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# Trusting is for Doing: On Goals, Mindsets and Trust

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To fully understand how trust forms we need to understand why people trust. Conventionally, the “how’s” and the “why’s” have been seen as intertwined; people trust because of their experience with a person or institution or because other sources of information suggest that they have good reason to trust someone. Trust here is seen as constituting the main driver of behavior. We define trust here as a “psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability” (Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt & Camerer, 1998: 395).

In this paper we seek to disentangle goals and trust, and argue that people’s goals while interacting with other people is likely to influence the experience of trust. This again builds on the assumptions that trust is not merely a basis for decisions but a factor that influences (often favorably) other valued outcomes. Our experience of trust helps us display trust which furthers relational goals (e.g. developing work-relationships). Thus, this paper adopts a pragmatic perspective on trust (Fiske, 1992; James, 1890): Paraphrasing Fiske (1992) and replacing thinking with trusting we argue that “trusting is for doing”. People’s experience of trust constitutes not only a basis for decisions but serves important ends in its own right, enabling people to interact with ease and confidence. People’s experience of trust not only influences peoples’ selection of goals but also influences peoples’ ability to attain those goals once selected. Trust enhances peoples’ ability to effectively influence other people in that people tend to trust people who trust (Williams, 2007, Weber, Malhotra & Murnighan, 2005). Trusting likewise reduces the load on peoples’ information processing capacity, and enables people to more effectively focus on task-interaction enhancing task performance (Schmeichel & Baumeister, 2004). The effects of goals on trust we suggest tend to be automatic, often unconscious and uncontrolled (Bargh & Williams, 2007).

Depictions of trust formation typically see trust as an intention or willingness to engage in risk taking in relationships based on (i) a general propensity to trust and (ii) beliefs about the trustworthiness of the trustee formed through experience (Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995).

Subsequent contributions have included other bases including categorizations (e.g. in-group versus out-group), institutional safeguards and normalcy beliefs (McKnight, Cummings & Chervany, 1998). These extensions however still retain a core set of assumptions; trust is assumed to reflect peoples' experience and beliefs with respect to properties of the trustee (Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995; Butler, 1991). The specific set of properties that influences trust reflects the nature of the dependency between the trustor and the trustee and the trustor's goals in a specific situation and determines "what trust is all about".

In arguing that trusting is for doing we draw on four premises:

First, we suggest that studies of trust should pay more attention to the context of trust and what people seek to achieve by themselves, and in collaboration with other people: People trust other people in a context where people seek to attain valued outcomes for themselves or others (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003). A trustor is usually not a disinterested observer of a trustee but actively engaged in interacting with and seeking to influence a trustee. How we see, categorize, understand, remember and feel about other people partially at least reflects our interactive goals in that situation (Hilton & Darley, 1991). People not only select goals but strive to attain them (Heckhausen & Gollwitzer, 1987). Selecting versus striving to attain goals once selected involves different motivational processes that influence trust in different ways (Gollwitzer, 1990).

The trust literature tends to focus on trust as antecedents to peoples' commitments in relationships. Yet, people commit to actions, and social relationships for reasons other than trust. Such reasons can be affective or practical, brought on by choice or imposed on people from the outside and may include habits, norms, values, a need for self-expression or selfrespect or pragmatic and utilitarian reasons (McKnight, Cummings & Chervaney, 1998).

Rather than trust leading up to a decision, trust may in some cases begin with a decision or a commitment (Koller, 1988).

Second, trust as mentioned is not merely a basis for taking decisions but an experience that affects our wellbeing as well as ability to function and perform in relationship to other people. Trust in this respect is not just an end or a basis for decisions but also a mean to accomplish valued ends. Trust frees up cognitive and emotional resources that would otherwise be spent on monitoring the other party, furthers communication and provides emotional support (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001; McEvily, Zaheer & Perrone, 2003). For teams with tight deadlines some form of trust is a necessary precondition to perform (Meyerson, Weick & Kramer, 1996) as is initial displays of trust in collaboration (Weber, Malhotra & Murnighan, 2004).

Third, and related to the second premise; goals influence how we perceive and feel about objects. People pay more attention to objects or people that are relevant to goal-attainment and are drawn towards and show preferences for objects that facilitate goal-attainment (Fishbach, 2009; Ferguson & Bargh, 2004). This attraction towards goal-relevant objects or trustees can be seen as adaptive in supporting effective performances and goal-attainment. Ferguson & Bargh (2004) thus demonstrate how the goal-relevance of objects influences immediate liking. A large and growing literature on affect-regulation shows how people routinely regulate their own emotions in ways that facilitate goal attainment in social relationships (Gross & Thompson, 2008).

Finally and fourth, people not only select goals but strive to attain them: Our experience of trust is likely to coincide with people striving to attain goals, and peoples experiences with such goal striving is likely to influence peoples' experience of trust. People continuously select, ignore and strive to attain goals. Processes of goal-striving and trusting thus both constitute processes that are likely to run in parallel and that influence each other mutually.

To begin to see how goal pursuits can influence peoples' experience of trust, we turn to the literature on goal striving, action phases and mindsets (Gollwitzer, 1990; Heckhausen & Gollwitzer, 1987).

### **Action phases, mindsets and trust**

Existing models on trust formation builds on earlier models of risk taking that attempts to integrate both goal selection and goal striving within one conceptual model (Atkinson, 1957). People integrate information and the various pros of cons of a specific option and the positive valence of a given option determines the strength of a behavioral intention and hence the zeal with which an individual will pursue an chosen behavioral option. Strong trust hence suggests that people will be willing to take greater chances and overcome more resistance in a relationship.

The "Rubicon model" of action phases brings an explicit temporal perspective to goaloriented behavior that begins "with the awakening of a person's wishes prior to goal setting and continues through the evaluative thoughts entertained after goals striving has ended" (Gollwitzer, 1990: 55). The model differentiates between goal-selection and goal striving while introducing four distinct phases (Heckhausen & Gollwitzer, 1987): A pre-decisional action phase in which people deliberate and ponder the expected outcome of behavioral options, a pre-actional phase in which people have chosen one behavioral option and are determined to follow this through. People start to plan, addressing specific questions about how and when and where they are supposed to start acting. In the action initiation and actional-phase people seek to implement their goal and effort in this phase is assumed to be related to the volitional strength of the goal intention. Finally in the post-actional phase people reappraise their performance.

Associated with different phases are four different mindsets or cognitive modes optimized to address the particular challenges and goals associated with the different action phases (Heckhausen & Gollwitzer, 1987): A *deliberate mindset* is associated with a pre-decisional phase, an *implemental mindset* with a post-decisional pre-action phase, an *actional mindset* with an actional phase and an *evaluative mindset* with a post-actional phase. Here we focus on the first two: In a pre-decisional or *deliberative* stage the primary challenge lies in making a correct decision (as of whether to work with someone or not). People deliberate not only to determine which of their wishes are the most desirable but also whether they are feasible. People thus seek information about the positivity-negativity of the consequences of different goals as well as information about whether a given goal is attainable. This requires an impartial, unbiased and open-ended search for information (Gollwitzer, 1990). People need to be sensitive and open minded towards information in general, including peripheral information that may impact outcomes or feasibility.

In an *implemental* mindset people plan how and where to act in order to promote action initiation. In order for people to effectively solve the task the individual concerns him/herself primarily with information related to the task at hand. Effectively solving the task requires that individuals form an initiation intention or commit themselves to act. Closed-mindedness enhances performance at this stage (Gollwitzer, 1990; Gollwitzer & Kinney, 1989). Thus, emphasis in an implemental phase is on the effective implementation of a chosen course of action. A highly critical evaluative stance would interfere with performance once people seek to implement their chosen course of action. In this stage people have been found to shift to a more narrowly focused style of information processing in which people focus on the immediate task and challenges at expense of more distant concerns or threats. To sustain the effort, people engage in slightly biased thinking and produce more positive affect when

compared to an earlier more critical stance adopted in the pre-decisional mindset (Taylor & Gollwitzer, 1995).

### **Goals, action phases, mindsets and trust**

Goal pursuit influences peoples' experience of trust in several ways: First goals define dependency relationships in that people can influence valued outcomes or goal-attainment (Johansen, Selart & Grønhaug, 2013). Second, different goals have different implications for how people meet and see other people and how people see relationships (Hilton & Darley, 1991). Goals emphasizing outcomes that can only be attained in cooperation with others is more likely to offset activities likely to strengthen the experience of trust. Pro-social goals emphasizing the value of social companionship and social interaction for its own is also likely to offset activities that help develop trust. On the other hand, goals emphasizing minimizing risk, self-protection or even self-enrichment on the expense of others is unlikely to offset behaviors that lead to the formation of trust (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003). While not our focus here, specific (non-social) goals can of course also impede or terminate the formation of trust.

In addition to the type of goals people pursue, the process of selecting and pursuing goals we argue is likely to influence peoples' experience of trust. Such goals can develop within a trusting relationship as tends to be the assumption in most models of trust development (Lewicki et al. 1996) but can also originate from outside the relationships to influence the dynamics of the relationship (Meyerson, Weick & Kramer, 1996). Specific events, cues or commitments to decisions or actions here initiate processes that mark the transition between different action phases and different mindsets (Lewicki & Bunker, 1996). Having decided on a goal people need to transform the goal into an intention. In forming goal intentions people



move to a preactional phase, and forming behavioral intentions. Completing or attaining a goal or failing moreover leads to a postactional phase that shares some of the characteristics of the pre-decisional phase (Gollwitzer, 1990). Thus, committing to goals and forming goal intentions is likely to activate an implemental mindset whereas cues, events or shocks that causes people to reappraise their priorities or choices is likely to activate a deliberative mindset. Mindsets moreover influence peoples' attention to and memory of peripheral or incongruent information, how people process information, illusion of control, degree of optimism, attitude strength and general affect (Taylor & Gollwitzer, 1995; Gollwitzer, 1990).

The effects of mindsets on information processing are also likely to influence peoples' experience of trust. As the experience of trust reflects how people process information and evaluate probabilities as well as peoples' general affective stance, we suggest that mindsets will also shape individuals experience of trust (Gollwitzer,1990; Dunn & Schweitzer, 2005). Positive affect even where unrelated or incidental to social interaction has been found to increase initial trust (Dunn & Schweitzer, 2005; Lount, 2010). The illusion of control has likewise been linked to initial trust (McKnight, Cummings & Chervany, 1998; Kramer, 1994, Langer, 1975). An increase in attitude strength may be linked to stronger trust (yet could also fortify distrust). We suggest that the effects are likely to be even stronger for non-related emotions associated with important and relationship-relevant goals are likely to stronger than the effects of unrelated, more peripheral emotions. Mindsets are also associated with styles of information processing and information search that are likely to influence peoples' experience of trust. A broader, less biased search for information characteristic of a deliberative mindset is more likely to reveal uncertainty and risks than the more closed, focused search associated with an implemental mindset (Gollwitzer & Kinney, 1989).

Different mindsets we suggest are likely to inform different forms of trust:

*Deliberative trust* is likely to reflect the characteristics associated with a deliberative mindset and is likely to be more tentative, more calculative, and more open to incongruent or disconfirming evidence and information. Deliberative trust is likely to be associated with less positive emotions, more critical processing of information and to be more easily revoked than implemental trust. Deliberative trust thus strongly resemble other descriptions of trust in the literature including fragile trust (Ring, 1996), calculative trust (Lewicki & Bunker, 1996) or cognitive trust (McAllister, 1995).

*Implemental trust* on the other hand reflects the characteristics of an implemental mindset in which emphasis is on implementing a given decision. Implemental trust is likely to be associated with more positive emotions, less critical processing of information and a greater commitment to trust. Unlike deliberative trust, implemental trust is not easily revoked and if revoked, but is only likely to happen at a great cost to the trustor. Implemental trust accordingly has similarities to other forms of trust described in the literature, including resilient trust (Ring, 1996), affective trust (McAllister, 1995), identity based trust (Lewicki & Bunker, 1996).

This distinction between deliberative and implemental trust may contribute to a better understanding of how trust forms in relationships, emphasizing the importance of the behavioral commitments for the formation of trust - effects that go beyond the mere effect of information (Meyerson et. al. 1996; Rempel, Holmes & Zanna, 1985). A more radical notion is the idea that the distinction could explain variation in trust-forms even in situations where people have limited experience with a trustee.

A more pragmatic and contextual view of trusting that includes more of peoples ongoing concerns and that sees trust not only as a basis for decisions but as means to other ends, offer

we believe, a more realistic image of trust and valuable insights into how trust is accomplished in spite of uncertainty and vulnerability (Möllering, 2006).

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