

# *Business901* Podcast Transcription

*Implementing Lean Marketing Systems*



## Sales Trustworthiness

Guest was Charles Green

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## **Transcription of the Podcast**

**Joe:** *Welcome, everyone. This is Joe Dager, the host of the Business901 podcast. With me today is Charles Green. He's an author, speaker and world expert on trust-based relationships and sales in complex businesses. Founder and CEO of Trusted Advisor Associates. He's author of "Trust-based Selling", and co-author of the "Trusted Advisor" and "The Trusted Advisor Fieldbook". Charles, I'm a big fan, and even though you started writing books about trust a long, long time ago, it seems to have gotten a lot more visibility all of a sudden recently, and in business. Is that true?*

**Charles:** I think it is true, Joe. By the way, thanks for having me here, I appreciate it. Thanks for those kind words. Yeah, I think it is true. The word "trust", and "trusted advisor", has been around, obviously, but it has gotten a lot more attention. To a great extent, that has been driven by business, not only – it's a common saying that trust is down recently and it turns out that is actually true. On several, objectively verifiable, basic measures, general levels of trust tend to be declining down. It's not the usual suspects. It's not like all the Catholic Church is down, or banking is down, or government or congress. Yeah, those things actually tend to go a little bit with the GNP, but more worrisome, what is fundamentally down... there has been a 50-year survey of a thing on the what's called a General Social Survey, an open-ended question that basically says, "Do you trust strangers

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or do you think you can't be too careful around people?" And the answer to that question is pretty stable over time, but it has been gradually, steadily declining, and that's bad news for business, society, etc.

**Joe:** *Then, what's the problem with trust in business end? I mean, you're an expert in this area – I mean, what is the problem.*

**Charles:** Well, it's a couple of things. It's useful actually – one of the things I've noticed looking at trust is one of these words like, one of the Supreme Court Justices famously talked about, "obscenity" and he said, "I don't know how you define it, but I know it when I see it." Trust is somewhat like that. We all have an intuitive sense of it, but it turns out it's very hard to define, and one of the simplest distinctions that I find useful in answering your question is the distinction between trusting and being trusted, or between trusting and trustworthiness. Like, do I dare risk to trust somebody or do other people find that I'm trustworthy, capable of being trusted. Those are two different things. Part of the business issues lie on the side of business. They really have become less trustworthy, in some ways. The other part lies in the trusting. People have become less inclined to trust business in certain ways and, most especially, business has become disinclined to trust customers. If you look at the growth in lawyers, the length of contracts, the appendices that you see at the end of e-mails, business is paranoid about trusting its customers, and that causes exactly the kind of result they think they don't want. If they don't trust us, we don't trust them.

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**Joe:** *One of things is, in the online world, you know, we talk about data security, but it has really become a matter of who we trust our data with, not how secure is. Do you see a correlation between your previous answer of trust?*

**Charles:** You know, that's one of the thorniness parts of trust, and to perfectly honest, Joe, I haven't totally figured out how I think about that. I can say a couple of things. There's no question that there's a connection between, "Do I trust somebody who seems to be broadly, overly trustworthy? Do I trust them with my data over somebody who seems to be fast and loose?" but it's not as big a connection as you'd think. How many people actually cancel their credit cards because of a department store chain? Not that many. I think part of it is, we feel we don't have a choice. If you're going to do business online, and you kind of have to these days or we all want to, you're a little bit stuck with clicking through to get all of these agreements. So, the link is a little bit less clear than you would think because I'm not sure we all have free maker choices, in the same way, that we used to.

**Joe:** *I think it's kind of funny, though. I go back to your books and those buzzwords of today, like "transparency", "collaboration" that are in your book...*

**Charles:** Yes.

**Joe:** *... is that the basis of what is needed or did you just have a crystal ball and put in your book a few years back.*

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**Charles:** Well, I think we got it right. I mean that book, the original book, "The Trusted Advisor", that you're talking about that came out in 2001, and it was a product of three people, of whom I'm one. Three of us are ex-consultants. We all had about 20 years experience, that's 60 between the three of us, and, basically, we kind of sat down and said, "Where are all the things that we goofed up on?" "Where did we screw up?" "Where do we learn by doing wrong?" and "What does that have to say about trust?", and we came up with this thing called the 'trust equation,' which is a lot of what you're talking about, the components of trust and those have turned to be very true. We got it right, that people trust if you if a) they can believe what you say – b) they can depend you like you've got a track record – c) you feel approachable or what we call 'intimate, like I can share things with you – and d) if they feel like you're not in it for yourself, and those fundamental are exactly the same as they ever were.

**Joe:** So, that trust equation. Can you explain that?

**Charles:** It turns out to be... this is on the side of trustworthiness, not trusting, but when it comes to thinking: is somebody trustworthy or am I trustworthy, we suggest you look at the trust equation, and we literally wrote it out in the form of an equation. Mostly, to give people, who are quantitatively inclined and kind of hooked into it, but it also actually... we ended up doing a survey based on it, and it's rather valid. The equation is -  $C+R+I$  over  $S$ . Which means, credibility, like can I believe what you tell me. Reliability, can I depend on you. Intimacy, meaning – do I feel secure and safe sharing things with you. All those,  $C+R+I$  divided by  $S$ , which stands for self-orientation, which means: not only are you selfish, but also it means: are you self-oriented – are you focused on yourself – are

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you neurotically self-obsessed all the time, versus "Can you care about me. The other person. The customer," and if you score high on the TQ, the trust quotient, that means you're high credibility, high reliability, high intimacy and low self-orientation. About seven years ago, it occurred to me: we really should put that online in the form of a survey and get some data, and if we have a minute, I would be happy to share some of that data with you.

**Joe:** Sure.

**Charles:** About sixty thousand people have taken it, and, I guess, some of the headlines... to me the most interesting headline is, and let me take you as a test case here, Joe – who do you think is more trustworthy, men or women? What would you guess? Don't overthink it.

**Joe:** Oh. Women.

**Charles:** Oh, you're absolutely right. It's true, and is statistically, significantly true, and more to the point, when I asked people like I just did you: which one do you think is more trustworthy, 98 times out of a 100, people will say "women", which I think is also kind of a proof. Secondly, it turns out that almost all of that difference in the study between women being more trustworthy than men rests on women getting higher scores in one of those four components. Let's see if you can guess which one it is. Credibility, reliability, intimacy or self-orientation? Which one do women do better at?

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**Joe:** Intimacy.

**Charles:** You are correct again. You're batting a thousand. Women are statistically, significantly better at that. Now, related, there are other studies, besides this one that, looked at professions for example – who has highest and lowest trustworthiness? No surprise, lawyers and politicians are at the bottom. Lawyer in Europe do a little better than here. Who do you think is at the top of the list? The most trustworthy profession in almost every survey you can think of? Want to guess?

**Joe:** Oh, no. I can't even... the quality professional.

**Charles:** Well, people, usually, come up with, you know, doctors, or pharmacists, or teachers, or whatever. Now, number one is nursing. Nurses are the most trusted profession. Which makes sense when you think about it. If the doctor says you're going to up and walking in a month, and the nurse is, "Honey, it's going to be eight weeks," you know, whom do we believe? We believe the nurse. We're very comfortable sharing intimate things, our bodies, our minds, our thoughts with nurses, and it's no accident that nursing is predominantly, not entirely, but predominantly a feminine profession. All these things fit together – female, intimacy, and nursing. It turns out that the biggest factor, the one with the most power in the trust equation, and we didn't expect it going in, is intimacy.

If you want to create trust, or sense of trustworthiness, the biggest single lever that you have is to be able to create a sense of intimacy with other people. It's also no accident that conmen know that too, by the way. So, they know dummies and that's the one they go for.

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You know, "I'm your friend, you can trust me. I have your best interest at heart. I understand who you are." It's a preferred tactic of conmen, for good reason.

**Joe:** *Where does the sales professional fit on that scale?*

**Charles:** Sales people differ. There are different kinds, not surprisingly, but it turns out that regardless of who you are, probably the best way to improve is to work on the intimacy part. For example, I worked a lot with the people in the profession – with lawyers, accountants, consultants, systems engineers, actuaries. Those people score very high on credibility and reliability, with good reason. They're smart, they're left-brain, they're top of their class – first-born, high-achievers, all that stuff. Furthermore, they believe that because they're the top of the heap in these high-intellect industries, that somehow that must be what's making them successful. The truth is, it's only up to a point.

When it comes to selling, if you're a professional services person and you're trying to sell a hundred thousand dollar assignment, or a million dollar, or ten thousand, or whatever, it's very tempting to think the clients are buying you because you're smart and an expert in the area, and after all, that's what they'll tell you. But, the truth is, the way clients look at that is, "Are you good enough? Do you have technical qualifications that are good enough?" I mean, nobody is going to laugh at me, they're not going to throw me out, but really, "Do I trust this person?" and when they say 'trust', they mean 'intimacy' – they mean, "Is this person not going to con me?" "Do I think they have my best interest at heart?" "Do they actually hear what I'm saying?".

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To the extent that you are an expert, you know more things than they do about the subject, they really are putting themselves in your hands. So, it's quite critical – if you're a wealth advisor, for example, or a divorce attorney, you're going to have to turn over all kinds of information, and you're not the pro. You want to know that those people are on your side, and that falls into the intimacy part of the equation.

**Joe:** *Now, in this world, we seem to block out salespeople to pretty late in the selling cycle anymore. How do you build trust, or can you build trust in the sales pipeline?*

**Charles:** Yes, you can. I think you're right, you know, quotes about salespeople only showing up in the latter half of the pipeline these days. You can telegraph some of these things. For example, the whole movement around inbound marketing is basically getting content, giving away content so that people can sample your wares and get a sense of who you are. I view that as a good strategy for trust. Hubspot kind of invented that whole thing, or they get credit for it. So, of the things that are nonconditional, don't send out blanket emails and force people to give you an email address – that appears self-orienting, greedy and non-trust-creating. But, if you put out good content, and people are interested in it, you make it available for them, that's viewed as a sign of generosity, other-orientation and it's a good thing. Another one is – always be adding value. If somebody sends an inquiry, "Tell me about your program and give me price on it," don't beat around the bush, tell them about the program and give them a price quote. They don't expect that. They expect to have to fight you. If you're willing to offer that, and then, you know what, throw in an e-book too, or whatever else might be useful in your particular business. Offer value at all turns. Be willing to answer questions. We all hate sales techniques that

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are, "We won't tell you this until you get here, or read through to the bottom," those feel manipulative to us. So, be open.

**Joe:** ... and I think that is common. That's the premise of inbound marketing. Get the people to know you and then to trust you. But, when I think about it, are we raising the bar on what we perceive trust to be? Is that why the scale is sliding?

**Charles:** I've never thought about that question, Joe. That's a great one. I don't think we have raised the bar. No, in fact, if anything I think it may be lower in some ways. Look at how easily we can – look at LinkedIn, look at dating sites, look at how easily we've all become comfortable surfing the social surface of things. On the surface, we're a lot more easily relating to other people. Whether that's the truth deep down – maybe not so much, but I don't think we have qualitatively changed the notion of trust all that much. I think it's pretty much a basic function of human nature.

**Joe:** I think of the younger generations because they're so transparent, and they're also collaborative, and I see them scoring much higher at empathy than my maybe my generation did. Look, they are just more accustomed to diversity and that type of stuff, and I think very highly of the next generation coming up. Do you think the trust equation is going to change for them? Do you think there's going to be... do you see a difference in that response from the age groups or anything?

**Charles:** Well, one thing I can tell you from that same survey we talked about before, is that the scores of trustworthiness go up with age. In other words, the older you are, the

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higher the trustworthiness scores. Now, it's a self-assessment, so you might say, wait a minute, that's old people rating themselves more highly, can you really trust that? I think you can, in the following way. You ask yourself, you, me, anyone listening to this – ask yourself, "Am I, today, more or less trustworthy than when I was 21?" and I think almost of us would say, oh my gosh, I'm probably a lot more trustworthy now. I don't have data about what those number looked like twenty years ago, to compare gen Y, gen X, I don't know how the trust is interrelated, but I do think the differences are not all going to be that huge. I think that when we're younger, no matter what generation we're in, we're just by nature a little bit more self-oriented. This generation is an awful lot better at very surface connecting. Everybody has got friends and so forth. The world has gotten a little bit de-based connections, friends, links, etc. I don't think they're any terribly worse at deep relationships than we were. I don't think they're any better at it. I think it's an age thing.

**Joe:** *In the process of sales, what are some tips you could give someone that would help them build trust and relationship in early meeting with people?*

**Charles:** Great question. Let me offer up a couple. One of the best ones I can think of is 'tell the truth', and that sounds simple, but let's explore what that means. I remember vividly an early sales call that I was going on as a young consultant, and my boss was with me – the client looks at me after we sit down with coffee and everything, he says, "tell me what experience you have in the sand-paper industry doing marketing studies." Well, we didn't have anything, and nobody has any industry experience in sand-paper, and...I didn't know what to say. I'm scrambling around, trying to come up with all these exotic ideas in my head, and fortunately, my boss leaned in and in the answer to the question what

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experience do you have in the sand-paper industry, he said, "None that I can think of. What else do you want to talk about?" Which turned out to be exactly the right thing to say, and because the client leaned back and laughed, and he said, "Well, shoot. Hardly anybody has done work in the sand-paper industry. That's OK. What else have you got," and we proceeded to have a perfectly natural discussion. That's a small example of telling the truth. Let me just expand – if you tell the truth, first of all, you only have to remember one version of it. There's a great pragmatism associated with that. Number two – you're not going to get caught, because it's the truth. Number three – if you tell the truth, and very rapidly the people come to see that you're the one who tells the truth, you're a truth-teller. They will rapidly come to trust you.

**Charles:** It turns out that there are all kinds of ways in which we don't tell the truth. Let me extend the further conversation: "How much experience have you had?" or, "How many clients do you have?" and if the answer is 'three', you might be tempted to say "Well, several and they're....," just say 'three', and wait for them to elaborate on it. We get caught it up in the sales conversations as if it's a duel – that we have to out-trick, out-hustle, respond to, handle objections, close deals. No, we need to reframe mentally – this is a conversation, they're entitled to ask questions, and, by the way, their questions are often a little combative, because they too think it's a battle. They think we're out to get them. So, stop it. Just tell the truth. Whatever the question is, tell the truth, including if you don't know. Probably the most believable thing you could say is, "I don't know." If people recognize you're willing to say that you don't know when you don't know, wow, your credibility just went way up because everybody else is trying to hustle you.

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**Joe:** I think there's a lot of truth to that, especially for a young salesperson, because they have that credibility issue to conquer anyway.

**Charles:** Yes, that's right. That's right. But the truth is, anybody older has already been at that age. We know what's it like to be 25. We know what's it like to be 35. We know the difference. So, don't con me. Be the best 25-year-old you can.

**Joe:** Yeah. I've heard the statement that trust starts after the sale.

**Charles:** No. Flatly, no. Trust is pretty well established during the sale. By the time the deal is made, it's large, to a great extent, it's because the trust is there pretty well set by that point. If you think the trust waits until the sale, you've probably missed a bunch of other sales. We begin assessing the trustworthiness of other people the minute we lay eyes on them, or the minute we hear their voice, or the minute we see a degree on the wall, or a stethoscope around the neck, or a tone of voice, or an accent – we're immediately making assumption and impressions. The way that we conduct ourselves as salespeople during the sales process tells people an enormous amount. It tells them, number one – how much can I believe what this person is telling me or are they just trying to get a deal. Number two – by the time you've had several interactions, you have room to figure out if they have got a track record. Number three, especially – you get a sense of "Can I share this information with this person, or do I think they're going to use it and run around and do something else with it. How forthcoming do I want to be with this person?" So, I just reject that idea.

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**Joe:** *I thought there was an interesting chapter in your book that asks, "Should you teach product people sales or teach salespeople product?" Could you elaborate on that a little?*

**Charles:** I haven't thought about that one for a while, Joe. That's interesting. We were suggesting that most people in sales have been brought up, developed, been acculturated in the sales environment, and they have fairly well established beliefs about the nature of sales, and that's hard to change. By contrast, people whose primary orientation has been around product, they're still relatively naive about sales and they may have preconceptions, "Oh, I don't want to be a salesman," but that's fairly shallow, and you can actually leverage all those wonderful ideas, the thoughts that they have about content and give them a few guiding notions about selling. My suggestion is, it's generally preferable and easier to take product people and teach them a little bit about sales than it is to take salespeople and teach them the insurance industry, for example, or accounting, or medical products. There's quite a learning curve there and you're still stuck with whatever bad habits they had in sales.

**Joe:** *Came out with the Fieldbook, and that's your most recent book, one, why did you wait for a Fieldbook for so long and two, should I read the other books before the field book or can I proceed with just the Fieldbook?*

**Charles:** You can proceed with just the Fieldbook. We intentionally tried to cover in there, my colleague, Andrea Howe, and I, tried to cover briefly a lot of what we covered in The Trusted Advisor and some of what we covered in my Trust-based Selling, the second

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one. You don't have to buy all three. If you want to buy one, in fact, you can make a good argument that may be the one. It fits people in sales. It fits people in professional services. It fits people who have relationships of all types in business. Why didn't we do it sooner? Good question. Probably should have. Part of the answer was – the book that I wanted to write after *The Trusted Advisor* really was around selling, and it takes a while, and it took me longer than most people to get together a book, write it and get it published. That took five years. It took another six years to get to *The Trusted Advisor Fieldbook*, so apparently, I'm just slow, and I didn't want to put something out that I didn't feel it had anything new. To some extent, I didn't feel we had enough new to say until we did. There's some new material in there about leadership, trust and leadership, for example, that you won't find in the previous two books, and that's one thing I realize when we had something to say about that, that helped push the needle over the line, so to say, "You know, time for another book."

**Joe:** *I have to tell you, I've had *The Trusted Advisor* for quite a few years and I listened to the audio of *Trust-based Selling*, and said, "I have to have the book."*

**Charles:** Awesome.

**Joe:** *It was like – there's good stuff in here that I'm not going to be searching back and forth in the audio book.*

**Charles:** Yeah, that's right. I think you're right. To be perfectly candid – of the three books, *Trust-based Selling*, the second one, is kind of my favorite. Maybe it's the one that I

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wrote solely, you know, my own, but I think more because it's about selling and the issues that come up with sales that are just so interesting and critical, especially in professional services. What you're selling when you're selling professional services, to some extent you're selling yourself. You can't avoid it. You're a part of the package and they're buying you or they're not buying you, so it's very personal. Salespeople are told, 'don't take it personally,' well, somehow it is, especially if you're one of those businesses where people have billing rates – "Oh, my gosh. Am I really worth that?" and if they push back on price, they're basically saying, "You're not worth it". There are just all kinds of fascinating things that come up, and how do you resolve that dilemma of selling people and charging the money for it and feeling good about yourself.

**Joe:** *Where do you think the next evolution of trust is going for the salesperson? In this world, it's harder to get more intimate when you're sitting there with so many things online, and that distance is there... how can we be intimate online, for example?*



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**Charles:** Well, here's the good news. You're right. Let me just underscore what you just said to the point. The world is more and more online, more and more dispassionate. You're seeing more and more procurement getting involved in sales. Distance, even reverse bidding online, etc. However, for the most part, there's still some kind of personal interaction, and the less there is, the more important it becomes. So, the few firms in any given industry that get really good at it are going to have an increasingly powerful strategic advantage because the role of trust hasn't declined. All the pipework has been done. If you think of it, the way we all like to buy stuff, let's think of it as a consumer, here – I want to buy, I don't know, a computer or a sound system, or some kind of electronics or furniture. What are you going to do? You go to the web first, right? You find out everything you can, and we like the sights and the companies that give us all kinds of information, and maybe there's even an online chat, something, or text-chat where you can ask questions, and they're still not trying to sell you. What we're doing is trying to put off and reduce the fine point when you finally have to talk to a salesperson, and we're gurning ourselves up against that, because we have such bad expectations. Well, guess what? By the time you finally do get to a salesperson, a person who behaves in an intimate, customer-focused kind of a way, it beats the heck out of 9/10 of the salespeople out there. You get an extraordinary advantage.

If you build the whole process with that in mind, and avoid transparent lies like, "Please hold, your call is very important to us," no it isn't, otherwise you would have answered me. Or, you know, listen carefully, our message has changed – no they haven't. Not for the last two years. You set up the system so it really is customer-friendly and then when they finally meet a salesperson, have them be devoted to you. Detach from the sale, and

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actually be of service to the customer. There are traditional examples of retail who have learned this years ago and it's still the same thing. It's still works for Nordstrom. It still works for L.L.Bean, and it works for Bed, Bath & Beyond these days. They focus on the customer and the customer experience, and guess what? It still works.

**Joe:** *What do you have upcoming?*

**Charles:** Well, I'm... good question. I don't have another book right now, although I may. I'm working on the possibility of a book, which would also be around selling. It would be great stories of trust-based selling among major companies. Major success stories. So, that's a possibility. Working on that. I'm also moving more in the video direction, and I've got a little series of one-minute trusted videos. I'm working on a much bigger series with my colleague, Andrea Howe, to be part of an integrated, blended learning program. I've also got – working on a thing tentatively called 'The Trust Audit', which is more of an enterprise oriented, consulting offering – let's take a big corporate look at your whole organization and see where the strengths and the weaknesses and the opportunities lie for creating a higher-trust organization.

**Joe:** *I didn't ask you during this, but you just kind of brought that to mind. Are these same principles applicable to relationships I have within my organization?*

**Charles:** Absolutely, and thanks for raising that. Yes, yes and yes. The way that we are trustworthy to our customers is exactly the way we are, or we are not, trustworthy to our internal people, or our suppliers for that matter – and ditto for the way we trust them, or

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don't trust them. So, if you think about, 'do you trust colleagues or not?' Well, if you don't trust your colleagues, then I can tell you what kind of a workplace environment you're in. If you don't trust your employees, I can tell you what kind of a workplace environment you're in, and not only that, but how many lawsuits you're likely struggling with. Ditto with your suppliers and customers. The principles of human trust are largely personal and are universal.

**Joe:** *Where could someone contact you, or find you on the web. Your book is, of course, on the Amazon.*

**Charles:** Well, the main place is TrustedAdvisor.com, and that's spelled the English way, t-r-u-s-t-e-d-a-d-v-i-s-o-r.com, TrustedAdvisor.com, or google Charles H. Green. You can probably find it that way, and as you said, we've got books on there and following my earlier principles, we've got like a thousand free articles, e-books, blog posts, video clips on all the kinds of things that you and I have talked about and a bunch more. So, TrustedAdvisor.com.

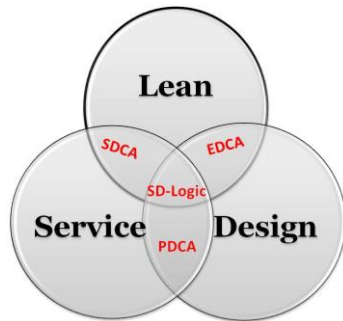
**Joe:** *Well, I would like to thank you very much, Charles. Your books seem to be timeless, OK. And I very much enjoy them.*

**Charles:** Well, thank you. I appreciate it, Joe, and thank you for the opportunity to chat with you. I enjoyed it.

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