Keynote: Can we trust ourselves with Power

Julie Diamond

We TRUST with every stranger we meet — our very life: pilots, drivers, dates, partners, internet banking

how much and how irrationally do we actually trust?

We need more trust in teamwork?

assumption!

TRUST comes AFTER working together!

it takes a LOT of TIME to learn to TRUST

we're constantly changing

BERLIN CHANGE DAYS

Power & Trust
— Leading Change in a VUCA-world

Insights from a deep dive into a topic that matters

Berlin Change Days
Oct 27-29, 2017

that's and b

people are frien... because I make them happy

can we trust people with Power?
● fear
● need

Why?

● to confirm my rank
have you ever used you higher rank to overpower people?

● feeling lower

● helplessness

We have to SHINE a light on Power!

Can people Develop?

if it's not TRANS intendet these is the opportunity FORM ATION for

Can we catch ourselves in the act?

... see when we made mistakes

course correct?

notice feedback

know how to apologize?

focus on the imp...

Edu van der Werf

Relational Signalling and Trust

The theme of the 2017 Berlin Change Days was Power and Trust – leading change in a VUCA world. In three days of workshops and plenary sessions 'the tensions between trust and distrust, the powerful and the powerless' were discussed, explored and experienced extensively. To me one thing stood out: we tend to mix up the notions of trustworthiness and trust. In this text I would like to shed some light on this.

Imagine the following: You are about to embark an airplane, which will take you to your holiday or business destination. It is a regular commercial flight with one of the well-known airlines and the total flying time will be four to five hours. Unfortunately, a lot of turbulence is expected and even an emergency situation might occur. You find yourself in the – admittedly, somewhat odd – circumstance of being able to choose the air traffic controller at your arrival airport. In other words: you get to decide who is in control of your flight. Be aware, the choices you have are limited. The air traffic controller is either female or male and she/he is either 25 or 55 years old. So in total, you have four options. Who would you trust most to be in control of your flight?

The theme of the 2017 Berlin Changes Days was 'Power and Trust – leading change in a VUCA world.' During three days of workshops and plenary sessions 'the tensions between trust and distrust, the powerful and the powerless' were discussed, explored and experienced extensively. To me one thing stood out: we tend to mix up the notions of trustworthiness and trust. In this text I would like to shed some light on this diffusion, because as Onoro O'neill so eloquently put it in her 2013 Ted talk: "what matters in the first place is not trust but trustworthiness. It's judging how trustworthy people are in particular respects (...) that's what we're looking for: trustworthiness before trust. (...) Trust is the response. Trustworthiness is what we have to judge".

Let's take a step back. It would be difficult if not impossible to overemphasize the importance of trust to human interaction (Fetchenhauer, Dunning & Schlösser 2017). Trust is essential for any social arrangement to thrive, whether it is between two individuals, within an organization, or even in a nation or society (Fukuyama 1995, Kramer 1999). No wonder in the last three decades a variety of scholars and disciplines have engaged in researching interpersonal dynamics underlying trust decisions. Yet a lot of the research has not reached the general public.

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One of the main contributions of this fore-mentioned research is the development of some key concepts that describe what the topic of trust entails.

Rousseau et al. (1998) offer a widely supported definition of trust: a 'psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intention or behavior of another'. From this we can already derive that trust is essentially the state of expectation of a trustor. Both Mayer et al. (1995) and Rousseau et al. (1998) argue for two main dimensions of trust: first, positive expectations of trustworthiness which refers to the perception towards trustees; and second, the willingness to accept vulnerability which refers to a "leap of faith" (Möllering 2006). In short: The acceptance of vulnerability as an outcome of positive expectation. An individual is willing to trust someone based on an assessment of that person's trustworthiness and thus expecting that person will behave accordingly (Dumitru & Schoop 2016, O'Neill 2013). This should not be understood as 'willingness to be hurt', but as highly optimistic expectations that vulnerability is not a problem and no harm will be done.

So, how do we judge trustworthiness? An interesting field of research in this respect is (Relational) Signalling Theory (Gambetta 2009, Lindenberg 2000). Trustors look for two things in the behavior of trustees: first they check if the behavior shows the competence to perform according to expectations (the ability dimension of trustworthiness.) A typical example: the 'air traffic controller' scenario at the beginning of this essay was part of a study performed by Mehta, Rice and Rao (2016). Their data suggested that American participants found 'aged' (experienced) controllers to be more trustworthy, while Indian participants had a preference for 'agility and information processing' (which was in their opinion stronger represented by younger controllers). Second, trustors look for signs in the behavior of trustees indicating whether the trustee is interested in maintaining the relationship in the future (the intentional dimension of trustworthiness.) Most cited and accepted aspects being benevolence (the degree to which a trustee is believed sincerely to do

good to the trustor; caring and considerate) and integrity (the adherence to a set of principles the trustee find acceptable: fair, reliable and morally just)

Now for the downside: Every action (plan), process step, presentation, meeting, procedure, policy, etc., is signaling either or both of the two dimensions. Signaling is not limited to just your own behavior. Research has shown the signaling power of HRM strategies and processes (Searle et al. 2012), CEO compensation (van Veen & Wittek 2016) and 'power' itself (Schilke, Reinmann, Cook, 2015; Kim et al. 2017). So if you want to 'manage things' you'll find yourself in a bit of a challenge.

That being said, when we do focus on behavior, research has also given us some encouraging results. Six et al. (2010) found that for trust building to be successful, attention to showing your own solidarity frame to others as well as stimulating the solidarity frame in other individuals does have an effect. Amongst others, they found behaviors like: initiating and accepting change to your decisions', 'giving a compliment in a public meeting' and 'take responsibility (don't pass the blame)' to effectively signal trustworthiness. Building interpersonal trust requires action that sends (unambiguously) positive relational signals.

Trustbuilding is critical to organizations undergoing change and thus facing uncertainty. The transfer of learning, acquiring of new skills, the changing of behavior might make employees feel at risk and vulnerable. In such highly volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous environments it is vital (change) leaders are aware of the signaling effect of their own behavior. Contrary to popular belief it is not so much about trust, the emphasis should be on being trustworthy, and how you give people adequate, useful, simple and regular (signaling) evidence that you should be perceived as trustworthy.]

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The engineers of the future will be poets.
Terence McKenna

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