

ESTABLISHING TRUST

It can be intoxicatingly exciting to meet a person from across the planet, who speaks a different native language than yours and has many different customs and beliefs. It can also be quite bewildering at times.

How do you approach a person like this? How do you initiate a relationship? How do you build rapport? How do you establish trust?

In his book, “Christianity Confronts Culture,” Marvin K. Meyers says that in matters of cross-cultural communication, the first and most important question that we should ask ourselves is the “Prior Question of Trust” (PQT):

*“Is what I am doing, thinking, or saying building trust or is it undermining trust? Does what I am doing, thinking, or saying have **potential for building trust** or **potential for undermining trust**?”*

Although there are many differences from culture to culture, there are probably more similarities. **Many of the things that cause you to trust another person will also have a trust-creating impact on people from other cultures:**

- **Someone you know.** Time spent together in a variety of settings allows each person to see the other from all angles. Shared experiences forge a bond and establish a foundation of trust.
- **Someone you know who cares.** The person who goes out of his or her way to help you in some way is able to earn your trust. As the familiar saying goes, “They don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.”
- **Someone who has special experience.** Those who have lived longer or seen things we haven’t seen tend to gain credibility.
- **Someone who shows consistency.** If a person does what he or she promises—displaying integrity or faithfulness—other people will respond with trust.
- **Someone who works hard to communicate.** Communication is indeed hard work—even among those of the same culture. But if you make the extra effort to make sure others understood what you said, why you said it, and how you felt about it—that’s huge for building trust!

Meanwhile, it's also useful to consider ways we could let other people down. **You might think of these things as “trust-busters”:**

- By not answering emails and phone calls in a timely fashion.
- By talking about them behind their backs.
- By not showing up on time for appointments or meetings with them.
- By not believing the best of them.
- By displaying inconsistencies in conduct and lifestyle.
- By frequently failing to do things that were promised.

In a ministry to internationals, it's critically important that we give great attention to the PQT- Prior Question of Trust. Of course, we will make many mistakes along the way, but a sincere apology can help greatly to restore trust. As a matter of fact, internationals tend to be understanding of missteps and miscommunications, since these types of blunders are common when living internationally.

As we continue to show the love of Christ and reach out in understanding, God will allow us to build trust relationships with internationals, and many of their hearts will ultimately be touched for eternity.

1 Peter 4:8 – “Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins” (NIV).