

TRUST AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Interpersonal and Organisational Trust

Mayer, Davis & Schoorman · Rousseau · Kramer · Covey

PAPER 01 / 02

A Furtherance reference compendium on the intellectual traditions behind organisational design, leadership, execution, and culture.

IN THIS PAPER

This paper opens the Trust and Psychological Safety series in Furtherance's reference library. It sets out what trust *is* and where it comes from – as an interpersonal judgement and an organisational condition. The question it answers: what exactly are we extending when we trust someone, and what makes them trustworthy?

Trust is the hidden variable in organisational speed and cost, but it is easily sloganised. The four contributions here give it structure: Mayer, Davis and Schoorman define its components; Rousseau situates it in the employment relationship; Kramer warns against maximising it; Covey makes the economic case for building it.

Mayer, Davis & Schoorman Integrative Model of Trust, 1995

Organisational behaviour · the trustworthiness model

CORE THESIS

Trust is the **willingness to be vulnerable** to another party based on positive expectations of them. Whether someone earns it turns on three perceived factors of **trustworthiness** – **ability**, **benevolence** and **integrity** – filtered through the truster's own general **propensity** to trust.

FRAMEWORK

Factor of trustworthiness	The question it answers
Ability	Are they competent in the relevant domain?
Benevolence	Do they want good things for me, beyond self-interest?
Integrity	Do they adhere to principles I find acceptable?
Truster's propensity	How readily do I extend trust in general?

Trust then translates into **risk-taking in the relationship**; the outcomes feed back to update perceptions of trustworthiness.

METHODOLOGY

An integrative conceptual model synthesising decades of scattered trust research – among the most cited frameworks in organisational behaviour – subsequently supported by extensive empirical work.

SIGNIFICANCE AND CRITIQUE

The dominant academic model of trust, and the reason “ability, benevolence, integrity” is the standard vocabulary. The critique: it captures a relatively static snapshot, and benevolence and integrity are hard to separate empirically.

Denise Rousseau b.1950

Organisational behaviour · the psychological contract

CORE THESIS

The employment relationship is governed by a **psychological contract** – each employee's beliefs about the reciprocal obligations between them and the organisation. When the organisation is seen to **breach** that contract, trust and engagement fall sharply. Rousseau also helped fix the cross-disciplinary definition of trust itself.

FRAMEWORK

Element	Meaning
Transactional contract	Narrow, economic, short-term exchange
Relational contract	Broad, open-ended, loyalty-and-support based
Breach	Perceived failure to meet an obligation
Violation	The emotional response – anger, betrayal – to a breach

METHODOLOGY

Organisational research combining conceptual work with empirical study of how employees form and react to perceived obligations.

SIGNIFICANCE AND CRITIQUE

Explains why trust is lost less through poor pay than through broken expectations, and why the same change can feel fair to one person and a betrayal to another. The critique: the contract is perceptual and subjective, which makes it hard to measure and to manage.

Roderick Kramer b.1950

Social psychology · the bases and limits of trust

CORE THESIS

Trust is not an unqualified good to be maximised. It rests on several distinct **bases**, and wise organisations practise **tempered trust** – calibrated to the situation – rather than either blanket trust or corrosive suspicion.

FRAMEWORK

Basis of organisational trust	Rests on
Dispositional	A person's general readiness to trust
History-based	The track record of past interactions
Category- and role-based	Group membership or the role someone holds
Rule- and institution-based	Shared rules and institutional safeguards

METHODOLOGY

A social-psychological synthesis of the trust literature, attentive to both its benefits and its dysfunctions.

SIGNIFICANCE AND CRITIQUE

A necessary corrective to trust boosterism: it names the different foundations of trust and the real risks of over-trust. The critique: it is more a synthesis than a single predictive model, drawing on an uneven evidence base.

Stephen M. R. Covey *The Speed of Trust*, 2006

Practitioner framework · the business case for trust

CORE THESIS

Trust is an **economic driver**. Where trust is high, speed rises and cost falls; where it is low, everything slows and a hidden **trust tax** is paid. Trust is a learnable competence built on **credibility** – character plus competence – and on consistent trust-building behaviour.

FRAMEWORK

The four cores of credibility	Dimension
Integrity	Character – honesty and congruence
Intent	Character – motive and agenda
Capabilities	Competence – skills and knowledge
Results	Competence – the track record of delivery

METHODOLOGY

A practitioner framework built for application, illustrated through business cases rather than derived from controlled research.

SIGNIFICANCE AND CRITIQUE

Made the business case for trust vivid and actionable – the trust tax and dividend are memorable and useful. The critique: it is a popular, commercial framework, lighter on empirical rigour than the academic models above.

Synthesis

Contribution	Trust is...	Key components	Register
Mayer et al.	Willingness to be vulnerable	Ability, benevolence, integrity	Academic / foundational
Rousseau	The reciprocal contract	Breach and violation	Academic / employment
Kramer	Multi-based; to be tempered	Bases of trust; tempered trust	Academic / synthesis
Covey	An economic multiplier	Credibility; trust tax	Practitioner / applied

FOR THE OPERATOR

Trust is the willingness to be vulnerable, earned through ability, benevolence and integrity (Mayer et al.), governed by the psychological contract (Rousseau), built on several bases and best tempered rather than maximised (Kramer), and a genuine multiplier of organisational speed and cost (Covey). For the operator: trust is a demonstrated, buildable asset – and the precondition for candour. The next paper follows it into the team, where it becomes psychological safety and voice.