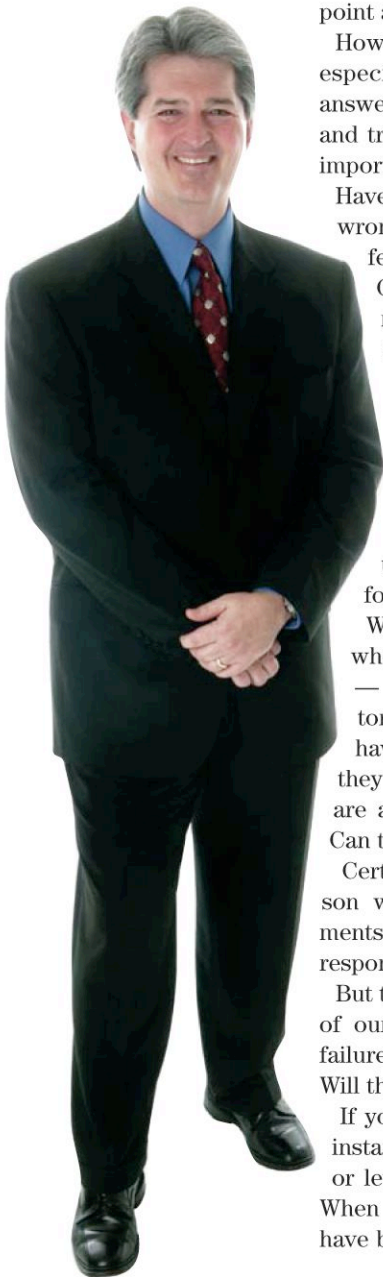


# Do you know who to trust?

Ask the deeper questions that determine trustworthiness.



“On belay?” I called out the rock climber’s command for readiness as I scanned the rock face for my first foothold.

“Belay is on!” said my 13-year-old daughter, Sarah.

Something about the sound of her voice made me turn to her. When I did, I saw a look of absolute determination on her face, a look that said “I’ve got you, Dad.”

I began to scale the rock face, knowing that my life might be in her hands at any point along the 200-foot climb.

How did I decide to trust Sarah so much, especially at such a young age? The answer is in knowing how to balance trust and trustworthiness. It’s one of the most important lessons in the business of life.

Have you ever placed your trust in the wrong person? Do you remember how it felt when that person let you down? Often, the deepest pain comes from moments when our trust is betrayed and yet, we must trust others almost every day.

So how do we decide when and whom to trust?

We can begin by realizing that the decision to trust someone involves two questions, one that we usually ask and one that we usually forget.

When we decide to trust people — whether in business or in a relationship — we first evaluate the external factors. Are they mature enough? Do they have the skills and experience? Do they seem committed? In essence, we are asking ourselves the first question: Can they do it?

Certainly, this is the place to start. A person who does not meet these requirements, at the level needed to fulfill the responsibility, is not ready to be trusted.

But this is usually not the problem. Most of our disappointments come from our failure to ask the second, deeper question: Will they do it?

If you fall during a climb, your partner instantaneously chooses to hold the rope or let it slide through his or her hands. When you think back to the people who have betrayed your trust, you will usually

find that they were capable of doing what they committed to do, but in the moment of choice, they were simply not willing to do it. In the business of life, you want to depend on people who won’t let you fall.

The next time you choose to trust someone, remember that there is a difference between being capable of fulfilling a commitment and a willingness to follow through on that commitment. Real trustworthiness requires both.

Ask yourself what that person will do in the moment of choice, and then watch how he or she fulfills commitments to others. If the person says the report will be done this week, does it happen? If someone agrees to meet you at a certain time, is he or she there?

Personal responsibility is like a light switch in most people; it’s either on or off. While no one is perfect, if someone takes small commitments seriously, he or she is very likely to make large commitments with the same seriousness.

Also remember that others are asking and answering the same questions about you. Do you always do what you say you will do? Or do you make promises with the expectation of adjusting them later?

Beware of the times that you make a commitment by saying you will try to do it. Try is a word that clearly says you are not committed and are already hedging. Eliminate this one word from your vocabulary and make an absolute commitment, and your trustworthiness will increase tenfold.

Halfway up the rock face, my foot slipped. I saw the ground rushing up toward me, only to be interrupted by a violent jerk as the rope broke my fall, leaving me safely suspended in mid-air. I looked down to see Sarah holding on to the rope with all her might. I had chosen the right person to trust.

Who’s holding your rope today? Can that person be trusted? Can you?

**JIM HULING** is CEO of The Jim Huling Group, a strategic consulting company enabling leaders and their teams to achieve extraordinary results. Jim’s leadership experience spans over three decades, including eleven years as CEO of a leading technology company named multiple times as one of the “25 Best Small Companies to Work For in America.” Jim is a nationally recognized keynote speaker and is also the author of *Choose Your Life!* a powerful proven method for creating the life you want, now available on Amazon.