

TRUST IN THE WORKPLACE

A STREETINVEST INC
WHITE PAPER

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THE TEAM



Grace Keisner
Development Director

Grace joined StreetInvest first in 2012 and returned in 2020 to lead the development of StreetInvest Inc. In between this time, she trained with TeachFirst, taught in London schools and then joined PwC as a Management Consultant, with a specific focus on building resilient teams. She has an MA in Education, Policy and Society and is committed to working towards social and environmental justice.



Duncan Ross
Co-founder & CEO

Before co-founding StreetInvest, Duncan worked for 30 years in the finance industry, culminating as a Managing Director of JPMorgan Chase. Over the last 15 years, his work has been focussed in the not-for-profit sector supporting street-connected children. He is a passionate StreetInvest trainer & facilitator.



Alan Carter
Head of Training

Alan has over 30 years experience as a Teacher and Teacher Trainer. He joined StreetInvest in in 2014 as Head of Training and has been supporting StreetInvest Inc. to translate their expertise of building trust to that of the workplace.



Illy Boyes
Behavioural Insights Manager

With a background in HR, behavioural insights and business psychology, Illy enjoys solving organisations' people challenges through a behavioural lens, ensuring lasting behavioural change.

TRUST IN THE WORKPLACE

The purpose of this white paper is to briefly outline the current thinking on trust in the workplace, based on academic literature and organisational insight. StreetInvest Inc. offers a unique approach, building relationships of trust, and improving employee wellbeing through that lens. This is aimed at anyone who wants to understand how promoting trust can improve their organisational outputs.

INTRODUCTION

The ability to generate trust, as well as foster it and rebuild it when broken, is a vital component to organisational success¹. This is clearly illustrated by the case of Uber's recent crisis. In 2017, the #deleteUber campaign was at an all-time high, it had lost its CEO and many senior staff, and its forced investigations into sexual harassment and workplace culture resulted in the dismissal of 20 employees. It was at this point that Uber recognised that it was trust which would have to make up the foundation from which they were to repair the damage. Through the process of building trust within the organisation, Uber was able to radically improve brand image and employee sentiment, as well as attract and retain top talent.

Trust is essential to all aspects of an organisation's activities. These include negotiation² executive leadership³ line management⁴, communication⁵ amongst others. Trust's crucial role in the workplace is recognised by the Big Four, all of whom have published a variety of papers on this subject in recent years^{6,7,8,9}.

If trust is to be strengthened in the workplace, there are a number of different angles from which to approach this¹⁰.

Intra-organisational trust: encompasses trust that exists between co-workers, the supervisor/employee relationship

Inter-organisational trust: trust between organisations

Trust between organisations and their customers: which is concerned with marketing and brand (i.e. customers, clients, external stakeholders)

In increasingly competitive global markets and global production, organisations need their employees to be both able to trust as well as elicit the trust of others¹¹. It is a challenge for global operators to build trust with the wide variety of stakeholders they are required to, as factors such as culture, values and objectives can vary greatly¹². Several factors such as an increasingly complex society, accelerating technological advances and enhanced access to information are cited as factors that give rise to a fall in trust in organisations⁷.

Within an organisation, the level of trust impacts a number of factors, such as team performance and employee satisfaction, and staff turnover¹³. This paper looks to explore what it means to 'build trust in the workplace' and articulate why a focus on building this trust is essential for any organisation to thrive.

THE TANGLED FIELD OF TRUST IN THE WORKPLACE RESEARCH

While the importance of trust in the workplace is undisputed, there remains a discord between the conceptualisation of trust in academic literature and the empirical measurement of trust within the workplace¹⁰. As such, the potential for building trust within the workplace is still a work in progress, and as the application and measurement of trust academia is increasingly applied within work contexts, its potential can be realised further.

Within the workplace, a recent report⁷ found that organisations are reporting that they do not yet have a way to measure trust within an organisation, further highlighting the gap between literature and practice.

The work that StreetInvest is doing within the trust space is actively joining these two aspects of trust, by applying a research-backed trust diagnostic tool to organisations.

Having undertaken a rigorous research and analysis process, encompassing responses from hundreds of employees, the final product is both a valid and reliable measure of trust and wellbeing in a workplace context.

This allows us to accurately measure an organisation's trust, and contextualise the trust environment to inform the work we do with the organisation to improve on this.

While many organisations and think tanks recognise the importance of trust in the workplace, few can clearly articulate what this looks and feels like.

Despite this, there is agreement within the literature, with researchers broadly agreeing that trust is multi-dimensional, but there's a lot of debate over which dimensions are essential for trust¹⁰.

This is compounded by the different approaches to measurement, and the different contexts (i.e. academic-based, experience-led, and as experienced by employees).

It is for this reason that StreetInvest Inc.'s diagnostic tool is tested on specific populations, for which they are intended (i.e. individuals in employment were tested when developing the workplace diagnostic).

Having undertaken a rigorous research and analysis process, encompassing responses from hundreds of employees, the final product is both a valid and reliable measure of trust and wellbeing in a workplace context.

Amongst the conceptualisations of trust, practitioners and academics in the field cite authenticity, congruity, shared values, autonomy, amongst others^{14,15}.

At StreetInvest Inc, our conceptualisation of trust synthesises decades of organisational trust research with the experience we bring from working with street-connected children. This and drawing specifically upon the work of leading psychologist Carl Rogers has given rise to our principles of trust: empathy, unconditional positive regard, congruence, all of which is deployed by building reflective capacity.

WHAT IS TRUST ?

Understanding the components of trust can help organisations nurture it. With reference to trust existing between a trustor and a trustee, Sanders and colleagues (2006) assert that trust can exist in three ways¹⁰:

Trust as a belief

Beliefs about the trustee (including their trustworthiness), as well as the relationship between trustor and trustee. It deals with the idea of whether interaction with the trustee will result in a positive outcome.

As a decision

For trust to manifest, the genuine belief of trustworthiness of a trustee must be followed by the decision to trust. This decision to trust signifies a decision by the trustor to make themselves vulnerable and open themselves up to disappointment and the potential for negative repercussions.

As an action

Conceptually contentious within the literature as to whether ‘action’ is a necessary element of trusting, as some argue that the decision to trust is enough. Some argue that the action of trusting is not a necessary consequence of the willingness (i.e. decision) to trust, as the decision to trust might be impeded by the consequences it might have on a third party¹⁶.

The table in the appendix articulates the different definitions of trust and how it is understood, starting with StreetInvest’s approach to trust, refined over years of building trust amongst street-connected children around the world. These definitions shape the approach organisations adopt to instil trust throughout an organisation.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRUST AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

We are not able to speak about trust without also speaking about trustworthiness, and although they are not the same thing, they are inextricably linked. As such, it is important to understand the difference and how they interact.

Trustworthiness is a quality of a trustee, whereas trust is something that is done by a trustor (broken down below).

Trustworthiness is a strong predictor of trust, but is not a guarantee¹⁰. Research shows that the relationship between propensity to trust and trust is fully mediated by trustworthiness, suggesting that trustors who are predisposed to trust are more inclined to see someone as trustworthy¹.

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF A HIGH TRUST ORGANISATION?

There are many benefits of building trust within an organisation. By nurturing trust in the workplace, the resulting consequences can have big impacts on organisational measures such as revenue, growth and KPIs.

Looking at trust within teams, trust between co-workers (as well as trust in management) is found to be a strong predictor of good teamwork¹⁷. As such, high trust is strongly linked with high performance teams¹⁸. These findings are key to organisations that place teamwork at the cornerstone of their function.

Examining the effect of high trust at an organisational level, a company's trustworthiness can drive organisational performance, not just through enhanced employee

performance, but also through successful client relationships, gaining investor trust and engaging with collaborative partnerships⁹.

The literature shows that teams that foster trust improve employees' attitudes towards the organisation¹³, high organisational commitment¹⁹ high team commitment²⁰, and employee satisfaction¹³. Such factors are related to decreased staff turnover¹⁰, therefore demonstrating the importance of the role of trust with respect to organisational effectiveness indicators.

At the employee level, increased trust also increases employee wellbeing²², and the feeling that they are better supported by the organisation²⁰.

HOW CAN AN ORGANISATION PROMOTE TRUST?

Having covered the advantages of trust within an organisation, the benefits of building trust in the workplace are clear. High trust is highly correlated with a number of factors, therefore understanding these provides insight to how to nurture trust in the workplace.

One way that trust is developed is through shared social norms. Highlighting shared experiences and common values is something that can be harnessed by organisations navigating an international scope of work. Research finds that teams that communicate socially (in tandem with task-related conversation), and consistently throughout the course of the relationship show high trust. Repeated interaction helps to create shared experiences, and solidify the connection²³.

By creating common ground, trust is able to grow.

This is at the heart of StreetInvest's trust-building programmes, creating

shared experiences for participants to face challenges in a safe and non-threatening environment.

Research also suggests that ongoing relationships facilitate the development of trust between people. This is because when we can anticipate future interactions with each other, we can value that any duplicitousness can be punished in further meetings, or trustworthy behaviour can be rewarded. Understanding this dynamic can be useful for organisations that work in project environments, or sales.

On an organisational level, transparency between the organisation and its employees is paramount. When we see organisations speaking about accountability and transparency, this is a move to build, or re-build, trust. When a mistake is made, management can repair trust by responding fast, as well as taking ownership of the error⁸.

PROMOTING TRUST WITH STREETINVEST INC

Improving trust in an organisation has wide ranging benefits, affecting productivity, profits, employee satisfaction, turnover, teamwork and other collaborative and organisational indicators.

At StreetInvest Inc, our work synthesises the decades of research about trust in organisations, and couples it with the experience we bring from building trust and growing relationships with street-connected children. This has given rise to our principles of trust: empathy, unconditional positive regard, congruence, all of which are practised and mastered through building reflective capacity.

We address the gap organisations experience when tackling the challenge of measuring trust in the workplace. Through our bespoke diagnostic tool, we are able to accurately read levels of trust in your organisation, providing a platform from which we can design interventions and target the specific difficulties experienced. Through working with StreetInvest Inc, your organisation can capitalise on an elusive advantage by promoting trust.

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Appendix

Definition	Author
Empathy, congruence, unconditional positive regard	StreetInvest
The conscious regulation of one's dependence on another	Zand (1992)
The extent to which one is willing to ascribe good intentions to and have confidence in the words and actions of other people	Cook and Holmes (1991)
A state involving positive expectations about another's motives with respect to oneself in situations entailing risk	Boon and Holmes (1991)
The extent to which a person is confident in, and willing to act on the basis of, the words, actions and decisions, of another	McAllister (1995)
The willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party.	Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995)
The specific expectation that an other's actions will be beneficial rather than detrimental and the generalised ability to take for granted...a vast array of features of the social order	Creed and Miles (1996)
Confident positive expectations regarding another's conduct in a context of risk	Lewicki, McAllister and Bies (1998)
...reflects an expectation or belief that the other party will act benevolently	Whitener et al (1998)
A psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability (to another) based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behaviour of another	Rousseau et al (1998)

**For further information on
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