

MONDAY MANNA
MAY 16, 2022

THE VALUE OF TRUST IN THE MARKETPLACE
By James D. Firnstahl

During my career as an International Banker and then as Chief Financial Officer of an international manufacturing company, I learned that character matters for many reasons. In fact, a character that consists of trustworthiness, honesty, and love of neighbor at work may be the most important success factors in one's career.

Once as CFO, I was asked to sign my name to certify a set of financial documents that I knew were inaccurate. When I refused, the President and owner made it known that my dismissal might follow. I told him I could not sign it, but boldly and humbly told him that he should not sign it either. I informed him banks have special legal protection and that he could face prison time if he signed to certify the numbers as accurate.

He had never thought about the ramifications in this way. Normally, he was comfortable telling customers and suppliers things that were convenient but not true. But this was a legal document, and he listened to me. He later thanked me for this advice, and this interaction led to more open and honest discussions between us about the financial position and valuation of the company. He had learned he could trust me.

Who commands our attention? Think of it this way: In a meeting of your colleagues, who is the person you most want to hear from? Is it the person who likes to speak and often does, but not with candor, honesty, or knowledge? Or is it the person you know you can trust, someone you know will speak the truth in kindness? In my 40 years of doing business, I learned that the most influential and listened to person in the meeting room is the one people trust the most.

How would we want to be treated? As a Christ-follower, I know that God expects us to "love one another," as it says in John 13:34 and numerous other passages. This means being willing to tell others the truth and treat them with respect and kindness, just the way we like to be treated. The so-called "Golden Rule," which says we are to "Do to others as you would have them do to you" (Luke 6:31), is an unfailing principle to follow.

Are you prepared to pay what a commitment to integrity might cost? Inevitably, we will encounter situations in which it seems almost impossible to tell the truth; when we may lose something – a sale, a promotion, a bonus, or even our job. In these situations, I tried to remind myself that God is watching and listening, and that my character is on the line. I strived never to forget that God can only honor truthfulness, and that I wanted people to

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trust me. Proverbs 10:9 states, “The man of integrity walks securely, but he who takes crooked paths will be found out.”

It is interesting to note that our relationship with God can only be based on trust – or faith, as we sometimes call it. Of course, we can also say that our closest relationships with people are also based on trust. They want to know and get close to other people they feel certain that they can trust. As Proverbs 20:8 affirms, “Many a man claims to have unfailing love, but a faithful man who can find?”

In every good workplace environment, trustworthy people are the most influential and highly valued. As business leaders and owners, we should remember there is a huge return – for the present as well as for eternity – in cultivating an environment of trust and neighborly love.

© 2022. James D. Firnstahl has served as President of CBMC International since 2011, working with a team of business and professional men and women in 90 countries who share a passion to see the global marketplace transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. On a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being highest, how important is trust (or trustworthiness) for you in building and maintaining relationships, whether in the workplace or elsewhere? Explain your answer.
2. Think of a time when someone betrayed your trust. How did you respond? Were you ever able to reestablish a trusting relationship with that person? If so, how difficult was that to do?
3. Do you agree that in a meeting, the persons whose perspectives are most anticipated are the ones who hold the most trust within the group? Why – or why not?
4. Have you ever been in a situation when you realized that your commitment to integrity, your determination to be truthful no matter what, came with a risk of serious consequences? Describe what those circumstances were like – and the outcome.

NOTE:

If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages: Psalm 78:70-72; Proverbs 6:20-23, 12:19,22, 13:6, 17:10, 25:13, 27:5; 2 Timothy 2:15

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