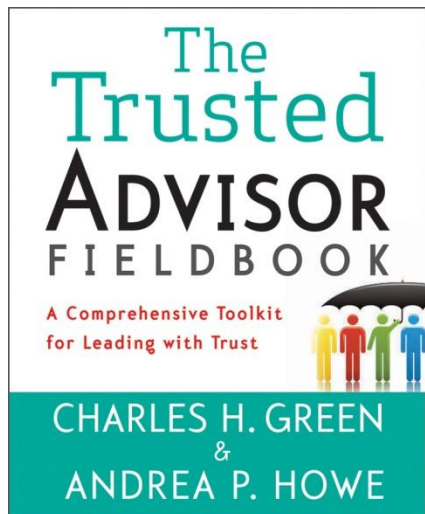

The Trusted Advisor Fieldbook

You can't lead without trust.



The Trusted Advisor Fieldbook: A Comprehensive Toolkit for Leading with Trust provides answers to pervasive questions about trust and leadership, such as how to develop business with trust, nurture trust-based relationships, build and run a trustworthy organization, and develop your trust skill set. Put the knowledge and practices in the fieldbook to work, and you will become someone who earns trust quickly, consistently, and sustainably—in business and in life.

Each chapter offers specific ways to train your thinking and change your habits in order to earn the trust that is necessary to be influential, successful, and known as someone who makes a difference.

II: Developing Your Trust Skill Set

Chapter 7: Partner

In our increasingly connected world, the ability to partner is essential. It is a foundational skill that advances collaboration, synergy, and expanded results. You know the benefits of having good partnering skills, yet you may not apply them as consistently as you would like. *Chapter 7: Partner* explores partnering traits and the most common barriers to making them part of daily life. It also provides practical suggestions for strengthening your partnering muscle.

The word *partner* has several definitions, including either of two persons dancing together. The dancing metaphor conjures up images of give and take, synchronization, graceful movement, and being in tune and in step with one another. It is very apt for trust-based relationships, where you have to both lead and follow, interchangeably.

In this chapter, we use the word *partner* as a verb—it is an act, not a person or thing. Dancing together well is the ultimate goal.

Partnering Traits

When you partner well, you:

- *Maintain a mindset of collaboration, not competition.* This means thinking about your interests as intertwined with others' and staying focused on reaching a solution that works for all concerned.
- *Work from a position of equal status.* You are appropriately respectful of hierarchy but not distracted by it. You are committed to a sense of fairness and balance in the relationship.
- *Lead and follow.* You are willing and able to switch between the two, depending on what would be of greatest service in the moment. You lead when your own strengths are called for; you follow when another's strengths are called for.
- *Balance assertiveness and cooperation in the face of conflict.*¹ You combine ideas and real points of view with a willingness to make things work for all involved.
- *Deal with disagreements and missteps productively and gracefully.* You view creative tension and mistakes as opportunities to learn and improve. You address things and move on.
- *Demonstrate a commitment to sharing responsibility for achieving a goal.* You see the entirety of the problem, opportunity, task, or project as "ours." You don't hoard, dominate, or control; neither do you abdicate, give up, or give in.
- *Take responsibility for your part in the partnership's successes and failures.* You don't see roles as 50-50, but instead 100-100.

Self-Assessment: Are You Primed for Partnership?

Knowing your own strengths and weaknesses is the first stop on the road to improving your partnering skills. Try rating yourself on each of the following factors.

- Score yourself toward the right-hand side of the scale if you identify the factor as a natural or developed strength that you consistently bring to your partnerships.
- Score yourself toward the left-hand side of the scale if you are less developed or inconsistent in that area.

The middle point on the five-point scale is the neutral point. It represents neither strength nor weakness.

	←————→					
	1	2	3	4	5	
A narrow view of relationships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	An expanded view of relationships
A win/lose mindset	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	An all-for-one mindset
Under-managed self-orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Well-managed self-orientation
Lack of confidence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Confidence
An over-developed ability to criticize	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A balanced perspective of positive and negative
A tendency to either lead or follow	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The ability to lead and follow interchangeably
A need for immediate gratification	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The ability to delay gratification
Intolerance of ambiguity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tolerance for not knowing or being in control
Discomfort with conflict	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Comfort with conflict
A limited view of problems and opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A “we”-oriented view of problems and opportunities

Specific Ways to Build Your Partnering Muscle

Here's a starter list of ways to improve your ability to partner. Identify two areas where you could improve. Then choose one practice for each (or develop your own) to build your muscle.

Partnering Muscle	Partnering Practices
1. An expanded view of relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Notice that when it's raining on you, it's raining on everyone else too. Make it a point to ponder this all week.• For two minutes each day, consciously envision the other person in the relationship as a "partner"—not an adversary, or a role, or a means to an end.
2. An all-for-one mindset	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Re-define what winning is within a particular partnership. Set your sights on a different target—one that is more service-oriented and reflective of a bigger picture.• Notice any fear-based reactions you have. Name what you are afraid of. Then practice responses based in curiosity. ("That could be interesting. Let's talk more.") It might take you seconds, days, or weeks to trump fear with curiosity. That's okay, try it anyway.
3. Well-managed self-orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify a situation or interaction when your mental energy was consumed with "it's about me" thinking. For example, when a partner seemed withdrawn and you spent several days wondering what you had done wrong. Then, practice mental dissociation. Make a list of all the possibilities outside of you that could be at play.
4. Confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep a running list of all the things you bring to a relationship—personal traits, experience, resources, and more.• Spend time thinking about your point of view on a matter that is relevant to a relationship you are in. Make notes about what led you to that point of view and what experience or evidence you have to back it up. Then make a plan to share your point of view.• The next time you feel the urge to blame someone for something that went awry, sit down and make note of how <i>you</i> contributed. It takes a lot of self-confidence to admit when you are wrong or see where you could be responsible.

Partnering Muscle	Partnering Practices
5. A balanced perspective of positive and negative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the improv technique “Yes, and!” to build on ideas. (For more details, see <i>Chapter 8: Improve.</i>) • When you give feedback, start a list of what is positive and what works. Do not move to the “what’s negative/what doesn’t work” list until you are certain your partner really heard the good things. And when you do transition, do not use the words “but” or “however”—they have the effect of negating everything you said prior. • Expand your own capacity to receive positive feedback. When someone compliments you or acknowledges you for something, really hear it and say thank you. Do not deflect or deny.
6. The ability to lead and follow interchangeably	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note which you tend to do more—lead or follow. Make a point to do the opposite for one day. Create your own experiment, then reflect on it: What was easy? What was hard? What surprised you about the experience? Did you get different results? What makes sense to carry forward into another experiment?
7. The ability to delay gratification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the “Stoplight” technique that some schools use to teach social/emotional skills. The next time you feel upset or impulsive: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Red light: Stop, calm down, and think before you act ○ Yellow light: Identify the range of things you should do beyond your first impulse ○ Green light: Choose the best one and try it out.² • When your resolve gets shaky, distract yourself with another task • Find a way to reward yourself when you successfully delay gratification
8. Tolerance for not knowing or being in control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt an attitude of “Isn’t this interesting! I wonder what will happen next.” Repeat this over and over to yourself whenever you feel frightened by ambiguity or lack of control.
9. Comfort with conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument which measures your behavior in conflict situations along two basic dimensions: (1) assertiveness, the extent to which you attempt to satisfy your own concerns, and (2) cooperativeness, the extent to which you attempt to satisfy another’s concerns. (At the time of this writing, a free version is available on-line.) • When a conflict or disagreement arises, celebrate it. Practice saying, “Oh good! We see that differently!”
10. A “we”-oriented view of problems and opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try mentally restating all of your problems as “we” problems for one week, where the “we” includes both you and your partner(s).

Worksheet: Working Side by Side

Bring to mind two current relationships: one that is working well and one that isn't. Describe them briefly below, then answer the questions that follow.

Case 1: A Relationship That Is Working Well

Description:

Case 2: A Relationship That Is Not Working Well

Description:

Using the partnering traits below, how would you rate each relationship?

Case 1: A Relationship That Is Working Well

You maintain a mind-set of collaboration.	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes
You work from a position of equal status.	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes
You are willing and able to both lead and follow.	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes
You balance assertiveness and cooperation.	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes
You deal with disagreements and missteps productively and gracefully.	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes
You demonstrate a commitment to sharing responsibility for achieving a goal.	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes
You take responsibility for your part in the partnership's successes and failures.	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes

Case 2: A Relationship That Is Not Working Well

You maintain a mind-set of collaboration.	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes
You work from a position of equal status.	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes
You are willing and able to both lead and follow.	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes

You balance assertiveness and cooperation.	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes
You deal with disagreements and missteps productively and gracefully.	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes
You demonstrate a commitment to sharing responsibility for achieving a goal.	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes
You take responsibility for whatever part you play in the partnership's successes and failures.	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes

For the traits present in the working-well relationship, what aids and sustains those?

For the traits not present in the not-working relationship, what is in the way?

What opportunities do you now see to close the gaps?

What actions will you take as a result? Be specific.

What	By When	With Whom	Support I Will Ask For