

Earning Trust: It's Not All About You

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By Adrian Dayton



Charles Green shared a story about a doctor of more than 25 years' experience. "In all my years talking to drug representatives," he quoted the doctor, "I have never heard a single one recommend the drug of a competitor. Therefore, I can never trust them."

Green, co-author of the management book, *The Trusted Advisor*, was illustrating a point — that selflessness is the path to earning trust. "The pharmaceutical industry is such a great natural fit to become an adviser to their clients," he said during an interview. "Yet they are squandering this opportunity."

We see this same problem in the legal industry, but now, with the proliferation of social media, lawyers have an opportunity to become advisers rather than pitch men. The first step is understanding what it means to be a trusted adviser.

"There is no formal definition of the term 'trusted advisor,'" said Green, who has spent more than a decade researching trust-based relationships. He posited a simple formula: credibility (you know your stuff) plus reliability (you can be counted upon) plus intimacy (people feel secure sharing with you) divided by your self-orientation level — the degree to which you care about yourself relative to others. The denominator is really the key.

"If people trust you, they will seek your advice far more than otherwise," Green said. "You are more powerful. Things will get done more quickly, they will buy from you. They won't push back on price as much. It's more valuable for the client, as well. If your client really trusts you, he doesn't hesitate to pick up the phone and contact you. You get called in earlier and at the appropriate time."

In his book, *The Speed of Trust*, Stephen Covey Jr. tells how Warren Buffett, who enjoys tremendous trust in the business world, can close major

deals in a day or week when other organizations require months. The need to build elaborate compliance structures can "slow the deal process down," Green said. "The lack of trust makes it cost more money." Buffett saves money simply because people trust him to live up to his promises.

"You don't have to be Warren Buffett to build those kinds of relationships," Green said. "If you are able to get over your own needs, focus on others and care about them, you can get there. It's an emotional level of maturity. In psychology, this is called 'differentiation' — can you empathize with others without losing your own identity?"

We see good and bad examples of this in the social media world. "The key online is to share things of value," Green said. "Chris Brogan (one of the most popular social media mavens) is great with this. He says to make 10 tweets about others for every one tweet you make about yourself. Become known as someone who offers things up to others, and eventually people will come to you."

This is challenging for lawyers — they so fear promoting their competitors that they miss the chance to become trusted advisers. "All these people shouting, 'Me! Me! Me!' aren't very emotionally mature," Green said. "They think bad things are going to happen if they don't talk about themselves.

"I seem to be learning over and over the value of telling the truth. Not just, 'Don't lie.' Telling people the whole truth, and realizing that truth is your friend, and getting comfortable with that, is huge. Simple things like, if you're a 29-year-old lawyer and you have a 53-year-old client, don't try to act older than you are. This won't seem right. If they ask how much experience you have, tell them. If they want the best article on a certain topic and it wasn't written by you, tell them.

"If the tsunami is coming, get your surfboard out. If you are in sync with the truth, things will go well for you. Go with the flow, and the flow is the truth."

You can check out Charles Green's latest book [The Trusted Advisor Field Book](http://trustedadvisor.com/books) at <http://trustedadvisor.com/books>, or follow him on Twitter @charleshgreen

Adrian Dayton is a speaker, author and strategist helping lawyers bring in

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