

The trust issue (2020 update)

Trust is important in the good times but also in the bad because life goes in peaks and troughs and there's going to be a point when you're going to require that trust, and if you've lost it before, how do you go about demonstrating that actually you are not going to repeat history?

The John Lewis Partnership

Reinforcing employee trust in the wake of COVID-19 is so urgent, companies can't afford not to take it seriously.

Josh Bersin (Bersin by Deloitte)

*Myth: Trust is managed from the outside in – controlling a firm's external image
Reality: Trust is managed from the inside out – running a good business*

Harvard Business Review, September 2020

Trust is the fundamental bedrock that binds us together as humans, our relationships, our actions, our expectations of others. If trust is important in the good times, it becomes utterly essential in the bad. In the wake of COVID-19, it's now become literally a matter of life and death. Can I trust my employer to keep me safe?

BC (before COVID-19), our ten-year strategies were about creating digitally enabled organisations, designed to help us work better, smarter, allowing a more flexible approach to working remotely. Digital transformation 2030 took place on Monday 23 March 2020.

To be fair, some organisations were ahead of the curve when it came to remote working, but for many the idea was unthinkable. Why? Lack of trust. As Leena Nair CHRO Unilever says:

I've been amazed by how many companies are still so suspicious of home working. Some have been forced to let their people work from home for the first time and it's shocking how many seem to distrust their own people.

As we come to terms with this seismic shift and all the implications it has on our workplace and people, (a recent People Lab poll has 91% of respondents not wanting to return to how they worked BC), there is one theme that dominates it all... TRUST.

Trust in each other, trust in our leaders, our leaders' trust in their people.



How's your trust fund?

Even BC, trust, or rather lack of it, was already one of the defining issues of our times. The last Edelman Trust Barometer BC revealed that despite a strong global economy and near full employment, none of the four societal institutions that it measures - government, business, NGOs and media - was trusted.

Edelman called the findings:

A wake-up call for our institutions to embrace a new way of effectively building trust: balancing competence with ethical behaviour.

The onus was already on our workplaces to become the beacons of trust, both on the outside as purpose-driven sustainable brands, and inside with the way they treat their people. COVID-19's made this a hundred times more essential.

Just look at the data. Compared with people at low trust companies, people at high trust companies report 74% less stress, 50% higher productivity and 29% increased wellbeing¹.

As we rebuild our organisations, those who actively seek to earn trust, build trust, maintain trust will be the winners. As David MacLeod, author of the MacLeod report and co-founder of Engage for Success² the UK's leading authority on employee engagement, says:

Trust is the vital underpinning to successful, productive outcomes and to individual wellbeing. The evidence is compelling. But trust arrives on foot and leaves on horseback. It has to be built.

Build trust and you'll also increase advocacy, satisfaction and productivity, positively impacting on employee, and in turn, customer engagement - driving trust inside and out.

Woodreed's been thinking about trust inside organisations in the wake of COVID-19. We've looked at trust through the lens of the Four Enablers of an engaged workforce as identified by Engage for Success. We've been thinking about the impact of the enablers on employee engagement and TRUST. The two, while being different concepts, are intrinsically linked.

Focusing on these Four Enablers will increase your employee engagement and, as a result, trust.

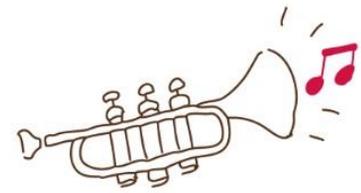
MacLeod again:

Trust in an organisation's future comes from a compelling strategic narrative. Trust every day comes from being well managed. Trustworthiness is encouraged by having clear and respected employee voice. Integrity is where behaviours and trust align.

How can you use the Four Enablers to build your trust fund?

1. The Trust Triangle, Matthew Davies

2. Engage for Success see www.engageforsuccess.org



Trust and the four enablers

Enabler

1

Have visible empowering leaders who can share a strong strategic narrative about the organisation, where it's come from and where it's going.

As resilient leaders seek to shepherd their organisations and stakeholders safely through the COVID-19 crisis, trust will be more critical than ever, as recovery without trust rests on shaky ground.

Deloitte Insights

Although a two-way thing, trust in the workplace must begin at the top. Leaders clearly cannot control the pandemic, so they need to focus on the areas they *can* control. Inside, these include clear communication, treating their employees well, commitment to behaving ethically and transparently, infusing their actions with purpose and integrity. Times of crisis present an opportunity to lead with trust.

Effective communications are vital in managing a crisis. From lockdown onwards we've seen a new and welcome visibility from many business leaders who have risen to the communication challenge with a refreshing new authenticity. Long may this continue.

Look at the way Jacinda Ardene kicked COVID-19 into touch in New Zealand. Compassion, clear communication and measured calm has not only virtually chased the virus from their shores (so far) but has seen trust in her and her government soar. According to a recent Colmar Brunton poll³, 88% of New Zealanders trust their government to make the right decisions about COVID-19 (well above the G7 average of 59%). Her strategy and its communication have been crisp, clear and consistent. **Go hard and go early. Stay home and save lives. Be kind.** It feels authentic because it IS authentic. Lessons we should all take into how we lead in the workplace.

As we come out of the crisis, leaders should continue to share a vision and purpose grounded in trust - a compelling story. This story will tell the how and why of its organisational purpose; where it's come from, where it's going. If done well, this has the potential to accelerate a company's recovery. Doing so will better prepare leaders to maintain business continuity, to learn and emerge stronger—and to thrive.

For some, the crisis allowed their purpose to be magnified. For leading commercial vehicle manufacture Scania for example, their purpose of 'everyday transport heroes' became crystal clear, as gleaming as one of the trucks off their production line. Their UK Marketing Director, Paul Smith, has this to say on the importance of trust:

I think it's all too easy to believe that trust isn't really an issue in your own business. Until you need it. Most corporations can get by with a relatively low level of trust if daily procedures are robust and they have a relatively high level of compliance. But when the chips are down or the world shifts, as with COVID, then it becomes very clear whether trust is there or not because the organisation struggles. And quickly. Then it's too late because you can't build trust overnight.

Paul Smith, Marketing Director, Scania GB

Now is the time for leadership to reflect on their organisation's purpose. Is it compelling and authentic? Are your people motivated to play their part?

3. https://static.colmarbrunton.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/CB-COVID-Times_8-April-2020.pdf



Trust and the four enablers

Enabler

2

Recruit, train and support engaging managers to focus your people and give them scope; treating them as individuals, coaching and stretching.

A team is not a group of people who work together, a team is a group of people who trust each other.

Simon Sinek

Trust is the foundation of all meaningful relationships, yet 70% of professionals don't trust their managers⁴.

Trust is the stuff of which all relationships are composed. Every team, client or customer relationship can be improved with greater trust. And without it, there can be no effective leadership, teamwork, collaboration, or positive outcome. Trust in an organisation stems from the behaviour of direct managers and team leaders, as well as the organisation's exec.

There can be no more extreme example of human trust than in the US Navy's flight demonstration squadron, the Blue Angels.

The pilots undertake a two-year assignment, during which they travel almost 300 days a year, flying air shows over 35 cities from mid-March to mid-November, six days a week, for 11 and a half months every year. When engaged in a flight manoeuvre, the pilots fly two to three feet apart, at a speed of 300-400 miles per hour, at very low altitude. There are no digital instruments keeping the planes in position – the pilots are flying based on eye-hand coordination, in combination with steely concentration. The assignment pushes the limits of human capability with little margin for error, requiring consummate teamwork *and unconditional trust*.

What does it take for a team leader to build high levels of trust?

Former commanding officer of the Blue Angels, Captain George Dom, has created a framework for building trust drawing on years of experience. He advises team leaders to regularly ask these questions of themselves and their team:

Character: Do I walk my talk?

Commitment: Does my team believe I'll be with them when times are rough? And that I am playing to win?

Competence: Am I doing everything I can to constantly improve my skills and stay relevant?

Connection: Does my team *believe* I understand them? Note: This is different from asking whether the leader believes that he or she understands the team.

Communication: Am I clear, concise, consistent, and direct enough to be understood?

Trust can't be bought, it can't be demanded, and it can't be coerced. It's a reward that is earned by team leaders who demonstrate the five 'C's' day in day out. Scania's Marketing Director, Paul Smith, agrees:

Ultimately for leaders, you have to have the vision to know it's better to succeed with trust, not control. It's a major investment that hugely affects your resilience.

How can you work with your people managers to help them earn, maintain and build trust? How can they learn to trust their teams?

Trust and the four enablers

Enabler

3

Give all your employees a voice for reinforcing and challenging views. Acknowledge them as central to solving your business challenges and driving innovation.

Employee voice has been front and centre throughout the pandemic. Checking in, asking people what they need, listening and acting on feedback.

If it was important before, it's vital now. Vital for wellbeing, for innovation, for productivity, for shaping the new workplace and working model. Listening to your people isn't just about employee pulse surveys or annual feedback mechanisms. You must work to develop a **culture of listening**, one in which employees trust that their feedback is being considered and acted upon.

Speak to your people. Employ and empower your teams. Set them the task to create new ways of working.

Scott Morrison, CEO the Boom!

In the wake of COVID-19, we now have a golden opportunity to reframe the nature of the relationship with our workforce. Embrace this and reach out to your people, letting them shape their workplace for their future, helping achieve their own work life balance.

How are you listening to employee voice in your business? How frequently? What forum have you for encouraging creativity, innovation and problem solving?

Enabler

4

Have organisational integrity – make sure the values on the wall are reflected in the day to day behaviours of everyone in the business at all levels.

Values without behaviours to drive them are meaningless, simply words on a poster. Empty sentiments lacking substance, busy eroding trust. Trust can be built by creating frameworks of behaviours that stem from the values, giving employees what's called 'bounded autonomy'. The cornerstone of bounded autonomy is an 'enabling framework'. This comprises the values, structures and processes that empower and guide people in their jobs. For us at Woodreed it's about helping our clients create employee consulted frameworks of behaviours where people interpret them depending on their role and responsibility.

Trust's a two-way commitment from leaders and workforce. By establishing frameworks of behaviours to empower people, you demonstrate trust in them to act with autonomy, but within the boundaries of the framework. A culture grounded in trust.

Running alongside COVID-19 has been the recognition that the Diversity and Inclusion agenda still has a long way to go. Black Lives Matter is a great example of how organisations can earn the trust of their own people, and their customers, by proving their actions match their words. Equally, it has the capacity to seriously erode trust if actions fail to live up to the sentiments expressed. #BlackLivesMatter scattered everywhere with no robust approach to diversity and inclusion and a poor representation of minorities in senior roles will quickly backfire.

Are your values fit for the future? Fit for your purpose now and in the future? Are your behaviours allowing everyone to walk the walk in a way that is relevant to their role? Does everyone understand them, their importance and how to model them?



Consistent, quality, brand-centred internal communication, is the glue to maintain trust



A brand is more than a product. It's a trust mark.

Sir John Hegarty

A brand is a promise to customers. A promise of a quality, consistent experience. A promise that customers can trust the brand to deliver. This matters just as much inside our organisations too. To gain our people's trust we need to be treating our people like customers, showing the same levels of respect. This means using the tried and tested tools and techniques of external marketing, inside.

So it's about **understanding your audience**, recognising that internal comms is not a one-size-fits-all approach.

It's about understanding the **power of emotional engagement**. It's four times more powerful than rational in driving behaviour. Make people FEEL something and it'll be remembered, they'll act. As Alec Stanwell, Head of Internal and External Communication at Shell Energy Retail, said when interviewed by our Creative Planning Director Charlotte Dahl:

You can't be effective in communications if you're not engaging your people in some way.

Alec Stanwell

It's about **keeping your communication promises** – do what you say you're going to do, when you say you're going to do it.

It's **providing consistency in tone of voice**. Marketers lavish time and money making sure their brand has one clear voice externally to customers. But it's not just important for customers. It's been proved that a consistent organisational voice builds trust with customers AND employees alike. Find your internal voice and flex it to provide your people with comms that feel right for your brand.

Use creativity in your approach. Think collaboratively and laterally. Be a sponge and look for inspiration at how brands communicate externally. Don't be afraid to follow Sir Eric Peacock's famous advice:

Steal with pride, adapt with glee and pragmatically implement.

Use the right channels. With our newly dispersed workforce this matters more than ever. Think outside the box and go beyond what's possible with Zoom and Teams. Woodreed have a fabulous proven platform that can be branded and tailored to your organisation and ready to roll in less than two weeks. [Click here](#) for more info.

Internal communicators have risen to the fore as a core part of the COVID-19 crisis team. As we rebuild, they have a key role to play as strategic drivers of trust. Working on nailing the above will get your trust fund in a good place, faster.

How much of this you are already doing in your workplace?

Checklist

How can you use the Four Enablers to build your trust fund?

Now is the time for leadership to reflect on their organisation's purpose. Is it compelling and authentic? Are your people motivated to play their part?



How can you work with your people managers to help them earn, maintain and build trust? How can they learn to trust their teams?



How are you listening to employee voice in your business? How frequently? What forum have you for encouraging creativity, innovation and solving your organisation's problems?



Are your values fit for the future? Fit for your purpose now and in the future? Are your behaviours allowing everyone to walk the walk in a way that is relevant to their role? Does everyone understand them, their importance and how to model them?



Think about your internal communication. Is it high quality, consistent and creative?



Ask yourself these questions to make sure you're ticking all the boxes.



So much is uncertain. I wonder if when it's over, this enforced seismic shift will be seen to have driven a permanent change in our workplace 'normal'. Creating a new, agile, remote workforce, always on, always connected with trust as the central tenet of it all.



Jo Moffatt, MD Woodreed and Co-Strategy Director Engage for Success

About Woodreed

Woodreed is a specialist advertising agency that's been putting brand at the heart of internal communications since 1991. We use the tools, methodologies, insights and creativity that marketing teams use to engage consumers, but we use them to engage your existing and future employees.

Woodreed is driven by our ambition to make workplaces better places to be. We do this by using the power of brand.

Woodreed plans brands and helps shape company cultures using various research tools and methodologies as well as the latest technology platforms. We create and run employee and customer workshops and focus groups. Our in-house creative teams devise multi-channel comms campaigns designed to move people.

If you'd like to know more about Woodreed's proprietary approach to building brand-hearted cultures, please drop Jo or Charlotte an email or call 07850 512840.



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