, or advice. Provide real value.

7. DO diversify your online network.

When you link to or highlight other people in your Web activities, don't act like an echo chamber and simply amplify the voices of the same handful of Internet celebrities. Expand your media diet: Introduce new and varied ideas and people to your audience. Draw attention to people you consider your Internet peers and to junior people who are starting out. Send the gift of traffic and attention where it can do the most good.

8. DO connect within networks. Take advantage of new media tools to make introductions inside your network. You know Joe, you know Susie. You can see how both Joe and Susie could benefit from knowing each other, and now you can introduce them easily even if you cannot arrange for them to meet face to face. It is possible to be overeager in connecting other people—the downside is resentment at an unrequested social obligation. But with care and sensitivity, it is also possible to generate great value for those in your network by exploring the synergies with others in your online network. By actively increasing the value of your network to others, you are leading with trust.

9. DO automate your research. Use online monitoring tools such as Google Alerts to keep track of online conversations about your contacts and their organizations. Don't sit on that information: Use it as a trigger to get in touch and send your congratulations about good news. Give the gift of attention. Don't forget to add relevant new details such as promotions and new titles to your contact management system.

10. DO keep making contact. Don't be a one-hit wonder. Keep coming back so you can cultivate a real relationship over time.

Put Others First

Once upon a time a Gentile came to the Rabbi Hillel and asked to be taught the entire Torah while standing on one leg. Hillel said, "That which is hateful to you, do not unto another: This is the whole Torah. The rest is commentary. Go study." Trust-based networking is like that. The basic rule is to put others first; the rest is commentary. The commentary is important, the details matter, but if you're at a loss, just ask yourself, "What would be best for the other person?"

Now, go practice.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Charles H. Green is founder and CEO of Trusted Advisor Associates. The author of *Trust-based Selling* and co-author of *The Trusted Advisor*, he has spoken to, consulted for or done seminars about trusted relationships for, or business for a wide and global range of industries and functions. Centering on the theme of trust in business relationships, Charles works with complex organizations to improve trust in sales, internal trust between organizations, and trusted advisor relationships with external clients and customers.

Follow Charles on Twitter at: **@charleshgreen**

Andrea P. Howe has been in the consulting profession for 20 years. From 1992 to 2000, she worked for AMS, a \$1B technology consulting firm. Today, Andrea's clients include top global firms in accounting, consulting, and other professional services. A skilled facilitator, she has designed and delivered hundreds of off-sites, workshops, presentations, and learning programs.

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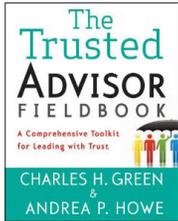
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