

WHO DO YOU TRUST?

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What happens when public trust in banks, media, public schools, organized religion, and government begins to fade? Rachel Botsman (2017) noted that in 40 years of Gallup survey polling, 2016 polling results indicated public confidence had fallen drastically across most of the major American institutions. Yet public trust in “5 star” ratings and reviews by strangers on the Internet remained high. What causes us to trust some systems, but not others? What causes us to trust some people and not others?

The consideration of trust – where it comes from and how it impacts us – is an important topic to consider. How do you know if someone is trustworthy? What do you do to create trust in others? The answers are not only relevant to our personal success, but carry implications for the organizations where we work, the community, and larger society. Take a few minutes to consider and discuss why you place trust in others.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- *What are the considerations you rely upon to determine if someone is trustworthy?*
- *What could be done to improve how others perceive your trustworthiness?*
- *What could be done to improve the trustworthiness of an organization?*
- *Are these same criteria relevant to the community or local government? Why or why not?*
- *What are your trust related expectations of local leadership?*

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

When determining trust in leadership, Crisp (2023) summarized the foundational attributes of commitment, caring, consistency and competence. In addition, Tzafir & Dolan (2004) also included perceived reliability and credibility in their scale for measuring trust. All of these are attributes which, when demonstrated by those in a formal leadership role, can build trust. The theory of Authentic Leadership (Luthans & Avolio, 2003) is rooted in the concept of trust and asserts that leaders must be authentic, true to themselves, and demonstrate high integrity.

Because individuals have different personal priorities, experiences, and world views, each of us prioritize trustworthy traits of others differently, such as whether we value reliability and predictability more highly than characteristics of knowledge and creative problem solving. Context also plays a role in how we attribute trust. For close relationships, for example, trust may depend more on the degree to which we believe others are concerned for our personal well-being. Whereas, at broader social levels, our trust may rest on a shared commitment to the common good.

Morrone, Tontoranelli, & Ranuzzi (2009) remind us that establishing and maintaining trust has broad implications and requires a constant focus of attention for leadership. Self-assessments for trustworthiness can be helpful to understand how personal behaviors and attitudes can shape how we,

and others may perceive trustworthiness. Keep in mind that trust is dynamic and can be built or eroded with daily interactions.

RESOURCES

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