

Time for action

Business owners need to take proactive steps for concerns to be heard

Small business is one of the most trusted institutions in American society. With politics in full swing prior to the 2014 midterm elections, it is becoming clearer that elected officials understand that small business issues are America's issues.



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Maybe it was the Great Recession. Maybe it's the new normal of the 24-hour media cycle that has the ability to dissect people and issues with unyielding intensity. No matter the cause, elected officials in today's world have fallen faster and farther than any other group in terms of reputation and credibility with the American public.

Confidence in institutions

You need to look no further than Gallup's recent June 2014 poll of confidence in 16 of our country's core institutions. Ranked last on the list with just 7 percent of those polled indicating a "great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence was Congress. And institutions — media, big business and organized labor — round out the bottom, peaking at just 23 percent confidence in the same poll.

So, in whom do the American people trust? In the last seven years, it has been the military and small businesses that have consistently led these rankings. With that kind of showing, it's no wonder that folksy stories and photo opportunities featuring the small business owner next door and our uniformed soldiers dominate campaign rhetoric.

Getting access to America's confidence in small business isn't an

easy play for our elected officials. Neither Republicans nor Democrats hold the high ground on small business. Recent national and local polling shows that among business owners, just 40 percent identify as Republicans, 25 percent as Democrats and 20 percent as Independents.

Yet, while they vote regularly, 85 percent don't vote a straight party line and more than 40 percent say that neither party best represents their issues.

Time for real answers

Elected officials are realizing that they've got to get to real answers on tough issues to gain broad favor with small business owners. Businesses have to be more proactive in helping elected officials work toward solutions.

Sadly, less than one in four business owners report that their elected officials know who they are. If that's the case, how can we take advantage of the position and potential provided to us by the confidence of other Americans? As business owners, we have an opportunity and a responsibility to get more engaged on what we believe are the right issues for our companies and our country.

The trust we have gives us the opportunity to carry the message, but we've got to tell our story. Find a way to make a call or extend an invitation to one of your elected representatives to visit with you and your business. Your perspective, your opinion and your experience can change the game — for every single American. ●



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