



# Attitudes That Build Trust

---

Recently, the Corporate Executive Board (CEB) looked at what drives the purchase decisions of small businesses. We think these findings apply to any business, but especially smaller ones.

What the CEB found is that trust is key to purchase decisions. Small businesses rely on a network of “advisors”—primarily other small business owners—to help guide them in making large purchases.

Consequently, word-of-mouth referrals become a key component of marketing. They are credible and powerful methods of building advocacy. To earn a referral, however, you must first earn a customer’s trust. In other words, trust becomes the currency that is passed on by customers who have had a “reliable and delightful” experience (The Brand Gap, Neumeier).

So how do you build trust with your customers? Here are four principles that can make a difference.

## 1. BE SIMPLE

“They made it so easy, I really didn’t have to give it much thought.”

Most important, be easy to do business with, easy to understand, easy to get up and running, easy to use. How easy it is to buy from you is very important. Use language people understand. For example, Intuit’s accounting software does not use “debit and credit.” They use “\$ in” and “\$ out.”

## 2. TALK STRAIGHT

“They were upfront with all fees, and there were no surprises.”

Make certain your company has integrity and is transparent. For example, there are no hidden fees; employees do not pretend to know information they do not know. As cash flow is king for smaller companies, be complete and accurate out of the gate.

## 3. UNDERSTAND

“They understood that I had lots of other things to get done so they didn’t waste my time.”

Your employees must understand and empathize with your customers. They must know the challenges they face and highly respect the customer’s time, ensuring each interaction adds the highest value.

## 4. PROVIDE 1:1 SERVICE

“They were with me through the whole process and took care of everything.”

Customers want to feel as if they are in control but they also greatly value personalized or customized service. They seek guidance and advice, not a hard sell.

In summary, an engagement that is reliable and delightful will build the trust that generates a relationship and the sale. Sounds a lot like the “golden rule.”