

TRUST INVOLVES CHARACTER AND COMPETENCE

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Today, I want to talk a little more about the qualities that generate trust.

First, I want to make clear that I'm talking about being trustworthy, not about trusting others. There is a relationship between the two concepts, but a decision to trust another is a choice, not a moral obligation. Being trustworthy, however, is an indispensable aspect of good character. Thus, we should always act so as to be worthy of trust—not simply because it's wise to do so, but because it's the right way to live.

Being worthy of full-bodied trust entails two distinct qualities: character and competence.

Of course, the attribute we first associate with trustworthy behavior is integrity. This crucial aspect of good character is demonstrated through scrupulous honesty and moral courage. If we want people to trust us or

our organization, they must believe that we will consistently do the right thing, regardless of the circumstances or pressures.

Other aspects of character include accountability and fairness. People trust those who accept responsibility for their choices and don't palm off blame to others. It's also important to be regarded as fundamentally fair.

But in business, confidence in character is not enough to justify trust. Trust also involves the conviction that the person or organization will successfully do what is expected.

This competency dimension of trust embraces faith in ability, knowledge and judgment as well as a belief that the person or organization will be reliable and responsive. Reliability is established through diligence and follow-through while responsiveness involves respectful communication and demonstrated concern.