



Building Trust in Global Teams

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10 TRUST CRITERIA SUMMARY

1. Competence	Trust based on a perception that team members are competent, and so will not let me down. <i>"Team members have the necessary skills and experience to cover their role."</i>
2. Compatibility	Trust based on background, values, approaches, interests and objectives held in common <i>"Team members work towards common goals, rather than private agendas."</i>
3. Goodwill	Trust based on the belief that other team members are concerned about my overall welfare <i>"Team members provide me with support when I need it."</i>
4. Integrity	Trust based on the fact that other team members maintain promises and behave towards me in accordance with a moral code <i>"Team members are honest and truthful."</i>
5. Predictability	Trust based on the observation that the behavior of team members is consistent over time and in different contexts. <i>"Team members are reliable."</i>
6. Well-being	Trust arising from the feeling that I have nothing to fear from the other members of the group <i>"Team members encourage me to speak my mind."</i>
7. Inclusion	Trust based on the observation that other group members actively include me in their social and work activities <i>"Team members treat me and other members as equals."</i>
8. Open with information	Trust based on the fact that other team members share information important to the team proactively and clearly <i>"Team members are open about their needs and motives."</i>
9. Accessibility	Trust based on the fact that other team members are team oriented and share their true feelings and I can relate to them at a personal level <i>"Team members are emotionally an 'open book' – their feelings are easy to read."</i>
10. Reciprocal	Trust based on the observation that other group members are trusting and co-operative towards me <i>"Team members are prepared to rely on me in important ways."</i>

TRUST IN THE GLOBAL AGE

Global organizations rely on collaboration (vs. command and control) to achieve results, using technology, distributed power and trust. Companies with high levels of trust among employees experience increased speed, higher morale, reduced costs, and higher total return to shareholders than companies with low trust, gaining a competitive advantage. Factors that contribute to the decision to trust can be measured and increased. With support, teams and leaders can identify the gaps in trust in their organizations, then through engaged discussion, learning and commitment, create higher levels of trust, collaboration and performance.

Cultural differences affect priorities in the decision to trust, adding challenges for global organizations which must be addressed to achieve cross-border efficiency and productivity. I work with cultures: ethnic and organizational/corporate cultures. Having lived, worked and traveled in over 30 countries, conducting research, training programs and consulting, it is clear that trust and respect are universal cultural values, strongly held, of high importance. However, the expectations, attitudes and behaviors for “trust” differ across cultures. So to answer the questions “Can I trust you” isn’t as easy as it may seem.

Japan-U.S. Global Team

Recently, I worked with a Japan-U.S. team where trust had eroded and milestones weren’t being met. This team was charged with a critical project, that relied on multifunctional teams of scientists and engineers in both countries to get Japanese government approval for a new product. Speed was important, to beat global competitors in the Japanese market. The company knew that if they failed at this first attempt, it would take years to recoup.

Performance Multiplier

Was this team unusual? There has been a lot of research in the past 10 years on what makes high performing global teams. Consistently, the existence of trust is the top predictor of high performance. Team members, who trust each other, increase the speed and frequency of their communication and interdependent tasks to reach and exceed their goals.

When trust is lacking, there can be miscommunication, delays, duplication of effort, mistakes, re-work, and low morale.. The costs associated with mistrust are like a tax on the team, causing them to work harder. Stephen .R. Covey, in The Speed of Trust, calls trust “the performance multiplier.”

Of course, everyone wants trust in their team. How do we get trust? Jack Welch said about trust, “You know it when it’s there.” But if for one person trust is *confianza*, for another it is *Vertrauen*, or *доверие*, *fiducia*, *confiance*, or *信任* ...how do we know we’re talking about the same thing?

What signals trustworthiness to you?

vertrauen	German
信任	Chinese
fiducia	Italian
εμπιστοσύνη	Greek
trust	English
confianza	Spanish
доверие	Russian

10 Trust Criteria

Charis’ strategic partner in Europe, WorldWork, has researched this question and identified 10 trust criteria that constitute trust around the world. They have conducted surveys with hundreds of people, using [The International Team Trust Indicator](#), to measure trust toward team members and team leaders.

Below are the 10 Trust Criteria, definitions, and sample statements from the International Team Trust Indicator.

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Trust Varies Over Team Life

Teams prioritize different trust criteria at different times of their team life cycle. New teams form “Swift Trust” while mature teams form “Deep Trust”. Swift trust occurs in teams that are highly technical (e.g., engineering, software or I.T.); geographically dispersed and may never work face-to-face; have strong requirements for skills; and have a short project lifespan of less than six months. Teams forming “swift trust” indicate these as trust priorities:

- **Openness** with Information – to apply quickly to their interdependent tasks
- **Integrity** – be honest; keep your commitments to the team
- **Competence** – identify and contribute your strengths (skills and experience)
- **Reciprocal** – suspend your doubt about “strangers” to get team goal accomplished

Back to our Japan-U.S. team

They were asked what they WANT from team members, and what they GET from team members. Here is a comparison of what the two teams prioritized:

TRUST CRITERIA “WANTS” – TOP 4 PRIORITY

JAPAN	U.S.
Openness with Information	Competence
Integrity	Openness with Information
Inclusion	Integrity
Competence	Predictability

Both groups agreed that Openness with Information, with honest full disclosure, good news or bad news, was critical to the success of the project. The U.S. group prioritizing Competence shows that they recognized that only the Japanese group really had the linguistic, political and scientific ability to drive the project through the Japanese government approval process, but they had never done this before, thus raising concerns that needed to be addressed.

Trust Gaps

What happens when one team member says to another, “I don’t trust you”? Devastating! Yet people have different expectations of each other that need to be addressed. We can measure the difference by comparing what each team member wants and what they get. Do you want competence? Do you get competence from team members? Any difference is a “trust gap”.

Both Japan and U.S. groups experienced trust gaps

TRUST GAPS

JAPAN	U.S.
Openness with Information	Openness with Information
Integrity	Integrity
Inclusion	Predictability
Benevolence	Competence

From discussions with the team, specific examples of behaviors arose that became tangible ways to build trust. The Japanese said Inclusion would increase if the U.S. held meetings during times that Japanese could attend (4:00-5:00pm PST), invited more team members to meetings, and cc’ed more Japanese team members on Emails. Benevolence would increase if the U.S. took into account the time and energy translation required. The Americans said Integrity would increase if the Japanese would clearly disagree or say “No.” Predictability would increase if the Japanese didn’t escalate issues, going over the head of the U.S. counterpart to an executive. Both groups reported improved processes, increased trust, and meeting their project goals three months after this.

Mature Teams form “Deep Trust”

Mature teams, like the Global Women’s Leadership Network at Santa Clara University, form “Deep Trust.” These teams have a long project lifespan (9 months to several years), share a history of working together; are often co-located, and their careers and/or reputations may be dependent on team outcomes. Teams forming “deep trust” indicate these as trust priorities:

- Predictability
- Goodwill
- Inclusion
- Compatibility

Trust’s Link to High Performing Global Teams

In study after study, trust emerges as the most consistent factor in contributing to teams’ successful accomplishment of goals, and team members’ rating of their individual and group performance as superior. A few are shared below.

Project Success: *The Role of Trust in Business Collaboration*, a study conducted in 2008 by The Economist Intelligence Unit, sponsored by Cisco Systems, they surveyed 453 business executives from around the world. Among the findings, those who had complete trust in a key individual with whom they had recently collaborated, **92% reported success in meeting the goals** of their collaborative venture, compared to only 45% among those who reported little trust. In fact, among those who had little trust in the person with whom they worked,

more than half said their collaborations had not been very successful, or were going poorly.

Total Return to Shareholders Increases: WorkUSA® A Study of Employee Attitudes and Opinions, was conducted in 2002 by Watson Wyatt, measured levels of trust in organizations. It then found Total Return to Shareholders (TRS), measured as increased share value plus dividends, for the surveyed organizations. In low trust organizations the TRS was 7%, while in the **high trust organizations the TRS was 20%**, almost three times higher in high trust organizations. That's a difference of nearly 300%!

Trust Enhances Higher Order Thinking: What can neuroscience tell us about trust? The emotions, thoughts and actions of trust originate in our brains, and there is a strong correlation between trust and the level of oxytocin, a hormone and neurotransmitter. A team of researchers led by Ernst Fehr of the University of Zurich showed that increased oxytocin levels in people correlated to a greater willingness to accept risks in interpersonal interactions, and were associated with human attachment, social recognition, and trust. Oxytocin modulates the fight/flight response of the amygdala, making the experience of trusting another person less threatening.

Could team members be biologically higher performing when they trust? Oxytocin also appears to support higher-level cognitive functioning. When one trusts, the higher order functions of the neocortex, such as critical analysis, logic, creative thinking and verbal ability, are ready to go!

By identifying and measuring trust gaps, teams have the tools to increase trust. Low trust causes friction that slows teams down, creating hidden agendas, politics, conflict, rivalries, defensive and protective communication, win-lose thinking, and focus on differences. High trust produces speed, enjoyment of the people and work, and ultimately performance that rewards the organization, team and individuals.

When will your team get started building trust? A Chinese proverb offers timely advice:

"The best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago.

The second best time is today."

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Trust is a performance multiplier.**
High trust creates speed, enjoyment, leveraging global interface, and high performance. Low trust burdens a global team with miscommunication, redundancy, bureaucracy, focus on differences, and low morale.
- **Measure "trust gaps", then modify team process.**
Using the International Team Trust Indicator, measure the gaps in what team members want and what they get to support trust. Trust in the team leader can also be measured. Team members then modify behaviors and processes to support increased trust to reach goals faster.
- **Trust changes with time.**
New teams form "swift trust", with different trust priorities than mature teams with needs for "deep trust." Team leaders can strategically identify the development stage and needs of their team.

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