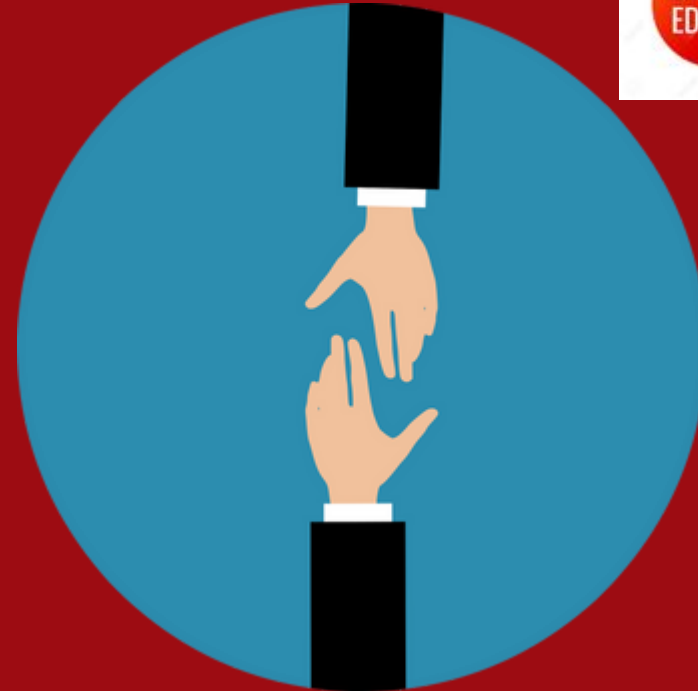


LIMITED
EDITION



Trust & Cooperation in the Workplace

AND VIRTUAL SETTINGS

Group 6

By Sonndy Exantus & Mila Cloidt

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What is Trust and Why is it Important?

Trust is one of the most fundamental building blocks of any relationship, especially in the workplace, where co-workers are working interdependently to accomplish the organization's business goal. According to Professor Patricia Jenkinson trust is the general belief that people can rely on each other (Jenkinson, 2017). She states that when trust is high, people openly express their feelings, opinions, information, and ideas, but when it is low, people tend to be evasive, dishonest, and inconsiderate (Jenkinson, 2017). Sharing ideas and building up those ideas with new information is the essence of cooperation, an environment that does not nurture freely sharing feelings and opinions is not a good environment for cooperation. According to Alyssa Gregory, four elements of trust are needed for collaboration, these elements are competence, reliability, integrity, and communication, if any one of those elements are missing in the collaborative relationship, it will be really hard to build the trust

that is needed in order for the team to cooperate (Gregory, 2020). For an organization to succeed, every member of that organization needs to have mutual trust in each other. Although trust is such a big part of building a successful organization, many people overlook the importance of it since it is hard to build or gauge trustworthiness. Organizations usually focus on skills that are apparent such as teamwork and the ability to communicate; the problem is that in order for an individual to be able to put those skills to good use they must be able to trust and be comfortable around their team members.



How to Build Trust in the Workplace

Trust is an important part of any relationship; In the workplace, trust is extremely important in building relationships with colleagues. There are many levels and forms of trust. When people first meet the initial form of trust that happens is swift trust. Swift trust stems from the idea that no one really knows each other and that everyone is in it together. If everyone works together, then the outcome will be successful, and everyone will look good (Harvard Business Review, 2020). This is often when employees assess others' skills and what could be a potential risk for themselves (Hungford, Cleary, 2020). Employers need to set clear goals and guidelines for the task at hand and the expectations and responsibilities to enhance this type of trust. Over time, however, this trust will not last, and other forms of trust need to be built. Interpersonal trust is a deeper form of trust that happens when team members bond and are willing to be candid. This type of trust is built through time and shows that the employees care and respects each other. Social interactions can grow this form of trust. Additionally, effective and regular

communication grows interpersonal trust. By effectively communicating with predictability, employees know what to expect and have a precedent for the work "norms." It creates a standardization when information is being broadcast, and this reliability builds trust. When team employees are conscientious of others' needs and schedules, work can be streamlined (Harvard Business Review, 2020). Overall one of the most important steps in building trust is that it takes time to build. Another way leaders can build trust is to allow individuals on teams to have their chance to share the power. Leaders should know their employee's strengths and trust them. By allowing a rotation of power based on who is an expert on the area shows that the leader trusts this person signaling to other employees that they should as well (Harvard Business Review, 2020). Building trust can be even more difficult in a virtual setting, so it is important to make sure team members are interacting with one another, both work and interpersonal related. While it may be a bit awkward at first with time, these relationships can transcend the virtual setting. Standardization of communication in virtual environments is even more important for consistency and certainty. Nonverbal communication is another way trust is built especially in virtual context where face to

face interactions aren't always available. Video conferencing allows for nonverbal communication cues that can lack at times in virtual settings (Levi & Askay, 2021).



The Interdependent Relationship Between Trust & Cooperation

One of the most important things that allow team members to speak their minds and express their opinions without fear of being judged is psychological safety, which is built on trust. As stated by Levi, "Trust improves team performance and coordination by enabling members to accept uncertainty and be more vulnerable with each other"(Levi & Askay, 2021). Without trusting each other, it is impossible for team members to make valuable contributions to their team. If team members know that they will be judged for sharing their opinions, they will never share anything with the team, which will severely decrease the team performance. As stated by Kellie Wong, "By prioritizing workplace trust, organizations can build a diverse and inclusive culture where their employees will feel

a sense of belonging and be more connected to their team" (Wong, 2020). A team that is filled with members that trust each other will significantly improve the cohesiveness of the team and their abilities to perform complex tasks that require multiple people with different technical backgrounds.

Furthermore, the more trust that team members have in each other, the less likely that groupthink, a major challenge presented by having a strong team cohesion, will be able to affect the team. If team members trust each other, they will be able to voice their opinions even though they might be in the minority without fearing retaliation or being ostracized from the team.



The Importance of Trust and Cooperation in the Workplace

Trust leads to cooperation which are both necessary in a workplace environment. Trust is important because it builds bonds that allow for support from other members of the team. Cooperation is important because it allows for working with others in teams and across departments. As previously discussed, one is necessary for the other. Cooperation with team members can lead to a deeper trust in one another—the ability to cooperate across departments and effectively communicate beyond the team's scope (Gratton, 2009). Working together well affects not only direct operations but at large with the company. Trust comes from the ability to work effectively together, and cooperation is a sign of trust (Ashkenas, 2015). In virtual settings where trust can be more difficult to build, it can be even more important to show a willingness to cooperate. Virtual teams rely more on

interpersonal trust, which makes cooperation even more important. Cooperation is motivated by trust, and competition can break both trust and cooperation (Levi & Akshay, 2021). Cooperation and trust can be built through mentorships, working with people across departments, and looking both internally and externally at the business output. All of these activities require trust on both ends that each other is doing the best that they can and, in doing so, is willing to work together for the best possible outcome for the whole. In cases where two teams are working together, as long as both teams are working together cooperatively, the sentiment should be reciprocated, but if one team responds competitively, the other team should respond competitively (Levi & Akshay, 2021).

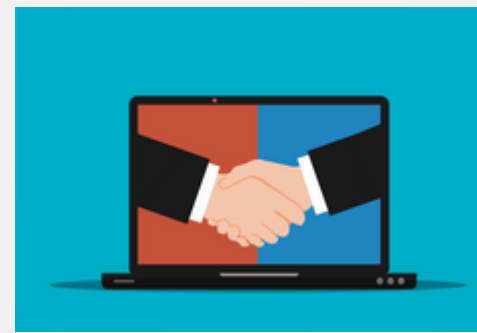
One of the concerns of too much cooperation is cohesiveness. When teams become too focused on maintaining social trust it can affect the productivity of the group (Levi & Akshay, 2021). When social trust is put before performance groups tend to fall in agreement with others even if they don't agree as to not disturb the group dynamic. This cohesion leads to group conformity. One of the benefits of working in a

team is that people have varying views and approaches, so when teams become cohesive, not to disrupt the group, this can be detrimental (Levi & Akshay, 2021). Cohesive teams are also more likely to come to a resolution rather than coming to the best resolution in order to avoid conflict (Levi & Akshay, 2021).



Trust and Cooperation in a Virtual Context

The creation of trust is completely different in a virtual context, being away from coworkers makes people feel detached and not present. To build trust, people must always be interacting and getting to know each other, the detach feeling that is created by virtual communication can make it extremely difficult for people to get to know each other at a deeper level. Since virtual communication is so different from face-to-face communication, employers must find a new way to adapt in order to create an environment that nurtures trust and cooperation. One of the main ways employers can do that is by making virtual meetings feel more natural. In an interview with a body language expert, Liu learned how to be a better communicator and be more present in her day-to-day work (Liu, 2020). She learned that when people are interacting in virtual settings and using their full faculty of expression to communicate, it makes the meeting more real and engaging. By teaching employees how to be more present at virtual meetings, employers will be able to create a trustful environment that enables cooperation.



Since virtual communication is increasing at a rapid pace organizations have to find a way to nurture trust in the virtual settings in order to create strong interpersonal and inter-organizational relationships. When two organizations are doing business together, it is imperative that they have trust in each other, if they do not trust each other, it is a huge risk to the organization. A group of authors were researching the importance of inter-organizational trust. They discovered that despite trust's multi-level dimension that when it comes to collaborative inter-firm ties trust seems to diminish and discourage opportunistic behavior between firms (Zaheer & al., 1998). By nurturing trust with employees and other organizations, not only will the employees be happier and more productive, but it will also help the organization get better business deals.

How Social Interaction Enable Trust and Cooperation

Because virtual settings offer fewer chances of spontaneous interactions between coworkers, it is important to have different levels of communication. Virtual communication comes in multiple types, and knowing what's right for the team is important. Technologies like video conferencing allow for the face-to-face feature that much of remote working can lack. This allows for face-to-face interaction and the ability to have small talk in a more natural sense (Harvard Business Review, 2020). These moments of small talk can be important in launching interpersonal trust. Having natural body language when on camera and staying engaged with nodding and eye contact can also add reassurance and build trust in these acknowledgments (Levi & Akshay, 2021). These nonverbal skills can create an approachable

atmosphere that invites trust. In virtual settings, offering things like virtual socials or in-person events can offer a more relaxed setting to have these social interactions in a non-work environment. These non-work-related functions can offer a time to get to know coworkers better personally and deepen interpersonal trust. As previously mentioned, social interactions can, however, lead to cohesion in the workplace and, while important in building

trust, can cause issues in worries of disrupting social trust (Levi & Akshay, 2021).



In a recent interview with a virtual worker, they discussed that they often felt the lack of social aspect while working remotely from home. However, when her office started offering virtual casual events like cocktail hours, it allowed for her to meet and talk to other employees that she wouldn't necessarily interact with on a daily basis. This extended her network and helped her out down the line when she had an issue across departments.

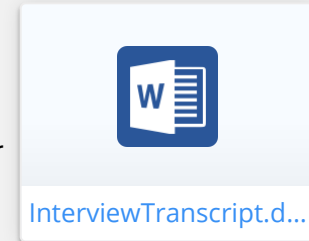
Can we accelerate trust in a virtual setting?

Interview: Accelerating trust building virtually



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During my research on finding how face to face interaction is different from virtual interaction I interviewed Arthur McCall, a Help Desk Support technician for a small



startup called E-Analytics; Mr. McCall gave me a lot of insight into how virtuality truly affects his career. One of the things he said really stood out to me, he states that his team was more responsive when his job got moved online. Since his job was virtual, I was expecting that there might be some "free riders", Levi describes free riders as people who do as little as possible in the team because they do not think that their effort matters, and they will benefit from the team's success either way (Levi & Askay, 2021). After stepping back and analyzing the information I got from Mr. McCall I have come to believe that the main reason that his team was so responsive and there was no social loafing

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was because his coworkers knew each other before going online. Years of face-to-face interaction help them build the trust that they need to cooperate smoothly. This trust enables the team to have a high level of team cohesion, as stated by Levi, cohesion is “the bonds that develop over time that hold a team together” (Levi & Askay, 2021), since their bond and trust in each other was already strong in-person, they were able to transfer it to their virtual environment. McCall's experience shows me that employers can greatly improve the time that their team members take to trust each other by having face to face meetings once or twice a month, not only will these meetings help employees attach a face to each person, but it will also allow them to bond at a deeper level.



**Without trust there's no
cooperation. And without
cooperation there's no progress.
History stops.**

~ Rick Yancey

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The Negative Effects of Trust

When organizations create an environment of trust, they create more productive and cheerful employees but despite trust overwhelming benefits it has some drawbacks. One of the big disadvantages of trust is that it has to be maintained through constant interactions, once people stop interacting together trust starts to diminish.

Furthermore, trust between managers and employees is extremely difficult to maintain since a lot of time managers are forced to make decisions that betray their employees' trust. For example, laying off staff and cutting bonuses are part of the jobs of many managers, but this can be seen as a huge breach of trust to many employees.

Additionally, there is a huge danger when employers blindly trust their employees without overseeing their progress, although it is good that employers nurture an environment of trust and cooperation in their organizations, sometime employees take advantage of the trust that is put in them which is why employers must always check the progress of the assign task.



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Blurbs

"In *Trust and Cooperation in the Workplace* we learn the fundamentals of building trust among our coworkers and other team members. The example of virtual workers working remotely absolutely captivates the reader's attention and takes them in a real-world career experience that truly emphasizes the importance of trust and cooperation in the workplace. Also, the authors did an incredible job in the presentation of the book because it is very easy for readers to read through it fluently."

- George Cardenas

"This was a captivating book about the importance of trust in the workplace. When discussing trust in a virtual setting, having events for employees like a virtual cocktail hour helped build community. I would recommend this book to learn more about interoffice trust between different divisions and team members."

- Julia Ventrone

This was an engrossing book about the necessity of workplace trust. Having activities for workers, such as a virtual cocktail hour, helps develop community while addressing trust in a virtual context. If you want to learn more about interoffice trust across different divisions and team members, I recommend this book. It's a must-read for any company searching for new methods to engage its workforce.

- Casey
Schultz