

Trust and interpersonal relationships



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Trust is not something that can be assumed within a working group, but rather something that must be developed and earned. It is “ built up gradually and incrementally, reinforced by previous trusting behaviour and previous positive experiences.” (Six, 2007, p. 286) Basic dynamics are intrinsic to any team or group of individuals working collectively, and cohesion within those teams or groups develops from each member being familiar with another; trust is therefore both fostered and lost within interpersonal relations among each of its members.

There appears to be an omnipresent definition of trust, which is associated with codes or beliefs and morals, so it appears to be a tenuous concept that we value but are unable to completely agree on. Rather than thinking of trust as a state, it is better to think of it as an interactive process (Six, 2007, p. 285) wherein two people ‘ trustor’ and ‘ trustee’ mutually gain knowledge of “ each other’s trustworthiness in different situations.” (Six, 2007, p. 285) In other words, it is a ‘ reciprocal process’ wherein both people are concerned in developing trust; as each person is concurrently ‘ trustor’ and ‘ trustee’, the actions of both need to be guided by stability within the team.

One way to guide stability within a team is to provide group guidelines or policies, which include clear and precise expectations of each group member, thereby creating a “ stable normative frame.” (Six, 2007, p. 292) In doing so, it is important to explain the team’s specific purpose or mission. This will help unite and solidify the team in a shared purpose, which in turn helps to develop trust.

Six (2007) speaks of ‘ trust enhancing organizational policies,’ wherein because each person’s ‘ frame’ impacts on that of another in the team, each individual has an interest in the social context in which he operates. He

suggests that three types of trust enhancing organizational policies can help to maintain trust among team members. The first is to formulate the ' norms and values' for team members to work within; the second is to provide ' normative controls' or ' value-based controls,' which promote required performance, actions and results. Team members are motivated by ' internal commitment' and ' strong identification' with common aims, and self satisfaction of their own work, which again helps to promote and maintain trust within the group; and the third concerns new team members. He believes that trust can be established between the new member and the old members more quickly if there is a clear and professional ' socialization process' in place, whereby the ' rationale' of the first two policies are made clear to new members. (p. 301-303)

Trust is something then, something that takes time to develop but it can be lost extremely fast. If the policies discussed above are not updated and maintained even the toughest group may run into trust problems that can spread very quickly. Special attention needs to be made when there are individual lapses in efficiency, temptations or mishaps. (Six, 2007, p. 286)

When the environment becomes unsteady or unpredictable, when management changes or competition intensifies, stress and demands may also fuel mistrust among team members.

The line of contention proposed in this paper, is firstly, that trust can be fostered and maintained by providing proper policies that cultivate and recompense interpersonal contact and encourage trustworthy behavior among team members. Secondly, in order for trust not to break down within the team these policies must be revised and sustained. Trust takes time to cultivate but can be chopped down all too easily.

References

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