

# Family Business Repairing Broken Promises

## 7 Courageous Steps To Rebuild Trust



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Trust is the cornerstone of any successful family business. When a promise or commitment is broken, it tends to fracture the relationship and undermine the foundation of that trust.

Keep in mind that promises come in all sizes and can range from “I’ll grab you a latte on my way in.” to “I am going to make you CEO someday.” It’s not just failure of the big promises that matter, it’s the stacking of the little ones that add up over time and result in damaged trust.

In a business family, restoring trust after a broken promise requires a delicate balance of humility, transparency, and genuine communication.

Taking these seven concrete steps to rebuild damaged trust is important because the long-term success of your family business depends on strong business family relationships.

Remember that this is for broken commitments or promises, big and small.

- 1 Acknowledge the broken promise to yourself:** Awareness is the first and often the hardest step, many of us put-off acknowledging a broken promise long enough to forget all about it. Don’t brush it under the rug.
- 2 Decide on your new commitment:** Decide whether to remake your former promise, make a smaller or a bigger one, or make no new promises at all. Basically, this means, decide what you are willing to do for the sake of repair.
- 3 Prepare yourself for full accountability:** The broken promise has damaged trust and to repair it, you must be willing to accept the consequences. There is a cost.
- 4 Apologize:** Owning and saying you’re sorry is critical. Don’t lean on excuses, own-it and apologize. The words can be hard to say, but they are important to hear.
- 5 Listen and stay consistent:** Ask to hear their side of the story and be empathetic to their negative experience. This can be painful but remember that this is not the time to become defensive or rattle off excuses, no matter how legitimate. Listen, nod, take it in, and ask...” Is there more?”
- 6 Communicate a new level of commitment:** Inquire and actively listen to learn and confirm their willingness to give you a second chance. Clearly communicate your new commitment, checking-in to confirm it meets their needs.
- 7 Show and execute the plan:** Present a thoughtful make-up plan and most important of all, be sure to carry it out. It’s unlikely that you’ll get a third chance to build real trust.

Human relationships can change, grow, develop, deepen or decay quickly. All of us fall short from time to time. Taking accountability to repair damaged trust is a foundational step in building better relationships.