

**Excerpt from *Trust, Inc.* by Nan S. Russell**

**Introduction**

How to Create a Business Culture That Will Ignite  
Passion, Engagement, and Innovation



**TRUST, INC.**



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## INTRODUCTION

# Trust Is a Local Issue

*Trust, not technology, is the issue of the decade.*

~Tom Peters

Like a societal Doctor Jekyll and Mister Hyde, trust confounds us. On one hand we live in unparalleled times of global interdependence, instant connection, and no-worries access (at least in developed countries) to abundant and safe water, food, and medical care. Most of us don't think twice about swiping plastic cards at registers, answering e-mails from strangers, ordering items online, or flying across the country.

On the other hand, we live in a time when computer magic renders real photographs indistinguishable from enhanced ones, truth-in-advertising is an oxymoron, and reminders of the perils of trusting, such as seven-time Tour de France winner Lance Armstrong's

doping admission or former mayor of New Orleans' corruption charges related to Katrina hurricane recovery, fill headlines.

A 24/7 news cycle, augmented by social media, ensures our access to trust-breaking stories about child-harming priests, lying and manipulation in politics, and misdeeds of business executives. Most weren't surprised when Pew Research reported, "Only 22 percent of the public trust government in Washington almost always or most of the time."<sup>1</sup> We were unfazed when Gallup found, "Americans' confidence in banks is at a historic low."<sup>2</sup> And we didn't blink when a Maritz poll informed us, "Only 10% of employees trust management to make the right decisions in times of uncertainty."<sup>3</sup> Yet, when teachers in Atlanta falsified standardized test scores by erasing wrong answers and supplying correct ones, one had to wonder, "*Who* can you trust?"

Trust is challenging. Part of our Jekyll-Hyde dichotomy about what and whom we trust is attributable to the word *trust* itself. People mean different things when they use the word, often interchangeably with words like reliable or predictable or trustworthy. It's a word fraught with multiple definitions, interpretations, and expectations. There are even different kinds of trust—confidence trust, competence trust, organizational trust, institutional trust, basic trust, authentic trust, blind trust, self-trust, situational trust, transactional trust, stakeholder trust, brand trust, leadership trust, and more.

This book is about *authentic trust*. It's the trust that's broken or missing in most workplaces. It's the trust, when present, that fuels innovation and engagement, and ignites passions in those we lead. And it's the trust you'll need for *your* Trust, Inc. Here's a glimpse:

**authentic trust \ verb. \ 1.** Trust(ing), as in committing to, giving, or placing confidence in another, with awareness and optimism. **2.** Choosing actions associated with genuine relationship-creating, -building, -restoring; requires ongoing cultivation. **3.** A dynamic happening *in* relationships, created and grown only when there is an ongoing commitment to the

relationship, and when that relationship is more important than any single outcome. Accepts risk of trust-betrayed. 4. Given without concern for personal advantage, enabling others to show up with talents and do great work. 5. Requires self-awareness; a relationship practice with one's self that offers ways to explore individual gifts, possibilities, and potential.

## THERE'S A PROBLEM AT WORK

You don't need an expert to confirm what you already know and Gallup polling continues to substantiate: The majority of employees are disengaged at work. You don't need an employee survey to tell you why discretionary efforts are tamed, passions for work are fleeting, and ideas are tethered. And you don't need a consultant to explain why cynicism is up, enthusiasm is down, and trust is the currency of the new workplace. All you need to do is reread one of Aesop's fables, "The Goose that Laid the Golden Egg." Remember the greedy farmer who wanted more than one golden egg each day? By the story's end, he'd killed the goose and was left with no golden eggs at all.

Every day, leaders at all levels communicate with their actions that they're not committed to a working relationship with those they lead. They eliminate resources and positions while still expecting immediate results. They shut out dialogue and limit open communication, while still requesting candid feedback. They pocket stock options and bonuses, while reducing staff salary and benefits. They reward unfavorable behaviors, while operating with myopic interests and escalating bureaucracy. And then they wonder why those they're striving to engage are alienated, distrustful, and fed-up.

You don't need an expert to explain that while basic productivity and job presence can be bought, staff ideas and discretionary efforts must be freely given. When intellectual property (the golden egg) is the competitive edge for *most* enterprises, success is contingent upon natural followership and significant relationships built through

authentic trust. A 20th-century mindset that sees employees as interchangeable pieces won't fuel innovative products and services or enhance customer impressions in this 21st century.

You don't need an expert to tell you that out-of-touch leaders, operating like medieval warlords with refrains like "just make it happen," "there's no budget," "I don't care what it takes," and "they should be thankful they have a job" have fueled employee mindsets, exacerbating the challenges we collectively face. Employees know what many leaders haven't figured out: Parental, top-down cultures in today's world are as ineffective as one-size-fits all, print-only marketing approaches.

## IT'S A SHARED PROBLEM

It's time we were also honest about the challenge. Trust is not only about "them," in corporate, political, or business roles; it's also about *us*, in everyday roles. What's needed to change our direction is a balanced understanding. Consider these representative examples:

- In a CareerBuilder.com survey, employers reported nearly "half of the resumes contained falsehoods."<sup>4</sup>
- Data-mining experts from the University of Illinois estimate "one-third of all consumer reviews on the Internet are fake."<sup>5</sup>
- The largest for-profit hospital with 163 U.S. facilities discovered cardiologists were "unable to justify many of the procedures they were performing."<sup>6</sup>
- In a magazine survey, 63 percent of employees admitted to calling out sick when they weren't.<sup>7</sup>
- Almost 50 percent of a Harvard University class was investigated for suspected cheating, on a take-home final exam, in what the undergraduate dean called "unprecedented in its scope and magnitude."<sup>8</sup>

Reduced trust impacts relationships, bottom lines, innovative solutions, cooperative endeavors, and well-being. Trust is a collective

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problem when it impacts the society we share; when the *win* becomes more important than *how* it's achieved.

## THERE'S A LOCAL SOLUTION

Most of us aren't going to rebuild organizational trust, increase confidence in CEOs, or change perceptions of corner-office leaders. We aren't going to change our boss's behavior, or that of bosses above her, or be tapped to awaken those who cling to 20th-century workplace myths, or operate with misconceptions of what works at work today. But that shouldn't stop those who lead from replenishing the trust deficits in their business, work group, or relationships.

In this era of distrust, disengagement, and disconnection, if you want a thriving business or career, you can't afford to allow what you *can't* change to affect what you *can*. If you're someone's immediate boss, no matter your organizational level or business role, you can positively influence trust, commitment, engagement, and innovation. You can create your Trust, Inc.—a trust-pocket, where people show up and do great work.

There are three reasons trust is a local solution for work groups everywhere:

### 1. People Work for People

Trust isn't about "those" people in senior management; it's about us in our individual work groups. If someone works for you, it's *your* trust that matters most to them. You're the one having everyday impact on their work life.

Can they trust you? Can they count on you? Are you worthy of their trust? Do you trust them? These issues affect both their results and yours. Don't be naïve in thinking trust is only about others. For the people who work for you, it's about you.

## 2. No Permission Is Needed

Which business, team, department, or work group gets the best results where you work? You'll find trust there. Where do you notice energetic people, unleashed creativity, and unstoppable enthusiasm? There's trust there. Where are people giving more than what's asked, volunteering for assignments, and accomplishing the unexpected? Trust is at work there too.

Anyone, anywhere can start his or her Trust, Inc. You don't need permission to build great working relationships, exceed expectations, enjoy the results of staff engagement, or lead an enthusiastic team. You don't need to wait for your boss to give you trust, or for an organizational trust-building initiative to launch. Authentic trust is something you make. It's an action. You choose; you decide.

There's even a nudge from the Conference Board's CEO Challenge study, which for the first time included "trust in business" in the top-10 challenges "after several chief executives warned that lack of trust could pose a serious threat to growth."<sup>9</sup>

## 3. People Trust "a Person Like Me"

As societal distrust in established institutions, politicians, and business leaders grows, "a person like me" is one of the most credible sources to which people listen.<sup>10</sup> As people seek trusted information, not from their institutions or organizational leaders, they're moving from institutional trust toward individual trust.

That shift changes the influencers. It makes what you do and how you do it even more important. With the shift toward individual trust, you're a catalyst for rebuilding the trust deficit plaguing workplaces and communities. For those who report to you, you're a person "like them." Trust at work is a local relationship issue. It's invested and built person to person. Building trust locally means positively influencing your environment.

Imagine millions and millions of trust-pockets thriving across hundreds of thousands of organizations and businesses, operated

by people just like you. When I hold that picture, I'm reminded of words from tennis legend Arthur Ashe: "To achieve greatness: start where you are, use what you have, do what you can."

People work for people, not for companies. Even in an era when "skeptical" has turned to "cynical" about everyone from politicians to priests, doctors to teachers, and CEOs to department heads, any supervisor, manager, or business owner can still build a trusting environment for their work group, where people can show up and do great work.

If you're someone's immediate supervisor, you can positively influence trust, engagement, and innovation. You don't need to wait for HR or top management to launch an initiative to rebuild trust, reignite passions, or reboot the work culture. Top-down programs aren't the answer to distrust and disengagement, *you are*.

Troubling trends and heart-grabbing headlines can reinforce the impression that no one is worthy of your trust. But they are.

## WE NEED A NEW CURRENCY: TRUST

What companies need to ensure growth, innovation, and sustainability can't be bought with just a paycheck. Intellectual property and staff initiative are essential to organizational and societal success, but they require a different kind of currency: *trust*.

We're approaching an era when the strongest performers, those with the golden eggs of ideas, know-how, solutions, and innovation, will accept nothing less than work environments and bosses that enable them to do their best work. For those who want great results in this post-recession era, *the ability to build authentic trust is a new workplace essential*.

Authentic trust is the currency of winning cultures fueling the next generation of exceptional results. No one will need an expert to explain why those who can create, grow, and invest trust currency will thrive.

## WHAT YOU'LL FIND IN THESE PAGES

This is a hands-on book for anyone with a staff. It's about how to create your Trust, Inc.—a local work-group culture that works, founded on authentic trust. It's not a book about trust per se, in a traditional way, nor a book about work-cultures, per se, in a typical way. Rather, it tackles the active, real-work process of using “trust” as an action to build your trust-pocket and get great results from yourself and others.

In **Part I** you'll find specifics about trust-pockets and trusted bosses, plus what it looks like to be making trust currency, and the dividends to expect from your trust investment—engagement, innovation, and accountability.

In **Part II**, expect specifics about what you'll need to do as a Trust, Inc. leader to make, build, and sustain trust.

Finally, **Part III** looks beyond Trust, Inc. to the setbacks and stumbling blocks you may encounter, including how to restore broken trust.

In every section, you'll find a “what does it look like” approach. My desire is to help you see what thriving work relationships founded on authentic trust look like, and how to create, nurture, grow, and wisely invest in them. You'll find approaches to help you apply these trust-making concepts in the real work world. Tips, examples, anecdotes, and how-tos are included, along with reflective exercises so you can garner your own insights and applicability.

What keeps you awake at night? What worries or frustrates you at work, or takes you away from what you do best, but requires your attention as a leader? The typical answer is: people. It's the people we lead, and work for and around, that complicate our work. And yet, these people also help us soar. Great work relationships, founded on trust, enable great results. But, to get those great work dividends means commitment, self-awareness, and continuous involvement on your part. Think of yourself as a trust-catalyst.

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What you'll find in this book is good news, not just about what you can do in your work group, but also the potential beyond those imaginary boundaries. In today's work world, change can start from anywhere. The concept of achieving change by collective voices is taking shape. From changing bank fees to changing policies, people are using collective voices to amplify messages, unite with others, and impact direction. Your Trust, Inc. adds *your* voice.

Whereas trust is a very big topic, this book is narrowly focused on your trust, work group, impact, and career. There's much written on the topic of trust. Certainly, there are many ways to build trust, create winning results, and enhance trust-building skills. Plus, there are differences in style and approaches that speak to the uniqueness we bring to our work. So, I encourage you to take what works for you and leave the rest. But before you do, I hope you'll approach *Trust, Inc.* with openness and trust. It's from that space that these words were written, peppered with hope and optimism, about a local path to a better work future.