

Women in Leadership Seminar Highlights

Date: December 16, 2011



Marilynn Mobley from Edelman, the largest Public Relations firm in the world, presented the results from Edelman's 2011 Trust Barometer. The 2011 study was their 11th annual, and it included 5,075 people representing 23 countries. Participants were between the ages of 25 and 64, college educated, and from the top 25% of household income in their age groups.

Ms. Mobley shared fascinating trends indicating changes in trust over the past 11 years, as well as differences by country. For instance, she shared that trust in media in China, Brazil, and India has increased, while in the U.S. it has declined. She also demonstrated that trust in Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) is now on par with businesses in both emerging markets and developed markets. Perhaps most interestingly, general levels of trust in the U.S. in 2008 were close to the highest among all countries, and the U.S. is close to the bottom (only Russia and The U.K. were lower).

Also discussed were the tangible benefits of trust. First, people are very opinionated and will not buy your products if they do not trust you. However, it is also true that they will criticize your company publicly if they do not trust you, as 33% of people will share negative opinions about your company online. On a more positive note, 54% of people will pay more if they trust the company. The research also shows that trust in a company will serve as a buffer to negative information.

Practical considerations were reviewed, as well. On the whole, the results suggest that for organizations to build trust, more frequent communication from multiple trusted and respected voices is needed. Ms. Mobley also recommends that you allow for some balanced discussion of your organization or products. People actually become skeptical of reviews when they see nothing but positive. The results also suggest that CEOs need to own and live corporate responsibility. People need to and want to know what companies do for charity, and they are willing to buy and pay more if they believe the company cares. She recommends that organizations find out what their employees care about and donate accordingly. She shared that if you do pro bono work, you should let people know. It helps them connect to you.

In all, it was a fascinating presentation with rich discussion and valuable considerations. For full details of their latest trust survey, go to Edelman's website.