

## TRUST BUT VERIFY

Living in in modern world requires us to rely on a lot of people, systems, and processes to make it through the day. Often we do not even realize this dependency because we are too busy to notice the trust we place in others. We get promised something everyday and often times these promises fall short in some way, shape, or form. Someone says they will text you with a drop-off time for your child's dance recital, but the message never comes and you end up missing the class. You might be relying on a contractor to renovate the basement in your house to the proper building codes, but the work ends up being subpar. In medicine, it is easy to get caught up in the so-called expertise of your doctor, when their lack of knowledge ends up delaying and worsening your condition. There is a simple concept that allows us to efficiently overcome these situations.

When working with the Russians during the Cold War, President Reagan is credited with telling the Russians this famous phrase: "Trust but verify." The meaning was that when it comes to international treaties, especially those concerning weapons regulation, it is a good idea for both sides to monitor each other's compliance with the provisions of the treaty. The idea is to not believe everything that you see. Instead, confirm that what you expect to be the outcome based on what you are seeing is actually the case. When my daughter was very young we had many discussions about this concept. The impact of the concept of trust but verify is amplified in the eyes of child, simply because children trust everyone and everything! They don't know what it feels like to be screwed over. Instead, they assume good intentions in all interactions with the world.



Walk signs, as are commonly found on many busy streets throughout the U.S., are a teaching moment for all of us. When my daughter and I would wait to cross the intersection, we would wait for the indicator to change from "don't walk" to "walk." Upon changing to walk, my daughter would eagerly say to me "let's go, Dad!" She trusted the indicator on the walk sign to the extent that it was safe for her to cross the street. What she did not do was verify that what the sign was telling her was actually correct. More often than not, it was actually not safe to cross the street! She did not bother to verify the safety of the situation and did not notice the cars that were turning on red. Or she did not notice the irate driver that is now gunning through the intersection. She may not



have noticed the distracted driver that was texting as he was going through the intersection.

## TRUST BUT VERIFY!

The trust but verify has implications in many common situations, although they may be quite subtle. Here are some common, everyday examples of how not verifying what you perceive to be the case frequently causes people to experience accidents or other negative effects:

- Driving: when turning right at an intersection, not looking in both directions to verify that someone did not run the light or the stop sign coming from the opposite direction.
- Investing: blindly accepting services from a broker without first verifying what the actual fee structure is.
- Homework: assuming that your child has done their math homework correctly without verifying that this is the case by actually checking some of the problems that she did.
- Marriage: assuming that your marriage is stable without checking in with your spouse periodically to make sure she is in a good place with the relationship.
- Protective equipment: assuming that your helmet or goggles are in proper working order without actually checking on their condition.
- Maintenance: Going on a road trip and assuming that the oil in your car is at the proper level without actually verifying this by pulling out the dipstick.
- Travel: Driving to the airport to catch a flight without first verifying that there are no road closures or that your flight is on time.
- Medicine: For serious medical conditions, assuming that the diagnosis and the treatment provided by your doctor is the best option for you, without verifying this through getting a second opinion or doing your own research.

Verification of a situation to make sure that it is safe usually just takes a few moments to accomplish, but it could save you a lot of heartache, cost, and hassle in the long run. Figuratively and literally, it usually simply involves a quick look in the opposite direction that you are going to make sure that nothing is going to plow into you and take you out of the game! Many accidents happen in the blink of an eye and often could be avoided by this simple step just before you take action.

Check out my safety books and other safety resources and information at <http://www.markkowaleski.com> for more insights to guide you on your journey to living a healthier, wealthier, longer, and happier life.

Remember: keep TABs on your safety: Think safe, Act Safe, Be safe!

- Mark M. Kowaleski