

Principles of Trustworthiness

Why would you want to be trustworthy?

The times back when you could survive regardless what other humans might have thought of you or how they may have related to you are long gone. Nowadays we live in a world, in which everyone of us is extremely dependant on vast numbers of other human beings, many of them we will never come to meet. But still, we somehow relay on them, on their dedicated, careful and quality work. We call that globalization. That is the word we use to describe our modern world, made of a complicated fabric of interdependent relationships. We get everything we need as a result of this intricated human interactions. You may be tempted to think, you can just relax and satisfy every and each of your needs, just taking whatever you want. But globalization is organized based on human exchanges. You can only get something, granted that you can give something else in return. Otherwise, normally you get nothing. You can argue, you can always go to some remote region and fight your survivance in the wild with no exchange at all. Like our ancestors used to do several thousand years ago. Please do. But you will certainly have to give up many nice things you can get and enjoy in our civilized society. Today, it is very unrealistic to believe, you may be better off living like a hunter- gatherer. It does not matter, how healthy and liberating they may say, it would be.

So, we must exchange things with each other. And you, as every each of us, are expected to contribute from your side to this exchange. Once you rich at this point, you will find out, that your contribution has to keep some sort of proportion with that what you get in return. The situation has two main dimensions: quantity and quality. Every time you want to get something you need; you will have to offer something from your side in return and bargain quantities which satisfy you and your counterpart alike. Agreeing on that will consider the quality of whatever items are being exchanged. You must offer a minimum quality, if you want to be considered for a negotiation in the first place. If you are offering bad quality, you will surly have to put greater quantities to close the deal and the other way around.

Now we have arrived at the next point. In order for your counterparts entering in a negotiation with you (and you with them), both sides must believe, that it is worthy doing it. Both parties trust, that they will be better off after the exchange. That is, both of you must be trustworthy in the eyes of the other. So, the short answer to the original question “why would you want to be trustworthy” is: because among other things you want to get the most you can, when you participate in our current globalized exchange world. This leave us with the following conclusion, everything else equal:

The more trustworthy you are, the better you can bargain.

Some advantages of trustworthy people are:

- They have access to a broader set of potential counterparts, with whom they can negotiate and come to exchange something
- They find more easily counterparts ready to negotiate with them
- Their claims they make about their items in offer will be more quickly held as true thing

- They can start asking more units from their counterparts in return for each one of their own (price)
- Counterparts will be more often satisfied with the results of the transactions they complete with trustworthy people
- The credibility of trustworthy people is higher
- Others will find it more difficult to poison the community perception about you, if you are held as a trustworthy person

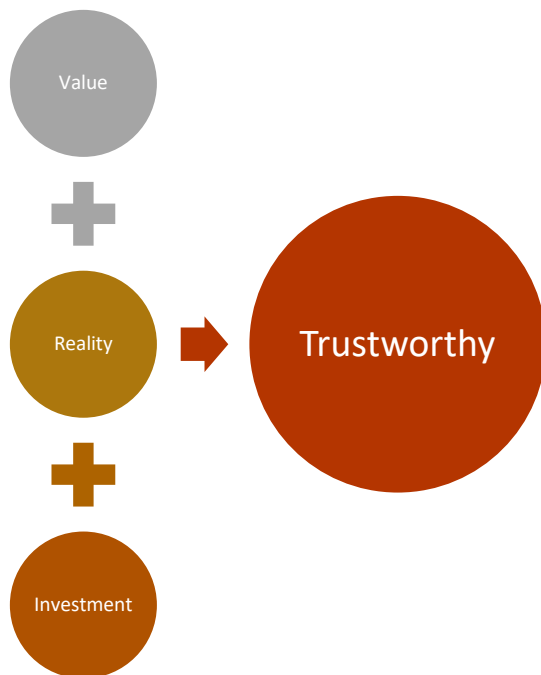
Anatomy of trustworthiness

Now that you want to be as trustworthy as possible, it is time to look really closely into it. A convenient way is to observe an actual human conduct, which right now we can agree, it is trustworthy. Such a conduct is the following:

Keep your promises

Consistently doing what you say you will do, will turn you into someone, others can trust upon. The challenge is to begin soon with such a behaviour and never stop. It is well known, that after a life acting like this, you will really be a trustworthy person. But if at some point you decide to stop keeping your promise only once, that only instances may very well be enough to destroy your whole trustworthiness beyond repair. Something just to keep in mind.

Keeping promises involves three moments, which working together make us able to keep or not a particular promise and so adding or not to our trustworthiness. We can depict this proposition in the following diagram:



Value

A value is a statement (articulated or implied) about something which is useful or has some life relevant meaning for someone. It may relate to a desirable object, because it has the properties to satisfy needs of some nature (i.e. food as a promise like *it will feed you*). It can just be the assurance, that you will behave in a certain manner, so that the other may rely on that, and in turn she can decide her own conduct (i.e. *I will not kill you*). That is, values may be reformulated as promises. For instance, the value freedom may be restated as “I will always let you make your own choices”

This value moment belongs to the realm of communication. It is mostly a statement announcing intentions, with our best will. They may sound “nice”, “desirable”, but they may be “threatening” or “warning” too. At this point there is only information, data in the air. The party sending the promise may mean it or not. It may be bluffing or being serious or deceiving. Likewise, it may mean harm or good to the other party.

The receiver in turn, will have to decide to trust the promise and react accordingly. Firstly with another promise but then with an attitude and some action at the end. To what extent the promise may be kept is at this point relative unclear, depending on how much experience the parties may have from previous encounters. The first time, the expected risk is at its highest and declines with every new time, a promise is kept, or increases if not.

Before a promise has a chance to be kept or not, we have other moments to check out. Let us see.

Reality

Promises of the value moment, sooner or later must be played in a real context. The apple will be eaten pushing hunger away (or not) or the promising party has a chance to kill the other, which it gives up (or not). In any case conducts have to be played somewhere under some given circumstances. All making more or less possible to keep particular promises. The one does not really want to kill the other. But if he feels that his life is definitively at risk, he may well prefer to give up keeping a promise, killing the other, in self-defence for example.

The point being, with real people, under particular circumstances and actual rules, what at first may have been easily stated, at the reality moment it may very probably prove very difficult to be played out as originally stated and desired. For instance, you say, you will never lie. Sooner than later, you will come to a point, at which you will find it very difficult not to lie. You are a businessman and you do want to pay your debts on time. You really do. But a moment will come, when you just do not have the required cash. It is in reality, where dilemmas come about between whatever we have promised and the difficulties to actually do as we said and probably wanted from our heart. Reality is the realm of dilemmas.

In the praxis, after hearing a promise, it is wise to reflect on how it may look like when the time comes to play the promise out in a given place and context. Will it really be possible to keep the promise? How much effort and resources we will have to deploy to be able to keep it? To what extent can we afford, not keeping it?

Investment

Values played in the reality, confronted with the forces and interests of actual people, rules and other objective and subjective conditions do not have to irremediable doom our chances to keep our promises and to be reasonable trustworthy. We can at least show to everybody around, how ready and prepared we are to commit to our promises. For that we take actual resources and we deploy them in places and ways aiming to increase our chances and power to actually keep them. Of course, these investments are not only a "show off" exercise. They should actually help us playing our values out in the reality, in spite of adversity. Done properly and with some luck, we should be able, whit the help of our investments, to better keep promises and thus consolidating our trustworthiness.

By the way. We talk very consciously about investments and not expenses. Whatever you do and the resources you may deploy in order to be able to better keep your promises are definitively more like investments than expenses just given ressources away for good. Keeping promises will yield a return in form of all that, what you will get, just because more people trust even more on you. Something which works the same in business, in the economy, the society and even in your

closer social circles like family and friends. We have mentioned some of the benefits already in the first section above.

To keep in mind, in general

- You want to be trustworthy, because it will help you to fit in our complex and globalized world of intensive exchanges. Also, you will enjoy a better position to interact with others economically, politically and socially.
- Trustworthiness will open you access to better options and possibilities
- Consistently keeping promises through your whole life will make you trustworthy
- Keeping promises has three main moments: 1) value, 2) reality and 3) investment
- Wisely managing these three moments will help you firstly to effectively keeping promises and secondly in doing that, you will gain trustworthiness

Next tasks

- How to wisely manage the three moments of actually keeping promises
 - How to choose and formulate promises
 - Analysing reality as a challenge for keeping promises
 - Designing investments to keep promises

Map for those who want a clear orientation, about how to behave, so that other can really trust you. In their personal and professional lives.