

LEGAL MANAGEMENT

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The Power of Trust

I am a huge fan of Stephen Covey — both of them, Stephen R. Covey (*The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*) and his son, Stephen M.R. Covey.



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Ten years ago, the younger Covey published a book titled *The Speed of Trust: The One Thing That Changes Everything*. I bought it a few years ago because it sounded great, but I never read it. I recently rediscovered it. It actually seemed to jump off the shelf when I was looking for a different book.

I learned a lot about trust when I read Covey's book. I learned that trust is an asset, and one you can enhance pretty rapidly. We can actually create trust. But how? Especially when we feel we are already trustworthy?

What happens when there is lack of trust? If I say something wrong in a high-trust setting, people will still understand me. But if I am perfectly clear and succinct in a low-trust environment, those around me will misinterpret what I have said. That's pretty scary.

"The moment there is suspicion about a person's motives, everything he does becomes tainted."
– Mahatma Gandhi

Covey points out that there are two components of trust: character and competence. When I think of trust, I have historically thought about the first component — character. According to Covey, character "includes your integrity, your motive, your intent with people." Competence includes your "capabilities, your skills, your results, your track record."

This is a fascinating distinction, because I can trust someone's character, but not their competence, and vice versa.

"Leadership is getting results in a way that inspires trust." – Stephen M.R. Covey

As we look forward to another year at ALA, we need to strip down barriers to increase trust. Some people believe trust cannot be restored once it is lost, but Covey doesn't believe that. Neither do I. Covey writes about the five waves of trust. The second wave is "relationship trust." This wave applies the most to our professional association. There are 13 behaviors that are consistent with high-trust leaders: talk straight, show respect, be transparent, right wrongs, show loyalty, deliver

results, get better, confront reality, state expectations, be accountable, listen first, meet commitment and extend trust.

I vow to work on these 13 behaviors — every day. And if you think I need to work harder in some areas, I ask you to point that out to me. Sometimes I just can't see it.

I had to go back to the basics and be truly self-reflective. Do I trust myself? I do. I trust myself to make the right decisions for the right reasons. I trust that when I make a mistake, I will admit it, work to rectify it and make amends as needed.

Covey talks about trust accounts. We're pretty familiar with those in our law firms, right? If you read Covey's book, you'll think of a trust account in a different way. I want a healthy trust account. When I behave in a way that builds trust, I get a trust deposit. If I act in a way that destroys trust, there's a big withdrawal from the same account.

We need to work toward being viewed as credible, capable and consistent. And we need to inspire trust in others. We have more than 8,000 members. We don't all have the same thoughts, ideas, beliefs or values. That means we'll inevitably have some differing opinions as we move forward with initiatives — but we can all trust that we are in this together and continuing our efforts to elevate ALA.

In the last year, members of the ALA Board of Directors have heard from some of our members that they don't always trust us. We want you to know that we are working to rebuild that trust. We will be transparent and candid. We will ask for your thoughts, and we will listen. We will not assume we know all the answers.

And as I say all the time in my firm, "If you wonder about something, please ask."

I understand we need to earn your trust. We ask that you give us that chance.

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