

# Chapter Two — Building Trust and Sales Ethics

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## Exercises

### 1. What is the essence of trust for a salesperson?

Students' answers will vary. The answers should include some description of the buyer relying on the salesperson's words or actions in situations where such reliance involves risk to the buyer.

### 2. If trust means different things to different buyers, how is a salesperson to determine what trust means for each buyer?

The salesperson must determine what trust means for each buyer by asking questions, listening to the responses, and making general observations. This is the only way the salesperson will be able to learn what trust attributes are critical to relationship-building for a specific buyer.

### 3. Why is trust important to a salesperson?

Today's customers are more sophisticated, more informed (or at least have access to more information), and more aware of traditional manipulative "sales tactics." In addition, buying organizations are interested in taking advantage of efficiencies associated with using a smaller number of suppliers. Salespeople who understand these characteristics know that the stereotypical type of selling (e.g., manipulative, pushy, aggressive) is ineffective and that building mutually beneficial relationships with their customers is the only way to compete in the new millennium. Trust is important to a salesperson because it is essential for building these long-term relationships.

### 4. How might a salesperson go about earning trust?

Students' answers will vary, but they should include discussion of the basic building blocks of trust, including expertise, dependability, candour, customer orientation, and compatibility/likeability.

### 5. What does it mean for a salesperson to have a customer orientation?

Customer orientation means the salesperson is as concerned about their customers' interest as his or her own. It means truly understanding the customer's situation and then presenting fair and balanced solutions addressing the customers' needs. In other words, it means "looking out" for the customer. This requires salespeople to be honest, candid, and fair when dealing with the customer.

**6. How would you rank the five trust builders in order of importance?**

Students' answers will vary, but should include each of the five components (expertise, dependability, customer-orientation, candour, compatibility).

**7. Explain why expertise is such an important relationship builder.**

Expertise is a very important trust builder because it gives the salesperson credibility and is associated with several of the other trust builders. Credibility affords the salesperson a degree of the buyer's trust prior to the salesperson actually earning it. Expertise may help the salesperson earn the buyer's trust through the other trust builders. For example, salespeople with greater expertise are more likely to have greater competence and/or make more significant contributions.

**8. How do knowledge bases help build trust and relationships?**

Knowledge bases help build trust and relationships because they empower the salesperson to use the trust-building variable more effectively. For example, as salespeople gain more product knowledge, they are better able to demonstrate expertise and customer orientation (by more precise matching of solutions to needs) and make a stronger contribution.

**9. Do you think certain knowledge bases are more important than others? Why?**

Students' answer will vary but should include appropriate rationale based on the chapter content. Knowledge bases viewed as more important may vary depending upon the buyer-seller relationship and the type of selling situation.

**10. What are the three areas of unethical behaviour? Discuss each.**

The three areas of unethical behaviour are deceptive practices, illegal activities, and noncustomer-oriented behaviour. Deceptive practices refer to any attempt by the salesperson to mislead or otherwise deceive the buyer. For example, a salesperson may exaggerate a product's benefits knowing that the buyer's decision will be based on (or that the buyer is relying on) those exaggerations. Illegal activities refer to a variety of activities in which the salesperson knowingly breaks the law. For example, it is illegal for a salesperson to pad an expense reimbursement report. Noncustomer-oriented behaviour refers to actions taken by the salesperson that 1) are in conflict with the buyer's interests, and 2) are done so when other options are available that are more customer-oriented.

# Video Exercises

## 1. Which area of unethical behaviour does Mark want Lisa to engage in?

Mark wants Lisa to share with him information about how much one of his competitors paid for its security system software. If Lisa were to share that information, she would be engaging in noncustomer-oriented behaviour.

## 2. Discuss how Lisa's answer can institute trust in her relationship with Mark as well as avoid her engaging in unethical behaviour.

Lisa's avoidance of breaching the confidentiality she shares with her other customer serves to ensure Mark that she can be trusted with his company's information. It is important to note that while sharing such information may seem useful in the short run (i.e., help get a sale), it is unlikely that prospective clients would ever truly trust a salesperson who does so. In fact, the buyer could have been testing the salesperson's integrity, and may not really be concerned about the information.

# Chapter 2 Case

## Discussion Questions

### 1. What are the ethical issues involved in this situation?

### 2. If you were Kelly Myers, do you think Janet Williams intended for you to see the competitive bids? What would you have done, given this situation? Why?

Students' answers will vary, but each should demonstrate the student's understanding of how to build trust through the various components. Here's an example.

Customer Orientation: It should be highlighted that Kelly did not demonstrate customer-oriented behaviour and that although her actions may have achieved that sale this one time, she may experience short-term gain, yet long-term pain.

Kelly breached the confidentiality she shared with Janet and it is unlikely that Janet would ever truly trust Kelly in the future. If Janet did do this with intention, she may have been testing Kelly's integrity.

# Chapter 2 Continuing Case

## Questions

**1. What would you recommend Brenda do to handle the challenges she faces?**

Students' answers will vary but should focus on trust-building activities. In particular, Brenda needs to build her knowledge base, including knowledge of her industry, company, products, services, prices, markets, customers, competitors, and technology. Doing so will give her confidence and improve her credibility within her territory.

**2. Brenda appears to have an advantage with her products and services. Develop a plan for Brenda to build trust in NCC with prospective customers.**

Again, students' answers will vary. However, the plans students develop should include a heavy reliance on activities designed to demonstrate competence, dependability, and customer orientation.

**3. What do you recommend Brenda do to compete effectively against competitors that have a long and successful track record?**

First, Brenda needs to engage in activities designed to develop a sense of compatibility with her customers. This will help her gain access and build trust. In addition, Brenda needs to become an expert in her industry and market, knowing exactly how her products compare with those of her competitors. Using this information, Brenda needs to look for opportunities arising based on her product's (and company's) competitive advantages, and/or her customers' dissatisfaction with their copier providers.

**4. How should Brenda go about handling the rumour mill?**

Because the text contains no specific recommendations or guidelines for this sort of situation, students' answers will vary. However, the recommendations should centre on strategies for correcting the misinformation and building trust. Recommendations should not include any behaviour that may be considered unethical, like making disparaging statements regarding the competitors.