

## Build Trust to Lead

### SKM Associates LLC

Family Business Consulting  
Developing High Performance  
Leaders and Organizations

What does trust mean to you?

Trust does not get built in a vacuum, and it takes work to build trust over time. Some say it is a feeling that cannot be defined. You know it when you feel it, but you have trouble defining the feeling. In a family business, trust should be defined as a “feeling that another person, or a group of people, or the system is performing in your best interests.” Test this definition by thinking of someone you trust completely. Do you feel that this person has your best interests as top priority?

As a leader in a business family, there are intentional steps that you can work on to help build trust in your family and your business.

**Trust them.** Give your family, your team members, and others the benefit of the doubt. Create a high level of trust by trusting them first.

*“Trust men and they will be true to you; treat them greatly, and they will show themselves great.”* Ralph Waldo Emerson

**Do what you say you will do.** When you promise what you can’t (or don’t) deliver, people lose trust in both you and your ability. Instead, deliver on what you say you will do in the small things each day. What’s more, when you make a mistake, admit it, own it, and correct it.

**Use trust elevating communication techniques.** Genuinely listen and seek to understand before being understood. Speak respectfully about all, to all. Speak about people as though they were present.

**Confront reality.** Tackle the tough issues head on, don’t ignore them and hope they will go away. Lead courageously even if the new is uncomfortable.

**Put others first.** To be trusted, you need to focus first on the needs of others. Strive for the best in others, develop their strengths, and support them in reaching their goals.

**Own your part.** Decide now that you will take the necessary steps to become a trusted leader in your family business. Don’t rationalize or blame others: your behavior will show how much you are to be trusted.

**Demonstrate integrity.** Be honest. Put others ahead of yourself. Don’t cut corners or act unethically.

*“Good teams become great ones when the members trust each other enough to surrender the ‘me’ for the ‘we.’”* Phil Jackson

Be the family business leader that builds trust.

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