Trust and Mistrust

By Aidan Ward and John Smith

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About the Book

In the book *Trust and Mistrust*, the authors Aidan Ward and John Smith, have delved into the complex world of trust in business. They noted that we all know and use trust in our work and everyday lives. More importantly however, is how we obtain and utilize that trust. Ward and Smith suggested that there are four dimensions of trust: authentic, network, authority, and commodity trust. Their book explored the different ways that businesses should look at trust and what they should be striving for in terms of trust. Ward and Smith stated that trust is able to tackle a lot of issues within a business, which is particularly important because organizations cannot make money without trust and because mistrust is expensive.

"My trust manager got me into pork bellies."

> "Trust is the ability of the parties to a relationship to raise and deal with issues that may otherwise damage it" (p. 14)
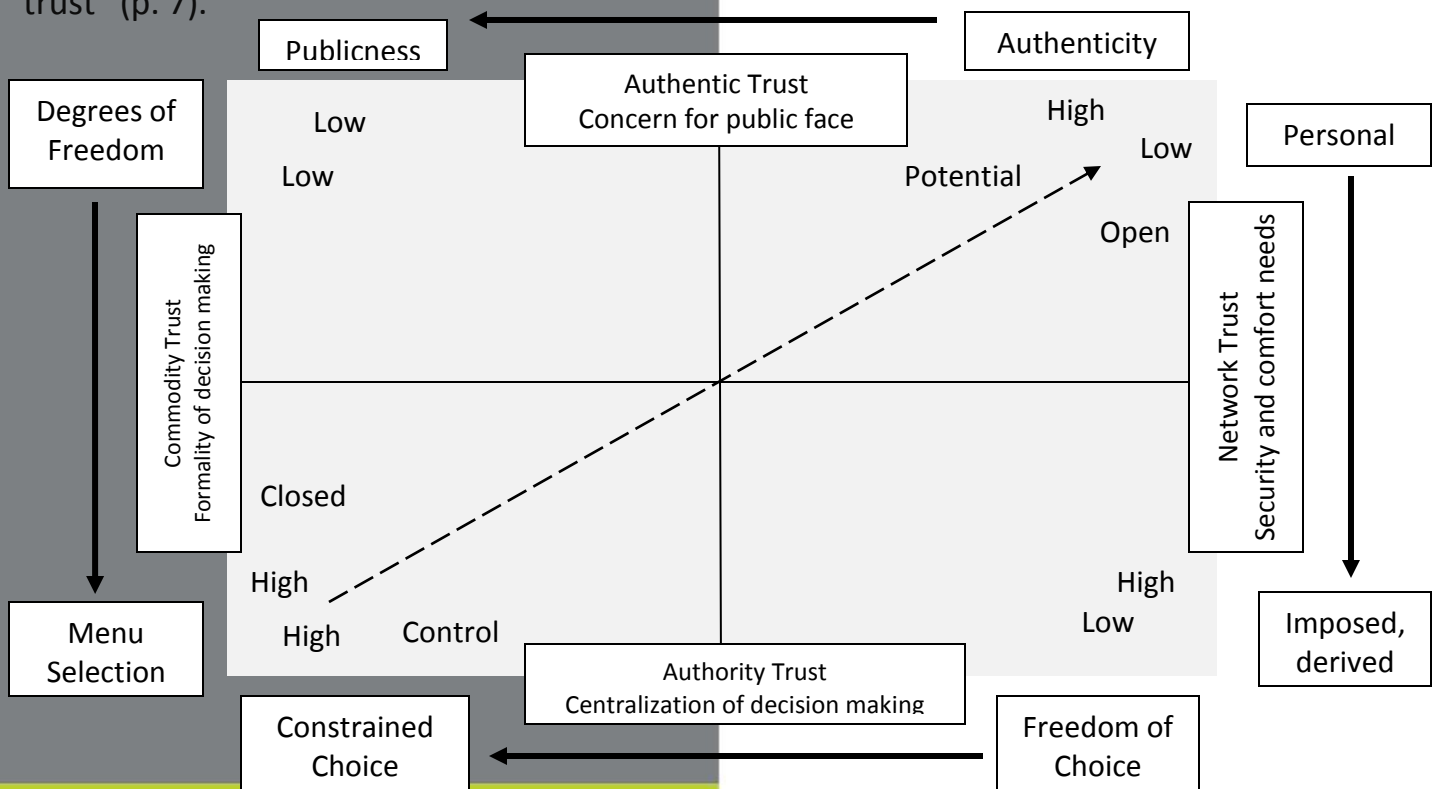
TRUST = MONEY

Ward and Smith stated that authentic trust enables groups of people to discuss issues that may become toxic if they are not resolved. There may be danger for people within an organization to bring these concerns to the table, so trust is imperative in making people feel safe to talk about particular items. The authors described trust as a choice; people have to choose to trust. When organizations have a lack of trust, a cycle of abuse takes place whereby a lack of trust leads to cynical actions, and then people become suspicious of the motives of others.

Ward and Smith stressed the notion that people within a business may not notice or even be aware of systemic failures in their company. Furthermore, most work cultures fail to support discussions regarding these failures. "There is more automatic skepticism and less immediate trust" (p. 7).

The authors defined trust as follows: "To trust is to rely on someone or something to take care of our interests" (p. 8). They noted that people have to make the choice to trust, knowing that the organization cannot be fully successful without it.

There are several different kinds of trust. Ward and Smith referred to four different levels of trust: authentic, network, authority, and commodity. They used the following diagram to express the specific dimensions of trust and the notion that a better position lies up and to the right of where an organization is currently.

Publicness

Authenticity

Degrees of Freedom

Authentic Trust
Concern for public face

High

Low

Low

Personal

Low

Potential

Open

Commodity Trust
Formality of decision making

Network Trust
Security and comfort needs

Closed

High

High

High

Low

Menu Selection

Control

Imposed, derived

Constrained Choice

Authority Trust
Centralization of decision making

Freedom of Choice

Ward and Smith stated that authentic trust is what teams should strive for. It encourages growth and strong bonds between people. By trusting someone, you are choosing to believe that the person is going to make decisions based on what is best for you. Authentic trust is a people trust. Businesses and organizations often work with larger groups of people. It is not enough to trust just one person. If two people within a system trust each other, authentically, but mistrust a third person, then it is difficult for that team to function successfully. Therefore, trust between the people who work closely with you is imperative. More importantly, it is not enough to just trust people. We need to identify who needs our trust and whose trust we need, in order to achieve results within our organization.

"The best way to find out if you can trust somebody is to trust them."

— Ernest Hemingway

Ward and Smith identified a system for benchmarking potential for trust. It contained three threads with varying levels of questions:

Thread 1: The Act of Giving Trust
Level 1: In the system of interest can you clearly identify who is giving trust to whom and what the scope of that trust is? Is the person who is identified as giving trust able to make other choices than trust without penalty?
Level 2: Do the parties to trust, in the system of interest, all accept that a relationship between them exists? Do these parties all have an interest in the maintenance and development of that relationship? Do the parties each have the personal resources to play their role in the development of the relationships? Do the parties each have the maturity to understand the demands that the relationship may make on them?

Thread 2: Underpinning Performance
Level 1: Does the person giving trust understand the context within which the trusted parties are working? Does the person giving trust have any intention of making allowances for context or any way of making such an intentional good?
Level 2: Does the person giving trust understand the assumptions they are making about the context the trusted parties are working in? Do they have any practical way of testing those assumptions and dealing with the implications of assumptions that turn out to be false? Is the person giving trust also motivated to improve the conditions for success of the trusted parties? Do they have a practical way of supporting the achievement of the trusted parties?

Thread 3: Generating Inter-Subjectivity
Level 1: Does the relationship between the parties include any mechanism for exchanging their perceptions of their mutual context? Is there in practice any dialogue that might support exploration of the perceptions of the parties?
Level 2: Do the parties in practice respect each other's subjective perceptions and insights? Are the parties capable of integrating their different perspectives on their context? Does the dialogue that takes place between the parties include the notion of joint opportunity? Is there a sense of shared purpose in the development of the context for mutual belief?

Ward & Smith (2003) pp. 52 - 54

Once the potential for trust has been evaluated, Ward and Smith discussed eight threats against trust. Specifically, these included:

- Trusting those outside of the trust group.
- Keeping personal lives separate from the work of the team.
- People lack the maturity and insight to handle the repercussions of trust.
- Members unable to maintain focus and interest in the project.
- Lack of motivation.
- Misconceptions regarding communication of the trust relationship.
- Unauthentic members of the group.
- Abuse and betrayal of trust.

Part II: Network Trust

Ward and Smith described network trust as the trust within the group. It includes the security and comfort of being with people and relying on that group of individuals. However, network trust is inconsistent. It is unlikely that the exact same group of people is going to be working exclusively forever. As mentioned previously, if trust does not exist with a third party member of the group, as it often does not, then success is difficult, o. The authors also noted that network trust brings power and leverage to an organization; safety in numbers.

Ward and Smith used religion to demonstrate the power of network trust. Members of religious groups may willingly submit to the "rules" of the group: eating at specific times (and certain foods), dressing a certain way, making intense sacrifices, and trusting a written word whole-heartedly. The people within religious groups, or any other network, trust each other because they choose to and because they have added security and comfort in that trust. However, within network trust, there are often benefits for members and disadvantages for outside observers. Although, Ward and Smith noted that trust is *neither* good nor bad; it either exists or it doesn't. Most importantly, network trust requires cooperation.

> "To be trusted is a greater compliment than being loved."
> — George MacDonald

"A major bank in a conversation with a colleague said categorically that they would rather lose a million pounds and know where they lost it than have a CEO who led them to fortune without them understanding where it came from" (p. 114).

How can trust be improved and built upon? Ward and Smith replied with an updated version of the pledge to the king by the aristocrats of Aragon:

"We, who are as good as you only having less power, agree to cooperate fully with you, who are no better than us, in exercising power over us, providing you acknowledge and aspire through engagement, to meet our needs in respect of personal, security, commodity and authority trust. And if not, not" (p. 126).

Low Authority Trust = CHAOS
High Authority Trust = PERVASION

According to Ward and Smith, authority trust is power. People trust because others have power over them and they are fearful of the consequences of not trusting, or of going against the organization. However, Ward and Smith noted that if you don't trust these organizations, what is the alternative?

For example, we have an authority trust with our justice system. We trust that the system will deliver justice fairly and equally. But what is the alternative? Do we dare go against this system? Are we too afraid of the consequences? Education is a fitting example as well. Society has an authority trust in the education system to educate children.

People need trust to work; managers need trust to manage (p. 144).

"A colleague visited a number of organizations in the USA which had reputations for outstanding customer service. One of these had a well-established policy of giving a full, no-questions-asked returns policy on goods it sold. The policy was a cornerstone of its reputation for service. The organization had recently diversified into selling jewellery. One of its staff was put on the spot by a customer returning a diamond ring worth $4000. The salesperson was uncomfortable because of the possibility that the stone in the ring had been swapped for a fake but had no way of telling. Unwilling to take responsibility herself, she called the owner of the company for instructions. The answer, or we would not be telling the story, was two-fold:
- Whatever you choose to do is right because we trust our staff.
- Our policy is clear and if we have not thought it through that is our problem."

Ward & Smith (2003), p. 145.

Commodity trust, as outlined by Ward and Smith, is trust in something other than a human being. Commodity trust affects our daily lives. We trust in products and propositions. We trust that the food we eat is safe, that our vehicles are safe, and that our cell phones will work. We put a large amount of trust in these commodities. However, there is often a strong discrepancy between supplier and customer. The supplier thinks they know what the customer wants and the customer doesn't even know that he/she needs it yet! People trust the brand.

An example of commodity trust, given by Ward and Smith, is filling your car with gas. It is an underlying trust that after you fuel up your automobile, you will pay for your gas.

Failures in customer relationships and commodity trust stem from a failure to see that the product or the customer is changing. If managers ignore these changes, their business moves to authority trust where owners are insistent that their product is meeting the needs of consumers and doesn't need to be adapted.

"The inability to open up to hope is what blocks trust, and blocked trust is the reason for blighted dreams."
— Elizabeth Gilbert

BOTTOM LINE: Build relationships and credibility before they're needed (p. 229).

Part V: Managing Trust

Ward and Smith recognized that all four forms of trust are mutually exclusive, meaning you cannot be in two of the dimensions at the same time. Ultimately, authentic trust is the goal.

AUTHENTIC TRUST: Defined by choice; complete freedom to act. It is personal; trusting in someone.

NETWORK TRUST: Inconsistent, but not a significant issue because likely there is someone else who you can rely on and eventually trust, who shares the same views as you. Network trust means trusting in those around us and relying on them when we need to.

AUTHORITY TRUST: This is the trust we give to people in power to not abuse that power.

COMMODITY TRUST: This is the trust we place in brands or propositions, for example, trusting the police with our safety and wellbeing.

In general, to do work, people within a group need to take risks and those people are more willing to take risks in a safe and trusting environment. Trust is formed person to person, allowing for better results. People make the choice to trust because they know that in order to be successful, trust must exist within their organization. However, trust is challenging. People have been disappointed by people they trust, so how does a group rebuild that trust?

Ward and Smith determined that there needs to be a balance between perspective, risk, and the stakeholders. Not trusting leads to "shadow-side effects", which can include bullying, defensiveness, and exclusion (p. 223). In order for people to feel like they can safely make decisions and take risks, they need trust within their group.

In my very first graduate class, the professor noted that if trust is broken, it can never be rebuilt to the level it once was. I think this has huge implications for education. It is important for students to trust their teachers, for teachers to trust their administration, and for administrators to trust in their central office administrators and superintendents. Mistakes are made, easily it seems. Therefore, I think that honesty will go far in allowing people to trust you. Those on your team need to feel like they can rely on you (network trust) and that you genuinely care for them (authentic trust).

In general, schools and educators are automatically trusted by society. When parents send their children to school, they are whole-heartedly trusting that teachers will be there to take care of their children and teach them. They trust that their children are safe and happy. This is an impressive leap of faith in terms of commodity trust and authority trust.

As an aspiring administrator, I think trust is a crucial component for success. I want the teachers in the school to feel like they can trust me, that they can rely on me, and that they know me and how I would respond to situations. I want them to feel safe and free to make decisions and offer contributions.

> "Trust is self-conforming, self-reinforcing, self-rewarding" (p. 214).

Questions to Ponder ...

1. How do we teach our students to make the choice to trust, specifically because they need to trust in order to be successful?
2. How do educators sustain trust within their school when staff is changing almost constantly?
3. How can we help parents move to a place of authentic trust, as opposed to just commodity trust?
4. How can we protect and nurture strong relationships within our school culture?
5. How can administrators fully trust teachers when their trust might have been betrayed or abused in the past?

Ward, A. & Smith, J. (2003). *Trust and Mistrust*. *Radical Risk Strategies in Business Relationships.* West Sussex, England: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

This book truly deepens a person's understanding of trust and its pliability and fragility. It can be quite technical in places, making it somewhat challenging to read. However, the book is logically organized, constantly referring to the four dimensions of trust. Ward and Smith use personal experiences to further their points regarding trust, which makes for a more interesting read.

Ward and Smith connect the reader with their levels of trust and show how organizations should strive for authentic trust, but that some levels or authority trust and network trust may exist. The book is very business oriented, but I think it can easily be extended into education. It discussed potential threats to trust and how businesses can evaluate their potential for trust. Their main argument was that organizations need to be focusing on trust before it is needed in a crisis situation, and I think this has large implications for education. We should be constantly trying to improve the culture of our schools, which in turn, improves out authentic trust.

I would recommend this book to colleagues interested in the area of trust within an organization, in particular, those interested in human resource or working with people.

Trust men and they will be true to you; treat them greatly and they will show themselves great.
Ralph Waldo Emerson

"We're paying the highest tribute you can pay a man. We trust him to do right. It's that simple."
–Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*