

Trust Building Online

Virtual Collaboration and the Development of Trust

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It is no secret that trust is an essential ingredient in an organization's ability to collaborate, drive business results, and achieve overall effectiveness. The business case for trust is easy to make. A Watson Wyatt Worldwide (2002) study found that organizations where frontline employees trusted senior leadership posted a 42 percent higher return on shareholder investment over firms where distrust was the norm. In a recent University of British Columbia report, economists found that trust in management is the most valued determinant of job satisfaction (Heliwell & Huang, 2005). The report suggests that a small increase in trust of management is similar to receiving a 36 percent pay increase. Conversely, if the same amount of trust is lost, the decline in employee job satisfaction is similar to taking a 36 percent pay cut. One of the obvious consequences of working in a high-trust

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organization is that these organizations do not experience the high cost of turnover. Their employees stay. There is also ample evidence supporting the claim that people who trust one another work more effectively together (Reina & Reina, 2006; Shaw, 1997). Individuals who trust one another are more inclined to collaborate freely, create, innovate, take risks, and openly communicate (Reina & Reina, 2006; Solomon & Flores 2003). Strategic initiatives and change processes such as increased speed to market, decreased cycle time, research and development, and mergers and acquisitions all necessitate higher levels of shared responsibility and accountability, which are fostered by high levels of trust.

One of the most challenging and exciting aspects of this era is the incredible progress made in technologies and ideas about relating, connecting, and developing relationships. Communication technology, globalization, and an across-the-board awareness of the need to both tolerate and respect the “other” has given leaders and designers opportunities and tools that they have never had before.

What is surprising is that there are few strategies or models that seek to systematically and measurably improve trust and trust-related behaviors. This chapter reviews research findings about how trust is built and broken in relationships, teams, and organizations and focuses on how distributed teams and cohorts have engaged in learning about trust using a virtual environment. The chapter presents a rigorous model of trust at work, describes a tool that was designed to build and support trust in virtual teams, and presents a series of behavioral examples of transactional trust.

TRUST IN THE VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT

Developing technologies and methods to facilitate trust and the skill of virtual collaboration is probably one of the most important tasks facing theorists and managers (Dourish, 2001, Duarte & Tennant-Snyder, 1999; Kahn, 2005). The increasing complexity of relationships at global and local levels requires deep, effective, and sustained collaboration built on a foundation of mutual trust.

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Information technology has broadened the scope of connectedness in terms of geography as well as increased the density and number of social connections that form relationships; for example, almost 71 percent of Americans currently use e-mail (Center for the Digital Future, 2006). The simultaneous development of personal social networks and work-related connectivity has resulted in a complex landscape of relationships and some confusion about how these relationships are formed and sustained. Research into the dynamics of relationship building in both colocated and virtual teams continues with mixed results. Some theorists are finding that proximity is the key factor in the development of teams and that social characteristics play a much more important role in team or group solidarity than either race or gender (Yuan & Gay, 2006).

The recognition that proximity is a key element in virtual communication has resulted in an increasing emphasis on the quality of the virtual experience as it relates to social presence and the development of social networks and ultimately interpersonal relationships. Many consider that any technology that brings us closer to face-to-face work is worth investing in (Sanders, 2006). Consequently many designers are tending to focus less on asynchronous methods and instead emphasize synchronous elements using technologies such as video, audio, chats and instant messaging, and conferencing. The technology discussed in this chapter is solely concerned with asynchronous communications and draws on trust-building behaviors to support collaboration using only this medium. Findings show that the effectiveness of virtual collaboration is not contingent on the technology or the possibilities of synchronous communication but on the underlying relationships and foundation of trust that the technology supports (Kimble, Li, & Barlow, 2000).

Consequently, the deeper question is: What is responsible for the development of robust trusting relationships in the first place? Is proximity the limiting factor? How exactly do people come to know one another? Literature on communities of practice (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002; Wenger, 1998) and apprenticeship learning (Lave, 1988; Lave & Wenger, 1991) supports the idea that proximity and colocated presence are essential ingredients to effective team performance. In this view, shared meanings emerge from shared work, experience, and participation. The implications of this thinking at the very least point toward a climate of sustained engagement and familiarity at a local level. The key here is that the engagement is behavioral and communication based. People's relationships are based

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on talk and behavior. This talk is amenable to asynchronous talk, which also influences behavior.

What local means in the context of virtual teams is an interesting and important question. Our interpretation is that local is based on the key elements of engagement and participation and a basic realization that relationships and trust are at the heart of the matter. In other words, local is related more to thought and conversation (and the relationships that result) than to space and time. For example, even when we are colocated, we can extend the quantity, if not the quality, of our communications by using e-mail and the telephone. Extensive research shows that trust is built behaviorally (Brothers, 1995; Reina & Reina, 2006). These behaviors are as real in a virtual mode as they are in a face-to-face mode. In short, the behaviors that build trust in face-to-face relationships also build trust in virtual relationships. Moreover, the practice of these behaviors creates conditions that enhance collaboration in face-to-face or virtual mode. Our conclusion is that high trust tends to make both communication and collaboration easier. Our experience of building and field-testing an online trust-building program, discussed later in the chapter, suggests that trust is as vital in virtual relationships as it is in local relationships.

THE REINA TRUST AND BETRAYAL MODEL

The model of trust and betrayal presented in this section is the outgrowth of unfolding research on trust at work over the past decade in over one hundred organizations. The model is based on some foundational principles. First, business is conducted through relationships, and trust is the foundation of effective relationships. People who are expected to work together successfully have to trust one another: that is, they have to respect each other and confirm the other's worth and value as a person.

Most leaders, managers, supervisors, and employees strive to build trusting relationships. They recognize that trust is central to healthy work environments and performance, and the need that people have to be trusted and to trust others. In order to sustain trust, these core truths must be recognized: although trust may be held as a value, it is actually built by behavior, and it will be both built and broken in all workplace relationships. Both building trust and breaking trust are natural elements of relationships. Broken trust causes pain, doubt, and confusion,

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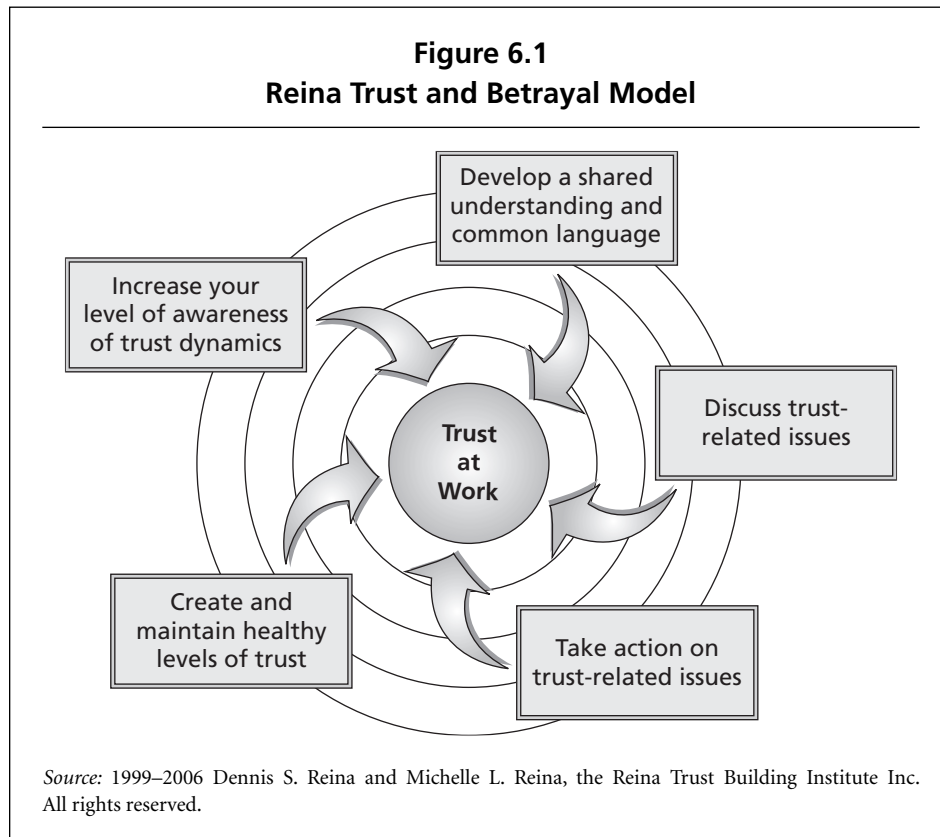
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but it may also be used to strengthen relationships and provide significant lessons when people recognize it and choose to work through it.

The purpose of building trust at work using the Reina Trust and Betrayal Model is illustrated in Figure 6.1. The ultimate goal is to increase awareness of trust dynamics between individuals in teams and organizations.

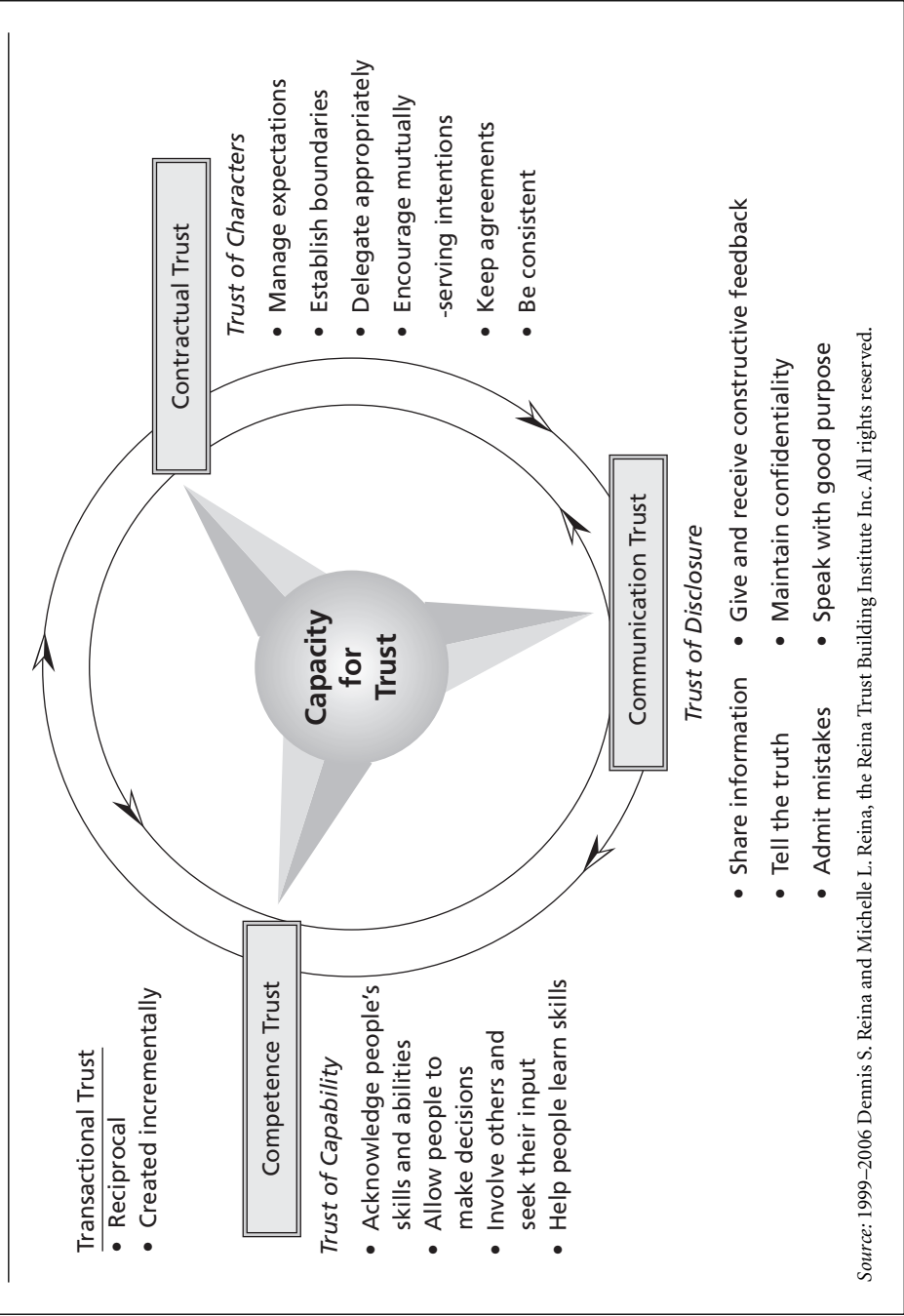
The problem of understanding the relationship between the dynamics of trust and specific trust behaviors has been addressed by the model. The three elements described in the model help simplify the complexity of trust.

Transactional trust describes trust as reciprocal in nature (you have to give it to get it) and created incrementally (step by step over time). There are three facets of transactional trust: contractual, communication, and competence trust. Each has essential behaviors that are associated with building that type. Figure 6.2 illustrates transactional trust and the sixteen specific behaviors that built it.



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Figure 6.2
Transactional Trust



Contractual Trust

Contractual trust involves mutual understanding between people (both will do what they say they will do). Managing expectations, encouraging mutually serving intentions, and keeping agreements are examples of behaviors that build contractual trust. When this trust is practiced, people understand what is expected of them, roles and responsibilities are clear, and commitments are kept or renegotiated. People collaborate freely, depend on each other, and deliver results.

Communication Trust

Trust influences communication, and communication influences trust: the two are closely related. Sharing information, telling the truth, and speaking with good purpose are examples of behaviors that create communication trust. In an environment with strong communication trust, people feel safe to ask questions, honestly speak their minds, challenge assumptions, raise issues, give and receive feedback, or acknowledge that they do not understand and ask for help.

Competence Trust

Competence trust influences the ability to perform job responsibilities. Involving others, seeking input, and helping people to learn new skills are behaviors that build competence trust. Feelings of self-worth and value are directly tied to the presence or absence of competence trust. Of course self-trust and trustworthiness are fundamental issues, but they are not addressed using the transactional trust model.

TRANSACTIONAL TRUST AS THE FOUNDATION FOR VIRTUAL COLLABORATION

Interpreting and evaluating behavior through the lens of transactional trust can serve as the foundation for collaboration in a virtual environment. Each facet plays a particular role. Contractual trust sets the tone and direction, shapes roles and responsibilities and helps make expectations clear. Communication trust helps establish norms for information flow and standards for how people talk with one another, share information, provide feedback, and work with mistakes that have been made. Competence trust allows individuals to leverage and further develop skills, abilities, and knowledge, particularly those required for virtual collaboration.

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Development of Trust Building Online

Trust Building Online is a Web-based computer application developed to support building a foundation of trust using virtual collaboration. The primary goal was to engage participants in a meaningful conversation about trust. In the face-to-face environment, learners become aware of trust-related dynamics by engaging in content that defines trust and specific behaviors that build it. They derive meaning from the content by engaging in reflection on their experiences, brought to life through dialogue with others in the learning environment. Insight gained and meaning derived are guided by facilitation. Individuals and groups report that reflection and dialogue support a deeper understanding of trust and cultivate conscious choices to practice trust-building behaviors. A central design goal is to mirror the sequence of learning experienced during face-to-face trust building. Our goal was to create an asynchronous Internet-based communication platform that would exemplify the best of face-to-face facilitation and enhance the reflection time that is so powerfully effective in the workshop or seminar environment.

Confidence and passion about the utility of Trust Building Online came from material changes in participant behavior as evidenced by changes in trust-building scores shown by the Organizational Trust Scale (OTS), a self-report Likert-type scale survey that is research based, valid, and reliable. The instrument contains fifty-four quantitative questions and three open-ended questions. Pre- and postscores were tracked in pilot study organizations, and significant changes were shown in all three facets of transactional trust after people experienced Trust Building Online.

The progress of Trust Building Online spans a four-year period involving the development of a platform for delivering the trust content, methods for building trust, and tools to practically link those methods to team and organizational needs. It was a collaborative effort that involved the authors and a team of technical specialists. The application was created using PHP, Flash, and HTML protocols. A third-party discussion platform (a bulletin board) was incorporated to support dialogue among participants. The application consists of a set of features and functions designed to engage participants in trust content through reflection, introspection, dialogue, and action planning:

- Flexible and scalable content management system. Multiple cohorts can be deployed from one URL and managed on one integrated interface.
- Flexible and scalable discussion and query functionality, which allows multiple groups and discussion under one organizational umbrella.

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- Interactive queries independent of the trust content and the discussion center to foster further collaboration.
- Discussion center (bulletin board system) for holding, categorizing, and tracking parallel discussions and dialogues related to the trust content, participant trust-related issues, and moderator-led discussions.
- Moderator-enabled design and architecture to enable a consistent thread of communication and a model for collaboration.
- Trust quizzes, help and FAQ functionality, a trust memory game, and progress tracking function to monitor engagement and commitments. (See the www.wiley.com/go/virtualteamshandbook Web site for a working Flash copy of the quiz: The Reina Team Trust Quiz.)
- Trust platform design that accommodates the integration of trust-measuring surveys to provide a baseline of the level of trust, support action planning, and monitor progress through postmeasurements.



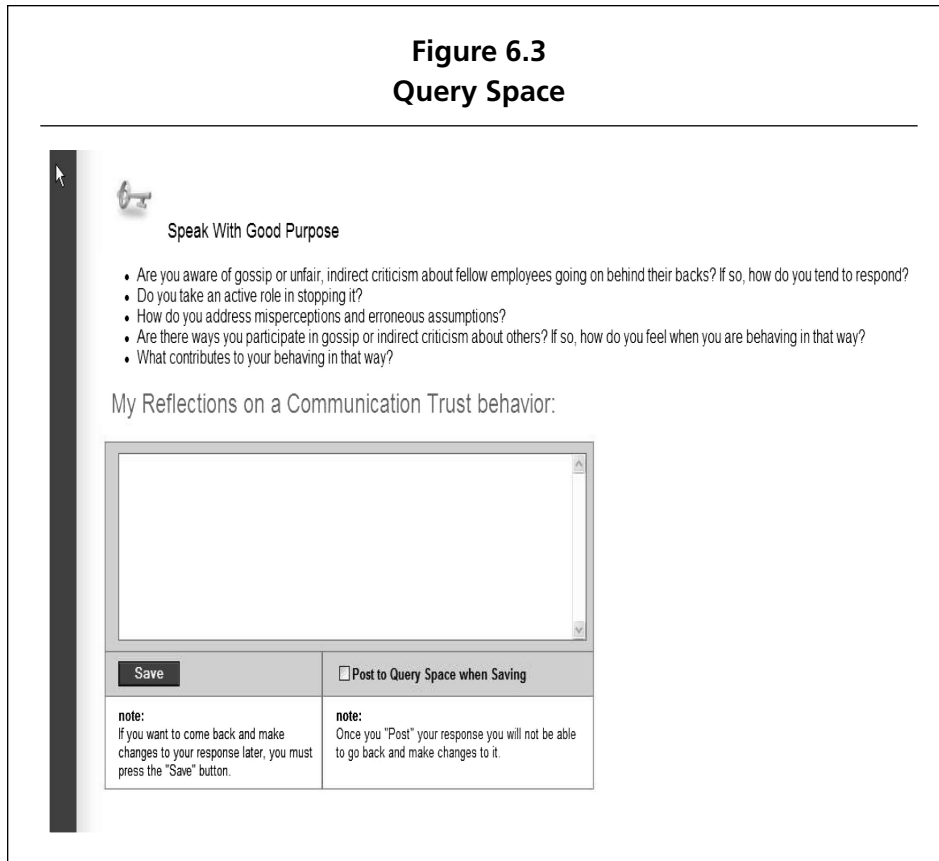
Two key features of Trust Building Online are the Query Space and the Discussion Center.

The Query Space A major goal of this design was to optimize interaction and awareness. The Query Space was designed to heighten participants' awareness of how they practice or fail to practice trust-building behaviors through a simple and public question-and-answer format. It was our assumption that participants would, in reading their own and others' responses to questions, both reflect on and share their insights into trust-building and trust-breaking behaviors. Our hope was that participants would develop a heightened awareness of the choices they make to practice trust-building behaviors. Figure 6.3 shows a screen shot of the Query Space. Participants are invited to engage in exploration of trust-building content through their own experiences and to gain insight from one another through a sharing of those experiences.

A query is a reflection question asked of all participants with an option to respond in a time frame of the participant's choosing. The reflection question is asked within the context of a particular aspect of trust. For instance, after an introduction to communication trust behaviors, a query question may be, "Have you experienced gossip or unfair criticism about fellow employees going on behind their backs? If so, how do you tend to respond?"

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Figure 6.3
Query Space



Rather than include this function in the Discussion Center, it was designed within the content portion of the interface, allowing moderators or designers to add or change questions or queries within the content itself. Participants could then respond to the query and, when ready, post it to the Query Space, where they could read and reflect on their own responses and the responses of cohort members. Figure 6.4 illustrates the group view of the Query Space.

This proved to be one of the most powerful design elements of Trust Building Online. The depth of participants' responses and the threads of meaning woven through multiple responses were surprising. This process of engagement with the content and reflection on both participants' own and others' responses contributed to a significant improvement in team culture. Furthermore, a level

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Figure 6.4
Group View of the Query Space

Building Trust in the Workplace Online

My Home | Resume | My Progress | Query Space | Discussion Center | Help & FAQs | Memory Game

Select Group: Group G [Group Progress](#)

Choose a Cycle

Cycle 2:
The Model - Part 1

Beliefs & Challenges About Trust

Query - Beliefs & Challenges about Trust

Beliefs & Challenges About Betrayal & Healing

Query - Beliefs & Challenges about Betrayal & Heal

Transactional Trust

Query - Understanding Transactional Trust
Reflecting on Contractual Trust
Reflecting on Communication Trust
Reflecting on Competence Trust

Transactional Trust

Reflecting on Communication Trust

█ on 11-15-04 3pm
Like I said earlier I think the most important concept is speaking with good purpose. It is often difficult to do this and at times I have to actively remember to speak always well. Its easy to get caught up in the mess of other people gossiping. When that happens sometimes I try to divert attention away from the subject matter and other times I just shy away from it, or on my not so nice days, listen to it. I think its important to always try to remind people to only speak with good purpose but it is difficult to know how to tel others in a nice way.

█ on 12-08-04 11pm
Speak with Good Purpose-- feel this communication trust behavior could actually sum up all of them. Always speak with good purpose should be our motto! I don't think it just pertains to gossip.. but overall being positive, saying and doing things to better our work environment--I think most people would agree they want to work somewhere where everyone looks out for eachother, respects differences, is open-minded, works as a team, and learns from eachother.

█ 12-15-04 9pm
Speak with good purpose- I think this is very important in everything we do, everyday wherever we are. The saying goes, "Think before you speak" and I believe that if everyone did this more, communication could be improved.

█ 12-17-04 4pm
One needs to be aware and try to avoid negative behaviors that would betray another's trust.

█ 12-28-04 6pm
On maintaining confidentiality, this is an area I feel very strongly about. Someone should not need to request that you keep a personal conversation confidential, common courtesy should tel you it's what you do! Have I ever broken someones confidence? Yes, there was a particular incident that could have been harmful to a number of other people. I had I not spoken up, Sometimes it's a judgement call. That's the hard part.

█ 01-19-05 03am
I feel it is hard to focus on one key behavior because they all are so closely related, part of each other. Being honest as well as maintaining confidentiality are very important to me. If you are honest you are truthful. Sometimes truth can be difficult to deal with, it can be positive or negative it allows us feedback which can be difficult, it allows usme to grow and be a better and stronger person.

of frankness and disclosure that is typically not present even in face-to-face encounters was observed. In addition, in later follow-up, it was shared that face-to-face discussions were enriched by the opening up of difficult areas online.

The Discussion Center The Discussion Center, a bulletin board, was a significant feature in an early pilot of Trust Building Online. Figure 6.5 provides a sample screen shot of the Discussion Center. This feature, in conjunction with the Query Space, was effective for sustaining meaningful conversations.

The blending of a structured query with the open-ended Discussion Center posts was an effective combination. The queries allowed participants who required a bit more direction and context to engage in a safe, bounded, and well-defined activity. Others more familiar with computer-mediated technology were able to

Figure 6.5
The Discussion Center

| Forum | Posts | Threads | Last Post | Noderator |
|--|-------|---------|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| MetaForums | | | | |
| Moderator's Corner The Moderator Speaks | 5 | 5 | 11-21-2008 04:09 AM by CarlL | |
| Suggestion Box & Help Desk | 2 | 1 | 11-21-2008 04:29 AM by CarlL | |
| Water Cooler Social Talk | 4 | 4 | 11-20-2008 09:41 PM by RudyS | |
| Practice Forum | | | | |
| Activity 2.2.3 | 3 | 3 | 10-08-2008 09:38 PM by JaniceL | |
| Activity 2.2.5 | 4 | 2 | 10-27-2008 09:09 PM by SherryH | |
| Activity 2.3.2 | 3 | 3 | 10-08-2008 09:41 PM by JaniceL | |
| Building Working Agreements | | | | |
| Expectations & Assumptions 2.4.2 | 3 | 1 | 10-27-2008 09:10 PM by SherryH | |
| Trust Netiquette 2.4.3 | 2 | 1 | 10-08-2008 07:43 PM by RandyH | |
| Time Commitment 2.4.4 | 2 | 2 | 10-08-2008 07:49 PM by RandyH | |
| Conflict & Breakdown 2.4.5 | 2 | 1 | 10-08-2008 07:49 PM by RandyH | |

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use the query as a means of stepping into a more open-ended, and in many cases deeper, conversation in the discussion center.

Learning from the Initial Design

Initial preparations to go live with the system required us to assess and determine a base level of readiness of participants to engage in the program. An important design element was to be sure that when participants logged in for the first time, they would quickly become engaged with both the technology and the material. We required the development of an attractive, simple-to-use, and compelling interface. Also important was the orientation of the trust-building content in a manner that was meaningful to the participants' work. We wanted to make it easy to engage in and comprehend.

One of the most difficult issues facing contemporary distance learning designers is the issue of participant motivation. Completion rates for standard e-learning applications are notoriously low (Cross & Hamilton, 2002). Our position has been that people have to be motivated to engage in the material in the first place and then gradually develop skills at working asynchronously through a Web-based and Web-moderated medium. Once these barriers are overcome, the disconnect becomes less and less relevant.

One of the issues that initial deployments struggled with was the degree to which participation was mandated. Experience confirms that some degree of "required-ness" is essential to get people on board and further that this "required-ness" is most effective when linked to business needs and desired outcomes. Participation is sustained when the technology is used to enable or develop performance competencies. "Requiredness" is most necessary when launching an engagement with a cohort or team. After engagement has been achieved, participants tend to take responsibility for their own pacing and set their own rate. Business, team, and individual goals influence the rate set. Leaders set the tone by clarifying expectations, and participants set the rate. In other words, participants determine how frequently they need to engage with the technology in order to accomplish what is expected of them. In any case, flexibility is needed.

Asynchronous feedback proved to be a critical element of the design and one that strengthened communication trust. Through asynchronous feedback, participants learned that their words were being heard and that they mattered.

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Initially, designs of Trust Building Online required trained moderators whose chief task was to provide this feedback. As the program developed, it became apparent that feedback was also coming from the participants themselves, which is a core element of the construct being used (for example, the behavior of giving and receiving constructive feedback builds communication trust).

Initial designs also had the facilitator drawing the team's attention to the dynamics of its process and key insights that emerged. Feedback took the form of a synthesis of themes, categories, and questions. This feedback required the facilitator's time to analyze and evaluate the responses from the Query Space and the Discussion Center.

The feedback that participants received was intended to build a sense of ownership, shared responsibility, and involvement on the part of individual participants across their cohort's range of responses. The posted feedback became the catalyst for unmoderated or semimoderated communication through the Discussion Center and further building of communication trust. This type of iterative feedback process uses metacognitive and second-order reflection skills and can become a standard part of the cohort's toolkit.

The most important of these feedback opportunities was the creation and maintenance of the team's story line. As participants reflected and commented on the growing body of text, it was obvious that their trust in one another was growing. This observation was supported by increased scores on the trust instruments over three years of survey data analysis.

APPLICATION OF TRUST BUILDING ONLINE: TRANSACTIONAL TRUST AND VIRTUAL COLLABORATION

This section presents a series of posts written by participants in the initial launch of Trust Building Online. Their comments illustrate a sampling of the sixteen behaviors that contribute to the three types of trust composing transactional trust: contractual trust, competence trust, and communication trust.

Virtual Contractual Trust

The posts demonstrated a clear link to the behaviors that support contractual trust. "Managing expectations," a primary behavior of contractual trust, is essential for effective leadership and fundamental to peer relationships. It means

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being clear about what you expect of others. When people learn what is expected of them solely by hearing what they have done wrong, it breaks trust and leads to feelings of betrayal. Trust Building Online illustrated this behavior as people's expectations of others immediately surfaced in their desire for clarity around posting expectations, how frequently to log in and participate, and the scope and breadth of response expectations. The following post from a nurse in regional pediatric hospital illustrates this point: "I agree with all the expectations that were summarized by you [the moderator]. I just want the group to recognize that there are different styles of participation reflecting individual communication styles."

As both the moderator and participants engaged in dialogue, connections with the contractual trust content, and managing expectations became obvious and relevant. Participants were both reading about this aspect of trust and experiencing its place in their work simultaneously.

Another contractual trust behavior is "keeping agreements." When you keep your agreements, you do what you say you are going to do, or you renegotiate if you are unable to keep the initial agreement. Honoring agreements speaks to an individual's dependability in carrying out commitments. This behavior also surfaced as a fundamental issue during the trust-building process. One human resource employee wrote, "Keeping agreements is something that is very important in building trust in a relationship. It's hard to rely or trust someone if they routinely 'forget' to keep an agreement. It's important to be true your word, do what you say you will, and renegotiate if things change."

This type of explicit dialogue around critical trust-related issues links the key elements of the model to everyday concerns and topics. Developing the ability to talk plainly, directly, and honestly about these issues is fundamental to virtual or face-to-face team coherence. When people are able to articulate and then reference their expectations and understandings of boundaries and agreements, they are able to openly communicate as they continue to negotiate more difficult issues. The following extract from a lengthy post talks about the issue of boundaries: "When establishing boundaries, I feel consistency is the key. Boundaries in our unit mean change and clarifying that change is good and encourages others' positive attitudes." Members of this organization experienced a revelation in learning that issues of change, particularly the introduction of new technologies, affected the feeling of trust around boundaries.

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Virtual Communication Trust

Communication is the very fabric of an organization. Some say that an organization is nothing more than a network of communicative structures (Armstrong & Hagel, 2000) and that the coherence of communication is the most important element to organizational effectiveness. Developing communication trust will significantly enhance collaboration and an organization's effectiveness.

An intriguing query posted by a participant who works in a large hospital system illustrates a reflection on a key communication trust behavior: "admitting mistakes." This post opened up a conversation with the participant's online cohort that goes to the very heart of what medical institutions are trying to develop in terms of transparency and the reduction of medical errors:

I am going to reflect on making and admitting mistakes. This weekend I was asked to go to ER to get labs on a little girl that they already poked twice. When I got down there I didn't see any nurses around and I could hear a trauma in the next room so I just decided to do the lab alone. Well I really needed another hand with pulling the syringe back to get the blood and it ended up not working out. My mistake was thinking that my two little hands could do it by themselves and not going to go find someone to help me. . . . Admitting mistakes is risky because people might think you are not as competent as they thought you were, and then they will not trust you with doing things.

The response to this posting resulted in dialogue about how and why admitting mistakes is hard and what the consequences of not doing so are. Participants were able, once the issue was articulated, to go deeper into the topic and then begin to identify issues like this in day-to-day work. To a great extent, the ability to practice these skills online facilitated the eventual integration of these practices in daily work.

One of the most persistent breaches of trust is the practice of malicious gossip. Speaking with good purpose is the communication trust behavior that is the opposite of gossip. One team member said:

I think one of the greatest challenges our group has regarding communication trust is "speaking with good purpose." It appears that it is

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acceptable in our culture to speak without regard for the impact of one's words on others. I'm not talking about a person who is trying to give constructive feedback to another person who is hurt by the feedback. I have heard many examples of people apparently getting enjoyment out of sharing embarrassing or hurtful information (usually quite embellished from original form) about others to others.

This post resulted in a lively conversation both online and off-line that had the overall effect of making all the members of this team more conscious and aware of the type of speech they were using and its effect on the team. Giving and receiving feedback is a behavior that is vital to people in learning organizations. If there is a lack of basic trust in comments on the intentions of others, it is very difficult to learn from feedback. The following post offered by a nurse on a patient care team illustrates a degree of honesty and introspection:

When constructive feedback is given to me, I definitely take it to heart and look at whether I need to change behavior/management of patients. Even when it is given appropriately, I sometimes still internalize it and think of it negatively and I need to work on that. When I am giving constructive feedback, at times I think I sugar-coat things too much and then I'm not sure I really made the point that I wanted to. I need to work more on that also.

Communication trust is vital for effective collaboration. Experience with Trust Building Online indicates that focused opportunities to think and write about these behaviors benefit both individuals and teams.

Virtual Competence Trust

Competence trust is fundamental to the performance of work and the collaboration needed within and between teams. Those who feel valued and esteemed for their competence exhibit a greater degree of competence in their work (Eraut, 1994) and tend also to confer on others their esteem. The development of skills in both identifying and articulating competence trust is critical. When people's skills and abilities are acknowledged, when they are involved in decision making, and when they are supported to learn new skills, competence trust is built. Dialogue in

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Trust Building Online around the behaviors that support competence trust (refer back to Figure 6.2) were rich and varied. One nurse participant said:

Almost every time I work, I ask for the advice or input of my coworkers because I am new at my job. The only time I don't feel comfortable or I feel a little hesitant to ask people is when I work with people who are "know-it-alls." Everybody knows these kinds of people. But in this setting, you cannot be a know-it-all because you will never know it all. I do not feel that I can trust what these people tell me or any nursing advice that they give me. In that case, I tend to research the question myself or try and find someone else to ask.

This comment served to open up a number of conversations related to competence trust. This person's status as a new employee, his effort at gaining new knowledge, and the clear roadblocks to learning posed by others stimulated the team to talk about and take responsibility for their actions in mentoring employees. Similar dynamics could be expected in a virtual environment where people are confronted with one or two individuals who write most of the shared text. Opening up the discussion and recognizing that people new to the space may be intimidated could foster an even greater sense of team coherence.

Another key behavior, and one particularly needed for collaboration, is involving others and seeking their input, as illustrated in the following post:

In every group I have been in, it is important (for me) to be included in the change. It feels horrible when big things change and you weren't part of the discussion process and yet, you are profoundly affected by the change. It is also important to realize that things may not always go the way you would have chosen, but if people can at least feel that they were heard and had a voice in the decision making, I think things tend to be easier to accept.

Competence trust goes to the heart of people's feelings of self-worth and identity. People often measure their sense of personal worth and identity by the competence in their jobs. Most people want and need to be included in decisions that affect their jobs and their lives. They need to know they make a difference and contribute to the overall of the organization.

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TRANSFORMATIVE TRUST

A key assumption of the Trust and Betrayal Model is that if people consciously and consistently practice behaviors that build transactional trust, the level of trust within the organization (or community) and among the individuals within the community transforms. This transformation from a personal perspective involves significant changes in how people interact with one another. People tend to be clear about their convictions, courageous in their willingness to raise issues, and compassionate and understanding toward one another, realizing they are all part of the same community. From an organizational perspective, an increase in trust will result in more transparent, equitable, and synergistic practices throughout the organization. This transformation is a reciprocal process. As the community changes, so do the individuals and therefore the community.

The following excerpt reflects the seeds of this transformative potential. This participant from a small pediatric hospital was reflecting on the query prompt, “When do you feel trustworthy?” She openly shared her deeply held convictions regarding what it feels like to be trustworthy. She also shared deep concerns and feelings of vulnerability regarding the breakdown of flexibility in her work environment:

For me feeling trustworthy is something that comes from within. I know that I am an honest person and that I try hard to respect the feelings of others and to acknowledge when I may have a differing opinion, that the other person’s opinion is also worthy of my respect. I don’t have to agree with them, and at times for safety issues, I may need to point out the reasons that I disagree with them. Hopefully, I handle the situation in a manner that still supports their feelings yet justifies why they may need to “go along” with my plan, or way of thinking. Within our unit I feel a sense of respect from my coworkers and that they also value me as an individual. It makes the environment a comfortable place to practice in. I would however have to agree with previous statements that others have brought up about the change in the flexibility allowed by management. I feel very few if any people ever took advantage of this flexibility. As a whole I feel we have consistently demonstrated a very high level of accountability to our patients and their families. Patient safety, safe coverage was always

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a priority. Now that the policies have become so strict in regards to having someone come in early or cover for you so you can get to school on time to pick your kids up, etc, etc. I think this has significantly harmed our sense of trustworthiness not among each other but from management. I think it also has diminished the strong drive that we felt to help out in times of high census. People were much more willing to make sacrifices in their home/personal schedules to accommodate, but now knowing the same accommodations can't be made for them in their time of need they are less likely to do so. It makes me sad that our environment has been changed in this way!

This post reveals a significant aspect of trust building in a reflective and contemplative virtual environment. Here the participant is voicing a link between her deepest sense of self and the impact that changes in her environment have had on her perceived trustworthiness. This post, and others like it, opened up conversations in the organization between management and employees that led to the development of a transformed community.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The depth and breadth of engagement related to meaningful and sometimes challenging topics increase with participants' comfort and familiarity with the trust content and the asynchronous Web-based tool. Distance learning educators have noted for some time the depth and quality of "postings" and discussions online (Collison, Elbaum, Haavind, & Tinker, 2000). This phenomenon is particularly evident in the Trust Building Online experience. It is clear that people respond naturally to issues of trust and betrayal. Once a safe climate for the exploration of trust is established, authentic dialogue opens up.

The Reina Trust and Betrayal Model and the Trust Building Online tool presented in this chapter provide an example of ways to create structure and form for the process of raising awareness and engaging in introspection, reflection, and dialogue; all are central to achieving sustainable levels of trust. Participants come to understand both trust and trust-related behaviors. More important, they

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the linkages they experience in the workplace between their understanding of trust and the often technical, administrative, and system-driven issues they must respond to. It is through this kind of dialogue that individuals, teams, and organizations are transformed: communication opens up, collaboration depends, people share responsibility and accountability, and business results are achieved.

The Trust Building Online experience affirmed the possibilities for virtual collaboration, specifically for building trust ~~in and~~ within an organization. While the barriers to developing collaborative skills in virtual teams may be significant, Trust Building Online demonstrates that the effort can be advanced by focusing on trust as a foundation using a high-quality, scalable Internet-based learning tool. Once adequate levels of trust have been reached in a team or organization, the possibilities of leveraging groupware and Internet-based technology, supporting collaboration and coordination of work, are enormous.

REMINDERS

- Trust makes organizations work. It drives performance and business results. It also increases communication and collaboration, innovation, and risk taking; raises shared responsibility and accountability; increases employee satisfaction and retention; and enhances effective social networks and team relationships.
- The Reina Trust and Betrayal Model and approach systemically and measurably improve trust with organizations, particularly virtual environments.
- Behaviors that build trust face-to-face also build trust in virtual relationships.
- Transactional trust, a foundational element of the model, has three facets: contractual, communication, and competence trust.
- Trust and relationships are at the heart of engagement and participation in virtual environments.
- The effectiveness of virtual collaboration is contingent not on technology but on relationships based on trust, which the technology supports.
- Trust Building On-Line is a tool designed to build and support trust building in virtual teams. The platform engages participants with content in a meaningful, easy-to-navigate manner and supports conversation among team members about trust and its relationship to business goals. The process mirrors the sequence of learning experienced during face-to-face trust building.

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- Asynchronous communication draws on trust-building behaviors to support communication and collaboration; proximity of team members is not important.
- Trust Building On-Line contributed to significant improvement in the teams' culture.
 - The Reina Organizational Trust Scale pre- and posttest scores demonstrated significant changes in all three types of trust.
 - High participant engagement with content and depth of responses to each other indicates deep reflection and introspection and openness and honesty not typical of face-to-face encounters. It later contributed to enriched face-to-face discussion when they did occur.
 - Blending of structured query with open dialogue and asynchronous feedback at the Discussion Center was a highly effective combination in sustaining participation and enabling performance.
 - Participants' motivation was linked to business needs and desired outcomes; participants took responsibility for their own pacing; business goals influenced the rate that was set.
 - The facilitator drew the team's attention to interpersonal dynamics and process; synthesized themes, categories, and questions; and analyzed and evaluated responses. Participants gained key insights.
 - Participants learned online about different aspects of trust and experienced those behaviors in their workplace simultaneously.
 - The depth and breadth of engagement relative to meaningful dialogue increased with participants' comfort and familiarity with the trust content and this asynchronous tool. Authentic dialogue between participants opens up as a result.
- The Reina Trust and Betrayal Model and the highly scalable Trust Building On-Line tool provided structure for raising awareness and engaging in introspection and dialogue among participants, which may enable them to link their understanding of trust to behavioral results in the workplace.



RELATED ITEM ON THE WEB

- Reina Team Trust Quiz

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