



By G.A. "Andy" Marken

About the Author

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MARKETING

At the outset I would have to say Al Golin's (Golin/Harris International) book, *Trust or Consequences: Build Trust Today or Lose Your Market Tomorrow*, really is not a book for PR people. (Book is available at www.amacombooks.org.) This is an outstanding management philosophy/guideline book that happens to be written by a legend of the industry and a track record that adds credibility to the advice and ideas he presents.

Trust or Consequences will be interesting to PR people who recommend strategy to management and carry out the programs and activities management approves. However, public relations does not create the trust strategy. That must come from management.

By all means this is a must-read book for people who treat this industry as a profession rather than simply a job. But at a time when CEOs hold their position for less than five years it is really a book that you need to give your board of directors, president and VP of marketing. These are the people who determine if they want to build and invest in a trust bank for their firm and themselves. They are the ones who ensure regular deposits are made in this bank so they can make withdrawals when it is necessary.

Once management has established the trust bank for the entire organization it becomes a lot easier for public relations to communicate with stakeholders and handle crises and opportunities. But because we (businesses, non-profits and governmental organizations) have done such an excellent job of destroying trust, it will not be a snap.

The challenge is that there have been so many management missteps over the past few years that even the best corporate trust bank does not have the deposits they would like to have and at a time when people want instant results, time is of the essence.

Despite the missteps and calculated actions of a few high profile organizations and managers, Golin does highlight a number of firms that have set the standard for trust building. He does an outstanding job of explaining how these organizations have planned a path of action and never wavered from that path even when it would have been easy to place the blame elsewhere, cloud the issues or blatantly lie.

Establishing Trust

Trust or Consequences Explains How Building Trust is Important to Holding Your Market

Make a huge deposit in your organization's trust bank; read *Trust or Consequences*.



Golin starts the book off with perhaps the golden rule of trust building, Johnson & Johnson (J&J). No firm or management team has faced as many problems as J&J, yet consistently stepped up and faced the issues head-on. Fortunately, J&J is not alone and Golin highlights organizations that have taken the right approach and emerged relatively unscathed. Similarly, he puts the spotlight on those organizations that have blundered and blundered badly.

I believe it is important for CEOs to understand the actions these firms took and the long-term impact it has had on the companies, but more importantly to executive management overall. It is the media's coverage of these managers that has helped develop the public perception that a CEO is slightly better than a used car salesman below, lawyers and PR people.

Golin divides the book into three sections to appeal to and help executives at every level. But rather than preach the holy grail of business ethics and honesty, he translates the value and ROI of the trust bank in a way presidents and senior managers can understand sales and profits. This approach makes it extremely difficult for the reader to say, "Yeah philosophically it is nice, but I have got numbers to meet if I am going to keep this job."

He does not take the Pollyanna approach that the trust philosophy and actions will not help you avoid problems because they are an integral part of doing business and of living. However, he clearly demonstrates that firms and management teams that establish a trust bank and a strategy of open and honest communications with stakeholders do produce bottom line results in good and bad times.

Golin faces the trust rebuilding issue head-on with the first section of the book outlining how management and PR people can determine how difficult it will be to rebuild trust when bad things happen. He explains by examples how organizations have produced a turn-around and regained their position in the marketplace and the community.

The second section of the book is devoted to helping management build trust for their firms both internally and externally.

The final section puts everything in perspective by presenting the ideas, concepts and guidelines in a clear, concise and specific manner. He delivers the information using everyday examples of real firms, not abstracts. More importantly, the book is not just a thinly veiled discussion of his agency's work. (However, Golin/Harris has long been a respected PR agency.) He also uses other companies as examples of work that has been done well.

Trust is a powerful word and a powerful concept. It can bring individuals, companies and countries together. Trust can help each of us withstand the whims and winds of change and adversity.

Trust can make an individual company stand head and shoulders above its competition. Trust can build the image and following of a CEO that will ensure stakeholders support him as well as his statements and actions.

Come to think of it, perhaps *Trust or Consequences* is a how-to book for PR people including professionals. It will give management faith in your recommendations because they know you are acting in the organization's best interest rather than your own. It will validate that you are concerned about management, employees, business partners and customers. It will prove that you are willing to handle crises openly and properly rather than dodging/denying the issues. It will give them reassurance that you can and will communicate accurately and openly with the stakeholders.

Or to paraphrase a credit card firm's advertising theme, "What's in your trust bank?"

I recommend reading Al Golin's *Trust or Consequences*. Then if you want to make your professional job easier and more rewarding, get copies for your CEO, VP of marketing and other key executives.

Think of it as a deposit in your organization's (and your) trust bank.

WQP

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