Trust and PR Practice

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Introduction

"Trust is fundamental to functioning in our complex and interdependent society" (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy 2000, p. 549). There are few who would disagree with the above statement. In fact, the concept of trust is a hot topic in the business literature. Most managers realize that trust isn't a soft commodity, but has significant impact on the bottom line goals of any organization. Trust has always been critical to the successful practice of public relations.

The purpose of this paper is to review the academic and trade literature on the concept of trust, in particular as it relates to the effective practice of public relations. This literature shows how essential trust is for any kind of social relationship, and will be used to help provide a working definition of trust. Trust is particularly important to other critical conditions for the successful practice of public relations, namely credibility and satisfactory relationships. Additionally, the paper will present ways in which trust is being measured in many disciplines, including public relations. It will conclude with some advice on how to develop, foster, and maintain trust.

Defining Trust

Trust is something we all can sense, but may have a hard time describing. As Jack Welch (2005), former CEO of General Electric, said "you know it when you feel it" (p. 71). Hosmer (1995) agrees that the importance of trust is widely understood, but laments that there is little agreement on what it means. Attempts at defining trust have been called anything from a "confusing potpurri" (Shapiro 1987, p. 625) to a "conceptual morass" (Barber 1983, p. 1). Watson (2005) questioned whether there could be just one operational definition of trust.

Some have used synonyms to describe trust, such as confidence and dependability. As Mayer, Schoorman and Davis (1995) clearly argue, this is too simplistic and has obfuscated the nature of trust. While these synonyms are related, and may be part of the construct of trust, recent research suggests that trust is multidimensional (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman 1995; Rousseau et al. 1998). As such, it is valuable to break down these dimensions of trust so that one can explore why trust—or its counterpart, suspicion—exists.

One way to explore these dimensions is through a chronological analysis of the trust literature. Along the way, certain variables have been discovered as key elements to the construct of trust. Some of these elements have been abandoned and other reinforced. Watson's paper (2005) also provides a chronological approach to the trust literature and highlights key articles.

Trust as a Personality Trait

Some of the earliest research on trust viewed it as a trait of individuals (Rotter, 1967). This psychological approach viewed trust as a belief, expectancy, or feeling that had deep roots in one's personality or disposition. Rotter (1967) defined trust as "an expectancy held by an individual or a group that the word, promise, verbal or written statement of another individual or group can be relied upon" (p. 651). He tested the "general" trust of individuals toward others to determine the characteristics of trusting individuals using both demographics (position in family, socioeconomic status, religion, etc.) and sociometrics (dependence on others, gullibility, humor, popularity, etc.) Swan et al (1988) viewed trust as an affective trait such as a feeling or an emotion, instead of the personality and cognitive traits used by Rotter. McCallister (1995) viewed the cognitive and affective approaches to trust as compatible dimensions rather than competitive explanations. Cognitive-based trust depends on rational thought based on facts, whereas affect-based trust is based on the emotional connection of the relationship. He found that cognitive-based trust was strongly related to affect-based trust and preceded its development.

Driscoll (1978) divided trust into two components: a general-attitudinal/affective component (such as Rotter's scale) and a specific-situational/cognitive component. Much of the early research on situational trust used game theory, in particular variations of the prisoner's dilemma game. Butler (1986) reported that the situational trust components were better at predicting outcome variables than the general trust components.

Trust in Social Interactions

The sociological approach emphasized the ability to observe and measure trust in social interactions. Deutsch (1958) saw trust as an interpersonal factor that influenced expectations and uncertainty. Zand (1972) wrote that trust is not a feeling but the conscious regulation of one's dependence on another. Zand developed a model that predicted the development of trust through processes of social exchange and mutual risk. As such, trust is the social lubricant that fosters interdependency on others. In these interdependent relationships, trust functions as a way of reducing uncertainty (Holmes & Rempel, 1989; Luhmann, 1979).

Dyadic trust, or trust between two individuals, is the smallest unit where trust is critical to the development of close relationships. Lazerlere and Huston (1980) explored dyadic relationships and placed an emphasis on the need for self-disclosure and benevolent intent to engender trusting relationships. Butler (1986) focused his dyadic trust measures on the concept of reciprocity. He found that one person's trust in another strongly influences the other's trust in that person. Butler found that reciprocal trust was more significant in explaining dyadic trust than personality traits. He also found that a partner's efforts to control the other had a negative impact on trust.

Trust in Organizations

By the 1990s, research on the value and operation of trust in organizational behavior and business management significantly increased. Zand (1972) helped established organizational trust research by introducing concepts such as influence, mutual control, and vulnerability. Zand (1972), Golembiewski and McConkie (1975), and Boss (1978) found that high-trust groups outperformed low-trust groups, while Lendenmann and Rapoport (1980) concluded that trusting dyads are more effective and efficient than distrusting dyads. Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995) scoured the previous literature and identified three critical elements of trust: ability, benevolence, and integrity. As Watson (2005) described these variables: ability reflects the skills, competencies, or characteristics that enable the trustee to have influence in a specific domain and is similar to the concepts of competence or perceived expertise; benevolence is the extent one is believed to be acting in the best interests of others; and integrity is the perception that one adheres to a set of principles acceptable to the trustor.

From an organizational perspective, trust has been defined as a collective judgment of one group that another group will be honest, meet commitments, and will not take advantage of others (Bradach & Eccles, 1989; Cummings & Bromily, 1996). Others view organizational trust as an exchange between individuals within the construct of an organizational context (Barney & Hansen, 1994; Butler, 1991; Zaheer et al., 1998). In reality, it is likely a mix of interpersonal and group interactions. Individuals are the trustors in the organizational context, but the trust they extend may be attributed to a larger entity, such as management or the organization as a whole. For organizations, trust is necessary for cooperation and communication, and the foundation for productive relationships (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy 2000, p. 55). According to Govier (1992), distrust impedes the communication that could overcome it, so that "suspiciousness builds on itself and our negative beliefs about the other tend in the worst case toward immunity to refutation by evidence" (p. 52).

Gabarro (1978) identified four stages to developing trust between individuals in an organizational setting. The first stage involves mutual impression making and orientation. Stage two follows with further learning and exploration. In the third stage, the individuals test the limits of trust and influence, and develop a set of mutual expectations. Finally, in stage four, they have developed the realistic expectations, mutual influence and reciprocal trust necessary for a stable interpersonal relationship. In his interviews with corporation presidents and vice presidents, Gabarro found that integrity, competence and consistency were the most salient conditions of a superior's downward trust in a subordinate, while integrity, motives, and openness were most salient in a subordinate's upward trust in a superior. Similarly, Schindler and Thomas (1993) found the components of integrity, competence, loyalty, and openness as deciding factors in evaluating the trusting relationships among supervisors, subordinates, and peers.

In an international study to measure organizational trust, funded by IABC, Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis, and Cesaria (2000) applied the trust literature to define organizational trust, which they concluded was "The organization's willingness, based on its culture and communication behaviors in relationships and transactions, to be appropriately vulnerable if it believes that another individual, group or organization is competent, open and honest, concerned, reliable, and identified with common goals, norms and values" (p. 8).

Trust is also critical in any exchange relationships and is critical to the marketing and sales functions of companies, as demonstrated in an experiment conducted by Schurr and Ozanne

(1985). At one level, trust has been explored as a necessary antecedent condition for successful exchanges between individuals. One of the most comprehensive studies of trust in exchange relationships is the effort by McKnight, Choudhury, and Kacmar (2002) on Internet purchasing. They used a multilayered and multidimensional instrument that measured: (a) disposition to trust, which is the extent one has a tendency to depend on others across a broad spectrum of situations and persons; (b) trusting beliefs, which is the extent a person is confident that the trustee has three qualities, namely competence, benevolence, and integrity; (c) trusting intentions, which is the extent one is willing to depend on the trustee; and (d) trust-related behaviors, which is a demonstrated dependence on a trustee that makes one vulnerable or increases one's risk.

Dimensions of Trust

From previous research conducted over the last 40 years on trust, there appear to be several elements that explain this complex human construct. First, people bring different levels of trust to the relationship. Some people are more trusting than others, as measured by Rotter's (1971) Interpersonal Trust Scale. Some of this may be cultural, as the Edelman Trust Barometer (2007) has shown higher trust levels in certain countries.

Second, interdependence and the risk of vulnerability are important considerations to trust in interpersonal relationships (Fischman, 2003). Morrow et al. (2004) described trust as "one's overall belief that another individual, group or organization will not act to exploit one's vulnerabilities" (p. 50). And Rousseau et al. (1988) describe trust as the willingness to accept this vulnerability "based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another" (p. 35). So, as Spicer (2007) puts it, trust is born of risk. Dependent stakeholders, where the organization has much power and the stakeholder has little power in the relationship, are in a "vulnerable position of having to trust the organization in times when a strategic decision is made that might affect their well-being" (Spicer, 2007, p. 36). Cook et al. (2005) argue that a series of risk taking behaviors between groups is essential to building trust relationships. They hypothesize that a typical trust-building process begins with people realizing they can potentially gain from a social exchange, and risking a little to test the benefits of the exchange. As the benefit is realized, they risk a little more and so on until a trusting relationship is built.

To overcome the anxiety created by putting ourselves in a vulnerable position, we cognitively, and affectively, evaluate the trustee on having certain qualities. This is the third dimension of trust, namely the characteristics of a trustworthy individual, group, or entity. The following characteristics of trustworthiness have been measured in previous research: benevolence, competence, honesty, integrity, reliability, predictability, good judgment, concerned, and openness (Ellison & Firestone, 1974; Butler & Cantrell, 1984; Mishra, 1996; McKnight, Choudhury, and Kacmar, 2002).

The fourth dimension is the outcome of trust. Trust can also be considered as a behavioral action, not just a cognitive or affective state. Trust should lead to trusting intentions and trusting behavior. Behavior such as consumer loyalty, employee satisfaction and retention, community accommodations are just a few examples that would demonstrate trust in an organization.

The Definition

By incorporating the above dimensions, and borrowing heavily from the definition developed by Tschannen-Moran & Hoy (2000), the following provides a multidimensional definition of trust:

> *Trust is one party's willingness—shown by intention and behavior—to be vulnerable to another party based on confidence developed cognitively and affectively that the latter party is (a) benevolent, (b) reliable, (c) competent, (d) honest, and (e) open.*

Trust and Public Relations
The need for trust in the practice of public relations is imperative on two levels. First, to satisfy the role of being messengers for organizations, public relations practitioners must have credibility. Second, trust is critical to public relation's primary purpose of establishing and maintaining relationships with key stakeholders on whom the success of the organization depends.

Trust and Credibility
As most are aware, the practice of public relations has its roots in journalism, with Ivy Lee (a former journalist) establishing some of the earliest principles for the practice. This early model of public relations, which Jim Grunig labeled the publicity/public information stage, emphasizes delivering a message to key audiences through mass media. The placement of messages is the primary end and good media relations the primary means. The job of public relations is defined as telling the client's story, often in a positive light. The role of trust in this model is critical to gaining credibility with the media and, ultimately, the audiences they reach.

In this sense, credibility is the confidence that receivers have in the accuracy and truthfulness of the message. According to John Budd (2000), to be credible is to be believed. Callison (2001) puts it in similar terms, "Credibility refers to the judgments made by a message recipient concerning the believability of a communicator" (p. 220). Credibility is not the same thing as trust, but it is closely related. Stacks and Watson (2007) claim "credibility is dependent on the trust between the organization and its publics, which is highly correlated with both reputation and relationship" (p. 69).

Unfortunately, research on the credibility of public relations practitioners has not been very encouraging. The National Credibility Index, underwritten by the PRSA Foundation, with a substantial grant from the Rockefeller Foundation and published in 1999 after five years of interviewing more than 2,500 people, showed that PR specialists ranked near the bottom of public figures. Using an experimental design, Callison (2001) found that PR professionals and the organizations they represent are perceived as less credible than unidentified sources. This indicates that further understanding and application of measures that increase trust and credibility are imperative to improve the practice

Like trust, source credibility is recognized as a complex phenomenon dependent on multiple factors. Aristotle identified three qualities of a credible source: Ethos (character and integrity), Logos (expertise and competence) and Pathos (likeability or charisma). Modern research has found empirical support for these dimensions. Early research put more emphasis on the competence of the source. Anderson (1971) cited status, reliability, and expertness as the dimensions most critical to establishing credibility. Other early studies added trustworthiness to expertise as an important quality of credible sources (Hovland and Weiss 1951; Dholakia and Sternthal 1977; and Ohanian 1990). Ohanian (1990) concluded that the literature identifies the same three dimensions of source credibility espoused by Aristotle centuries ago: expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness.

In other research, competence and trustworthiness have emerged as the two most reliable and valid dimensions of credibility (O'Keefe, 1990). In fact, Priester and Petty (1995) found that trustworthiness and honesty ranked as greater criteria for message accuracy over a source's knowledge, expertise, experience, sincerity, unbiased nature, likeability, and motivation. As Callison (2001) explained, studies on the impact of trustworthiness on credibility have focused on whether the communicators are telling the truth or being honest. In the context of credibility, trustworthiness has mostly been limited to the dimensions of competence and integrity. More research should be conducted to measure the impact of other trust factors—such as benevolence, openness, and reliability—have on credibility.

If credibility is preceded by trust, then efforts to increase trust would also benefit source credibility of practitioners and the organizations they serve. However, trust has also been tied to the deeper function of building relationships, where communication and credibility are also essential.

Trust in Relationships

While the practice of public relations still depends on credibility for good media relations and telling the client's story through mediated channels, these are seen as means to a greater end; that of creating and sustaining mutually-beneficial relationships with the key stakeholders on whom the organizations' success depends. In this sense, trust is at the heart of relationships. And the trust required for satisfactory relationships goes beyond credibility. As Arthur Page declared, building a durable relationship with the public is 90 percent doing and 10 percent talking about it. There is no question that trust is essential to "achieving effective relationships with many different audiences or publics such as employees, members, customers, local communities, shareholders, and other institutions, and with society at large" (PRSA, Official Statement).

As the practice of public relations becomes more focused on the outcomes of the practice and not solely on the output of messages, the contribution of building, maintaining, and sustaining mutually-beneficial relationships that help organizations achieve their goals has evolved as a bottom-line function for public relations (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997). Bruning and Ledingham (2000) stated that, "Communication, then, becomes a vehicle that organizations should use to initiate, develop, maintain, and repair mutually productive organization-public relationships" (p.159). Additionally, they have reported that the organization-public relationship (OPR) indicators of "trust, openness, involvement, investment, and commitment impact the ways in which organization-public relationships are initiated, developed, and maintained, and ultimately can engender loyalty toward the organization among key publics" (p. 162). In particular, regression analysis showed that the dimension of trust is the strongest predictor of consumer satisfaction.

Using the principles found in the OPR literature, Hon and Grunig (1999) developed an instrument to measure relationships using the variables of trust, satisfaction, commitment, control mutuality, and shared values. They identified trust as an essential component of satisfactory relationships between organizations and their stakeholders and defined it as "one party's level of confidence in and willingness to open oneself to the other party" (p. 2). They then identified three dimensions to trust: integrity, or the belief that an organization is fair and just; dependability, or the belief that an organization will do what it says it will do; and competence, or the belief that the organization has the ability to do what it says it will do.

StrategyOne, a specialty research agency owned by Daniel J. Edelman, Inc., has applied the relationship index developed by Hon and Grunig. Testing relationships using this index has helped management recognize the potential for these relationships to impact the business goals. In particular, "a poor trust score clearly has the potential to impact the bottom line by depressing investor confidence, inhibiting goodwill, weakening alliances with third parties or business partners, allowing for competitive incursions, and possibly removing the willingness of others to give the organization a fair hearing in a time of crisis" (Scott, 2007, p. 271). In analyzing trust scores from the relationship index among several businesses, StrategyOne has found the overall score for this dimension is elevated by the competence element and depressed by the integrity and dependability elements. "Qualitative questioning around respondents' reasons for giving these scores have revealed that large corporations—because of their huge resources—are usually expected to be able to deliver on their goals (competence). However, they are not as often trusted to be telling the truth about what those goals are (integrity), or to necessarily have the willingness to diver on them (dependability) (p. 271). She then concluded that without "the foundational element of trust, there are limits to how healthy perceptions of satisfaction, commitment, control mutuality, and shared values can become" (p. 272).

Measuring Trust

As previously noted, trust has been measured along all the dimensions mentioned in this paper. Rotter (1967) developed the Interpersonal Trust Scale which measured a person's disposition to trust others, which some have called general trust. Rotter's scale was replicated in many studies, most of which used game theory to test trust in specific relations and situations. Lazerlere & Huston (1980) developed a Dyadic Trust Scale that used a seven-point Likert scale to test perceptions of benevolence, honesty, sincerity, dependency, and fairness in relationships.

To measure the relationship between individuals and groups found in organizational settings, Cummings and Bromily (1996) developed the Organizational Trust Inventory (OTI). The instrument tested whether individuals trusted larger entities, such as an organization, by asking whether people in the organization behave in accordance with commitments, are honest in the negotiations leading to the commitment, and don't try to take advantage of others, even if the opportunity is available. Butler (1991) developed a Conditions of Trust Inventory (CTI) to measure the conditions that must exist to activate and sustain trust. Using interviews and surveys, Butler derived an instrument with 10 reliable and valid conditions: availability, competence, consistency, fairness, integrity, loyalty (similar to benevolence in other studies), openness, overall trust, promise fulfillment, and receptivity.

It has been measured at the organizational level (Shockley-Zalabak et al., 2000) and at the consumer level leading to exchange relationships such as purchasing over the Internet (McKnight et al., 2002). It has been measured as an essential component to credibility (Callister, 2002) and to satisfactory relationships (Bruning & Leddingham. 2000; Hon & Grunig, 1999). Each of these instruments can be used or modified to help an organization measure the trust it has with key stakeholders. In particular, Paine (2003) has modified the relationship-related trust indicators into an instrument for measuring trust in organizations.

Each year there are several studies measuring the current state of trust in our society. The Golin Harris Trust survey, conducted every few years, has shown that there is still a trust deficit in our society, but that as corporate citizenship improves so does consumer and employee trust (GolinHarris 2002, 2005). The Edelman Trust Barometer, conducted each year since 2001, shows that people don't trust large institutions as much as they trust "a person like yourself." Trust in media and business moved up from 2006 to 2007, while trust in government continued to decline. The most trusted institutions are non-governmental organizations (NGOs), while academics trust of corporations has improved slightly from 2005 to 2006, but that trust in government continues to decline. Of particular concern is the evidence that PR practitioners have low levels of trust by others. In the Trust Barometer, public relations executives are below 30% on the credibility scale, but still higher than entertainers (26%) and bloggers (16%).

Creating, Maintaining, and Increasing Trust

The overwhelming conclusion of the research on trust is that it is something that you need and can't afford to lose. If anything, it is something you hope can be cultivated even further. The good news and the bad news is that trust is not a permanent condition. Once you have gained trust, you can still lose it. But, if you have lost trust you can also regain it.

There is no question that trust is a commodity that all organizations need in order to function more effectively and efficiently. Without trust, organizations are bogged down by suspicion, anger, cynicism and disappointment (Golin, 2004). In his book *The Speed of Trust*, Stephen R. Covey (2006) identifies the value of trust as increasing the speed of business and reducing its cost. When trust goes up, speed goes up and costs go down. When trust goes down, speed goes down and costs go up. A 2002 Watson Wyatt study showed that return to shareholders in high-trust corporations is three times higher than the return in low-trust corporations (as reported in Covey, 2006).

Meanwhile, "mistrust doubles the cost of doing business" (Whitney, 1994). Consider the cost of regulation, which is often the outcome of suspicion by the public and government that corporations can't be trusted to act in the best interests of society. Sarbanes-Oxley, which by most evaluations is a cumbersome and imperfect regulation, is costing companies enormous resources in time and expertise to comply. It has been estimated that implementing just one section of the act is costing corporations $35 billion.

Golin (2004) has distinguished several benefits of being trustworthy: improved employee retention and recruitment, a more durable stock price, more confidence by investors, enhanced customer relationships and loyalty, opportunities for partnering with others, increased risk taking and innovation, and stronger brands. He believes that trust is both an end and a process. It is something you earn over time, and when you have established a reputation of being trusted—consistently making deposits of good works into, what he calls, the "trust bank"—it can help in times of crisis and criticism. However, the trust bank vaults are not limitless, and the withdrawals often come with penalties that can overcome years of deposits.

The Golin Harris trust survey (2002) asked how CEOs and companies maintain and rebuild trust. This is what they found:

What can a CEO do to maintain trust?

- Assume responsibility and accountability (60%)
- Personally and visibly show care and concern for customers (60%)
- Stick to a code of business ethics no matter what (58%)
- Communicate openly and frequently with stakeholders (56%)
- Handle crises better, more openly, and more directly (51%)

How can companies rebuild trust?

- Be open and honest in business practices (94%)
- Communicate more clearly, effectively, and straightforwardly (93%)
- Visibly demonstrate concern and consideration for employees (83%)
- Make the CEO a spokesperson beyond reproach (50%)
- Be involved with the community (50%)

Golin (2004) also recommends identifying where the organization is vulnerable with trust issues and fixing them before they become a problem, being more personal with others and applying the "human touch," acting with more humility and not getting caught in the traps of arrogance that ensnared companies such as Enron, and putting trust above profits when making business decisions.

Other CEOs and business leaders have espoused the virtues and benefits of trust. Perhaps the best source to read of their collective wisdom regarding this subject is in a book published by the Arthur W. Page Society entitled *Building Trust*. CEOs from many of the top 500 corporations relate how valuable trust is to their operations, and how they create it and foster it within their companies. The Page Principles are often used as benchmarks for improving trust. In explaining the Page Principles, Edward Block, former senior vice president of AT&T responsible for public relations, emphasized Page's first principle, "Tell the Truth." He believes the greatest risk is the damage done by obscuring, denying, or ignoring the truth. Spin does not help, because when statements don't pass the "'smell test,' credibility is the immediate casualty" (p. 6). John Rowe, Chairman and CEO of Exelon Corporation, stressed his commitment to delivering news to stakeholders—good or bad—in a timely and forthright fashion. He knows that this must be done to maintain integrity. While John W. Rowe, Chairman and CEO of Aetna, recommends the following principles for building trust with external constituencies: Listen, look for common ground, be transparent, and be willing to change.

These CEOs understand the pressures to perform on other indicators, namely financial, but still express the need for a long-term approach that safeguards the integrity, trust, and reputation of the corporation. One CEO expressed his opinion that keeping all stakeholders in balance is key to maintaining public trust. "Perhaps the most frequent cause of imbalance among stakeholders priorities has been the exclusive focus on investors and the financial community to the neglect of other stakeholders." (p. 203) He recommends taking the long view to"Taking the long view makes it easier to satisfy all stakeholders' needs and expectations." (204).

Frederic Poses, chairman and CEO of American Standard Companies, believes that the emphasis on numbers puts an artificial pressure on executives and other senior management to be perfect rather than human. "They tend to forget that they, too, make mistakes like the rest of us. The important thing is not that you make a mistake but how you deal with it" (p. 47). In truly great companies, CEOs deal with reality and acknowledge they make mistakes, accept responsibility for disappointing results and rally their people to produce better results.

To explain the rise of trust in corporations in the latest Edelman (2007) survey, one correlation was drawn to certain measures that ensure more accountability and transparency in reporting financial and social responsibility indicators, such as Sarbanes-Oxley.

There appears to be growing evidence that openness and transparency contributes to an increased sense of trust. The idea of organizational transparency is mentioned several times in the 2007 Edelman Trust Barometer. Pam Talbot implies that customers will seek mutual benefits from companies, and that "mutual benefits imply trust, which in turn implies transparency and honesty" (p. 6). Richard Edelman said that "continuous, transparent—and even passionate—communications is central" to business success in today's new environment (p. 2). Chris Deri advises nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to also be more transparent, because their entire value is based on trust: "they need to be laser-focused on the trust they earn and on their transparency about their own successes and failures" (p. 12). Nancy Turett counsels healthcare organizations to embrace transparency, and concludes with the following insight: "openness trumps an image of perfection" (p. 25). Employees also need their organizations to be transparent to them, according to Gary Grates: "today's management must still hold true to some basic tenets: authentic communication, relationship-building methods, and a communication style that affords open, transparent, ongoing discussion, which allows people to drive business strategy, and, most importantly, to voice opinions and suggestions that ultimately affect performance and business outcomes" (p. 11). Grate's opinion is supported by a survey of 25,000 employees by Towers Perrin showing that employees prefer "communication that is an open and honest exchange of information—both the good and bad—and materials that are clear and understandable (Strategist 2005, p. 4).

Rawlins (2007) recently found strong positive correlations between transparency and trust among employees of a large healthcare organization. In particular, he found that each dimension of transparency contributed to increased trust, namely sharing substantial information, allowing stakeholders to participate in information decisions, providing information that holds the organization accountable, and being open. Regression analysis found that sharing substantial information that holds an organization accountable contributed the most to trusting intentions. Rawlins also found that the employee perceptions of organizational integrity and goodwill explained a person's willingness to be vulnerable more than did perceptions of organizational competence.

Summary
Trust is critical to the functioning of our society at all levels—interpersonal, small group, organizational, and societal—and is especially central to the practice of public relations. You can't have credibility without it. And, trust appears to be the most central component to satisfactory relationships. If the purpose of public relations is to establish and maintain relationships with key stakeholders through communication and other efforts, then public relations is essentially in the trust-making business.

To gain this trust, one must trust others, because trust is reciprocal. One must also be trustworthy, which seems to be best measured by whether one is perceived as having competence, integrity, goodwill, reliability, and is open. Caring about the needs of others, telling the truth, and being dependable all increase trustworthiness. Trying to exert influence or pressure on others for the sake of meeting self-serving interests appears to damage trust.

In the end, trust is a bottom-line indicator that can improve more than the financial status of an organization, but it requires years of consistent actions. It can and should be measured and included as a critical indicator on the dashboard for any organization concerned about relationships and reputation.

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Annotated Bibliography of Suggested Readings

Arthur W. Page Society (2004). *Building Trust: Leading CEOs speak out: How they create it, strengthen it, and sustain it.* New York: Arthur W. Page Society.

This book contains the perceptions of trust from 23 of the nation's leading CEOs. The Page Principles are used as the foundational philosophy for building trust. Provides anecdotal evidence and testimony of the value of trust and the efforts required to build it. Nearly every type of industry is covered, and the book provides sound advice about how to manage trust with stakeholders while pursuing business objectives.

Bartolomé, F. (1989). Nobody trusts the boss completely—Now what? *Harvard Business Review, 67,* 135-142.

This article is useful for anyone concerned about the difficulties of trust in hierarchical relationships. Although the article focuses on the difficulties top management has with maintaining trusting relationships with subordinates, much of the advice provided here is relevant to any situation where more power and control lies with one particular group. Several short scenarios and cases are presented with advice to follow. In particular, Bartolomé recommends using communication to keep others informed, showing support, respecting others, being fair, competent, and predictable as ways of enhancing trust.

Butler, J. K. (1991). Towards understanding and measuring conditions of trust: Evolution of a conditions of trust inventory. *Journal of Management, 17,* 643-663.

Building off his previous work on measuring trust, Butler provides a good summary of trust measurement literature to develop 10 trust conditions. After conducting interviews with 84 managers, Butler identified the 10 conditions as: availability, competence, consistency, discreetness, fairness, integrity, loyalty, openness, promise fulfillment, and receptivity. Factor analysis and construct validation were conducted, and all were found to be valid conditions except discreetness. He called his instrument the Conditions of Trust Inventory (CTI). The article provides some good background on previous research on trust, but is primarily focused on testing the validity of a measurement instrument. The study does not include the statements that were used to measure the conditions.

Covey, S. M. R. (2006). *The speed of trust.* New York: Free Press.

A good management book that stresses the value of trust in the context of business. Particular emphasis is placed on how trust increases the speed and efficiency of business practices. Like many management self-help books, it provides several models and plans for improving trust. There are five waves of trust: self trust, relationship trust, organizational trust, market trust, and societal trust. And there are four cores of credibility: integrity, intent, capabilities, and results. Finally, there are 13 behaviors: talk straight, demonstrate respect, create transparency, right wrongs, show loyalty, deliver results, get better, confront reality, clarify expectations, practice accountability, listen first, keep commitments, and extend trust. It's an easy read with an entertaining style similar to his father's famous *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*.

Cummings, L. L., & Bromily, P. (1996). The Organizational Trust Inventory (OTI): Development and validation. In R. Kramer & T. Tyler (Eds.), *Trust in organizations* (pp. 302-330). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

This chapter follows the process the authors took to test the validity of the OTI. The authors define trust as an the beliefs of an individual or collective group that another individual or group (a) makes good-faith efforts to behave in accordance with any commitments both explicit or implicit, (b) is honest in whatever negotiations preceded such commitments, and (c) does not take excessive advantage of another even when the opportunity is available. They then created a matrix with these dimensions crossed against three degrees of trust, namely trust as an affective state, as a cognition, and as an intended behavior. Statistical analysis provides evidence of validity for the instrument, and the OTI long form and short form questionnaires are provided in the appendix.

Edelman Public Relations (2007). *2007 Annual Edelman Trust Barometer.*

An annual survey of trust. In 2007, 3.100 people in 18 countries were surveyed. The barometer provides a good index of how trust has changed over time and how it differs across borders. It evaluates trust in institutions (showing an improvement in corporations in 2007), sources (most trusted is "a person like yourself," the CEO, and characteristics of trust. Lots of graphics and analysis from Edelman experts in areas such as employee, global, and healthcare communications. Free and downloadable from the Edelman Website.

Frost, T., Stimpson, D. V., & Maughan, M. R. (1978). Some correlates of trust. *Journal of Psychology, 99*, 103-108.

` This study provides a good look at the role of power in trusting relationships. After studying 7 interpersonal groups, the authors concluded that trusted persons is someone who is highly influential, has an internal locus of control, a low need to control others, high self-esteem, and is open to being influenced by others.

Golin, A. (2004). *Trust or Consequences: Build trust today or lose your market tomorrow.* New York: AMACOM.

An influential book that relates the concept of trust directly to the practice of PR. Golin explains his concept of the trust bank, makes arguments about the bottom-line value of trust, and provides many principles and examples of how to establish, maintain, and restore trust. In particular, Golin stresses the need for honesty, humility, and balanced communication. His 10 commandments of organizational trust include: (1) focus on building trust first and restoring it second, (2) hold leadership accountable for trust-building efforts, (3) make trust bank deposits even if you're the most ethical company in the world, (4) do the right thing because it's the right thing to do, (5) practice humility even when you have plenty to brag about, (6) base your actions on principles as much as on results, (7) avoid shortcuts, (8) be patient, (9) take action as an individual (not just as an organization), and (10) be willing to give rather than receive when appropriate.

Kramer, R. & Tyler, T. (Eds.) (1996). *Trust in organizations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

This edited book contains summaries of trust research in organizational settings by many of the best-known researchers (see Cummings & Bromily above). From interpersonal trust between management and subordinates, to exchange trust between business and consumers, this book explores all of the dimensions of trust at the organizational level.

Mayer, R. C., Davis, J. H., & Schoorman, F. D. (1995). An integrative model of organizational trust. *Academic Management Review, 20,* 709-734.

Another review of the trust literature to develop a comprehensive model of trust. Does a good job distinguishing trust from similar concepts such as cooperation, confidence, and predictability. To achieve their model, the authors define trust, review the characteristics of the trustor and trustee, and the factors contributing to trustworthiness. The model provided is linear, beginning with the trustor perceiving trustworthiness in the trustee based on three conditions—ability, integrity, and benevolence—then extending trust while recognizing risk, and assessing the benefits of the trusting relationship as feedback that enhances the perceived trustworthiness of the trustee. In 2007 they reviewed the literature that emerged after introducing their model and recognized the possible influence of other variables such as time dimension, risk and control systems, reciprocity, willingness to be vulnerable, affective or emotional-related trust, violation and distrust, and the aspects of international and cross-cultural implications. This update can be found at: Schoorman, D. F., Mayer, R. C., & Davis, J. H. (2007). An integrative model of organizational trust: Past, present and future. *Academy of Management Review, 32,* 344-354.

McKnight, D. H., Choudhury, V., & Kacmar, C. (2002). Developing and validating trust measures for e-commerce: An integrative typology. *Information Systems Research, 13,* 334-361.

While the measurement instrument developed in this article is primarily focused on exchange relationships (purchasing) over the Internet, the research conducted here has implications well beyond that narrow focus. The questions used in the instrument (which are provided in the article) can be easily adapted to measure trust in other situations and conditions. The instrument measures the general disposition to trust, trust in the institution, trusting beliefs for the particular situation or condition, and trusting intentions. The study provides an excellent review of previous trust research to develop its multidisciplinary, multidimensional, and multilevel model of trust.

Paine, K. (2003). *Guidelines for Measuring Trust in Organizations.* Retrieved January 15, 2007, from the Institute for Public Relations Website: http://www.instituteforpr.org/ipr_info/guidelines_measuring_trust/
This paper, available free from the IPR Website, identifies ways of measuring trust using the Hon & Grunig relationship measurement index. Trust is defined within the relationship concept and includes the dimensions of competence, integrity, dependability/reliability, openness and honesty, vulnerability, concern, identification (common goals, norms, beliefs), control mutuality, satisfaction, and commitment. The type of relationship (either exchange or communal) is also expected to impact the perceptions of trust. Methodology, survey questions, and key questions organizations should ask themselves when measuring trust are provided.

Rotter, J. B. (1980). Interpersonal trust, trustworthiness, and gullibility. *American Psychologist, 35*, 1-7.
Rotter has to be included on any bibliography of trust because of his attempts to measure the trusting beliefs of individuals, referred to as general trust, spawned a whole body of literature on measuring trust. Using his Interpersonal Trust Scale, Rotter has focused on measuring levels of trust in individuals. In this article he provides evidence that trusting individuals are likely to be more trustworthy, happy, and to be honest in their dealings with others. The extreme of trusting behavior, gullibility (which he defines as believing communications in the absence of clear or strong reasons for believing), could lead to harmful results of extending too much risk and vulnerability. However, Rotter reports that research shows that high trusters aren't more likely to be fooled than low trusters.

Rousseau, D., Sitkin, S. B., Burt, R., & Camerer, C. (1998). Not so different after all: A cross-discipline view of trust. *Academy of Management Review, 23*, 393-404.
As the introductory article to a special edition on trust of the *Academy of Management Review* (all of which is worth reading), the authors provide an excellent multidisciplinary overview of the definition of trust, the dynamic nature of trust, the causes and effects of trust, the levels of analysis of trust research, and different levels of trust.

Shockley-Zalabak, P., Ellis, K., and Cesaria, R. (2000, August). IABC Research Foundation unveils new study on trust. *Communication World*, 7-9.
This article provides some highlights from their IABC Research Foundation funded study on measuring organizational trust. Their multidimensional trust model included the concepts of competence, openness and honesty, concern for employees, reliability, and identification. The last variable, identification was defined as the extent to which we hold common goals, norms, values and beliefs. The model tested shoed strong relationships among the five dimensions and trust, job satisfaction, and perceived organizational effectiveness. The full report is available (for a price) from IABC.

Tschannen-Moran, M. &Hoy, W. K. (2000). A multidisciplinary analysis of the nature, meaning, and measurement of trust. *Review of Educational Research, 70*(4), 547-593.
The focus of this article is the role of trust in school-related relationships. However, it provides perhaps the most comprehensive review of the trust literature from several disciplines, including psychology, sociology, communication, and management. The article provides a very useful chart of the trust dimensions researched by these disciplines. From this, the authors distill trust into the following facets: willingness to risk vulnerability, confidence, benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness. Although lengthy, the article provides an excellent summary of trust research as it relates to organizational processes such as communication, collaboration, climate, organizational citizenship, collective efficacy, achievement, and effectiveness.

Watson, M. L. (2005). *Can there be just one trust? A cross-disciplinary identification of trust definitions and measurement.* Paper submitted for the 2004 Ketchum Excellence in Public Relations Research Award, Institute for Public Relations.
A very fine and comprehensive paper on the meaning of trust and its historical development. Watson covers many of the seminal studies on the concept of trust and provides some of the ways others have attempted to measure it. A good primer to the

research on trust. She draws the conclusion that there is no single definition or way of measuring trust.

Zand, D. E. (1972). Trust and managerial problem solving. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 17,* 229-239.

This is an influential and oft-cited article, particularly in the management literature. Zand provides a model of trust and then tests the effectiveness of trust within managerial relationships. The model conceptualizes trust as a transformation from trusting beliefs to trusting behavior through information, influence, and control. One who does not trust another will conceal or distort information, resist attempts of others to exert influence, and minimize the amount of dependence on others. The experiment found that managers that were placed in a situation where there was high trust were much more effective and efficient at solving a difficult policy problem than those in low trust situations.