

# "Can I Count On You?" Reliability Builds The Trust You Need to Lead Others

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When I sat down to write about leadership, I thought about those around me everyday that I consider leaders. Why do these people have my admiration, my respect, and my constant willingness to do what I can to help them, both personally and "in business"? Why do others around me seem so willing to help me with my life's projects? It comes down to trust. Do people trust your opinion, your insight, your judgement, and most importantly, your ability to get something done? Beyond a leader's speaking ability, organization skills, creativity, and even intelligence, if people don't trust you, you'll never reach your full potential as a leader... no matter how many "skills" you have!

Trust doesn't "come from" somewhere... you earn it, often slowly, over time. It has been my experience that trust is founded on reliability. Can people count on you? How valuable is "your word"? I'm very excited to give you some insight from my life on how to improve your reliability. If I can be so bold to say that if you were to read select articles that are relevant for your entire lifetime, this would be one of them! Whether it was at school, at home or at work, other peoples trust in me, based on my foundation of reliability, has been the key to my accomplishments. This has lead to business success, positive relations with many people, and great personal happiness! Read on...I guarantee you I'm going to make you think! The keys to reliability are:

**1. The Little Things Are Everything:** 95% of your reliability will be judged on those "little things" that make up everyday life. For example, being on time to pick up a friend, returning a borrowed item, calling back when promised, or remembering to make special plans around a family member's birthday. Only 5% of your reliability will be based on life's "big things" such as completing a major project or planning an event. Think about it... if I can't count on you to be on time for class, remember to get a receipt, or return my call to go out one night, why would I think you are "reliable" for anything "bigger"? In 9 years I went from being grade 8 student council VP to coordinating a \$65K budget for my university's orientation week at age 22. How? I learned how to be successful accomplishing smaller tasks well so I was thus trusted by teachers, administrators and student leaders to take on bigger tasks. You volunteer to organize one day of a spirit week and the next year, you can run all of the week! Please, take the little things seriously; they mean everything to those around you!

**2. Honesty... and then Fix It!** No one is perfect. I make mistakes; I have forgotten something important, I've been inconsiderate, and I've misused my time and been late. Accept responsibility! Don't pass off the blame through "little white lies" like "your phone line was busy". Say, "I'm sorry", "my fault, I forgot", and "I must have misunderstood, I apologize". The biggest temptation is to explain why it was someone else's fault but your own. Please do not do this! Call ahead when you're going to be late or can't make it at all. If it's too much work for you, be honest about it and cut back your responsibilities before it hurts your reliability. Basically, fix it before it becomes a problem that hurts other people's trust in you! Honesty and seeking solutions in the face of your mistakes increases people's trust in you! When you do this, people won't judge you on your errors but when you are reliable. Then your mistakes come as more of a surprise and people forgive you quicker. North America's oldest and one of its largest investment firms, [www.bvp.com/portfolio/antiportfolio](http://www.bvp.com/portfolio/antiportfolio) actually lists its past mistakes! Why? It shows its clients that they can be trusted to be HONEST!

**3. Care About Others.** Put yourself in the shoes of those around you and get excited about other people's lives! A huge part of your reliability reputation will be based on your ability to remember to participate in the important events of others. Birthdays, lending a hand to their group for a project, helping them move, or calling them to be part of your weekend plans, are all so important to people. Remember their "big days"; wish them luck on that interview, try-out or project, be in the stands for their game or performance, or be there to listen when they need someone to talk to. Reliability is "being there" for people. The exciting thing is that if you care about what is important to others, they are more likely to care about what is important to you!

**4. Write It Down!** This is the key action to making all of these tips of reliability work! It starts with you owning some sort of daily planner, personal organizer, Smart phone, Outlook or a calendar that allows you to write a number of "to do's" on each day. Next, you've got to get in the habit of having it with you as much as you can - at meetings, at work and at home. Now, go beyond using it to note work oriented "to do" lists and write personal items. If it's someone's birthday, note a few days earlier to buy a card. If you promise to call someone to be part of his or her social plans, note on that day to give that person a call. If you borrowed an item

such as a DVD or video game, note a week or two later to return it to your friend. If you told a co-leader or teacher that you'd have an answer for her about a project you are working on, write it down on that day in your planner! Make sure as you speak to someone, write it down in your notes right away, even if it means taking a few extra seconds and saying "Hang on, let me write that down". Now, let's say your social plans don't happen or you still don't have an answer for your teacher. Still contact them to tell them the situation. This way you're viewed as being reliable enough to meet your commitment even though you don't have a positive answer. Too many people think that they shouldn't contact a person until they have all the answers, even when it means not calling or contacting when promised. Don't Do this! This will cause tension and stress with the other person as they question your reliability by saying to themselves and their friends, "I don't know what's going on!"

Here's a key tip for "writing it down!" Every time you are talking to someone new on the phone, whether it's personal or for leadership, note that person's/company's number and email in an organized place in your planner/smart phone. Include notes to help you remember them. Trust me, you never know when you suddenly need to contact them again. This again adds to your reliability because you may have a question for them and now you can quickly contact them and ensure you have all of your facts straight. Plus, I can't tell you how often I've helped others by having the number/ email address for someone they needed to contact! Their comment to me is often "gee, you're organized!" Yes, organized and reliable! Having someone's address is handy for thank you cards/emails. This habit of carrying a personal organizer and writing down everything will take time to get used to, but the effect it will have on your reliability will be dramatic! Stick with it!

**5. Make Others Look Reliable.** People will often commit to you on a date by which they'll call or contact you with an answer on an item. For example, on Tuesday your friend Tim says to you, "I'll call you Friday to do something this weekend", while your committee member Cathy says, "I'll tell you on Friday the price quotes from the suppliers so we can make our decision." Thus you'd note in your planner for Friday "Tim called?" and "Cathy – supplier quotes, review". When Friday comes you are then reminded of your need to get these items done. When you contact them, avoid saying "ya, I'm just calling/coming by to remind you..." This is because "reminding" already implies they've forgotten which will make them negative and defensive. Use statements like "Cathy, I just wanted to know how it's coming with that answer..." or "hey Tim, I'm calling to see what's going on..." You'll be amazed how many people appreciate "friendly reminders" and how it improves your reliability by getting you answers quicker. If something goes wrong or gets delayed because someone didn't get back to you, ask yourself this question: "did I help their reliability by providing friendly reminders?"

**6. Remember Another's Reliability.** When people reach out to you, write it down and return the text/email/call! Even if it's going to be an "I'm not interested" or "I can't make it", take the time to reply within an hour or two. When people send you e-mail always call/write back within a day. Whether it's just a short email or a quick call, reward their reliability in writing you by returning the favour! They'll remember that! Who wants to call/write to someone who doesn't make an effort to contact back?

When another person's reliability helps you, you've got to reward them with a "thank you". Send them a card, note, email and give them tokens of thanks. Take the time to personally approach them and say, "I appreciated your help on that!" However, the best way to reward reliability is to return the favour...especially when you haven't been asked! For example, make statements like "Hey, I got that new DVD, you can borrow it if you want to," or "we're going to the show, do you want to join us", or "when is your group putting on that fundraiser, I want to lend your group a hand!" Wow! When someone receives thanks, favours, and kind and thoughtful actions from you, they are far more likely to be reliable for you in the future. Most of all, their trust and opinion of your reliability increases because as humans we have a natural tendency to trust those who help us and thank us! What's most important of all is that it's a fantastic way to live life... helping and appreciating others!

As you read this article, put yourself through a reliability test. Are you often "reminded" by someone to complete a task or return an item? Are people cracking jokes or sarcasm at your ability to accomplish something? Are people coming to you for your opinion or help? Do you think you can take solid steps to becoming more reliable? Please, study this article and put its insights to work for you! To improve your reliability will be one of the most rewarding and effective accomplishments you can make in life! I make this far-reaching statement because reliability is the foundation of other people's trust in you. Trust is what builds loving families, fun friendships, successful businesses, and effective leaders. Can people count on you to improve your reliability?

# “CAN I COUNT ON YOU?” RELIABILITY & SELF-MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP

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## DISCUSSION SHEET

*What are the advantages of being organized?*

Saves time, saves money, makes money, increases the number of people who come to our school and school events, keeps current students & staff happy which in turn leads them to work harder on our behalf, family and friends don't feel missed, it gives the important impression that we care and can be trusted to get things done, important things are not missed, less stress, less time wasted fixing mistakes equals more time for other and better things.

*Why is disorganization and not being viewed as “Reliable” a big problem for our Organization?*

If you are unorganized, our staff, fellow leaders and students will feel your programs are also disorganized, and why would they trust their school, their time, their money, and their efforts to that?

### 1. The Little Things are EVERYTHING.

List at least two “little things” that are part of your “job” description and your dealings with students & staff

List at least two “little things” that are part of your daily life with your family and friends.

### 2. Honesty, then FIX it!

What irritates you the most when people make mistakes?

### 3. Share your Care

Note two examples of how you “shared your care” in your student leader, a job situation or personal situations?

#### 4. Write it DOWN!

Organize yourself as if it is the day before vacation. Note 5 things you need to do by the end of tomorrow OR pretend tomorrow is the start of vacation and note 5 things that have to be done before you leave.

#### 5. Make Others Look Reliable, or “Be organized for others!”

Note 2 or 3 examples from your daily business/family life of information and/or commitments that are made to you that you can “write down” to ensure it gets done.

Example from Leadership: The council VP tells me she will have this particular information for me by Monday, so I write it down on Monday. Personal examples: Friend says that he will be calling me tomorrow night, I make note of it for tomorrow night.

#### 6. Remember, Reply, Return the Favour!

Note two ways you can “remember” or thank someone for being reliable. You can use examples shared in the session. Use an example from your own past, whether personal or work related.