Trust, Trust Development, and Trust Repair

Book: *The handbook of conflict resolution: Theory and practice*

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In this chapter of <u>The Handbook of Conflict Resolution: Theory & Practice</u> (Deutsch, M. & Coleman, P.T., 2000), Lewicki & Wiethoff look at the relationship between trust and conflict in relationships. As relationships are based on differing levels of trust, when that trust breaks down, conflict may arise between the parties involved. This summary looks at their basic description of trust and key points related to trust. The authors discuss two types of trust, which are related to professional and interpersonal relationships, and at steps to take to try and rebuild trust once it has been broken.

Lewicki & Wiethoff (2000) described trust as "an individual's belief in, and willingness to act on the basis of, the words, actions, and decisions of another" (p. 87). An individual's ability to trust another is based on one of three elements, the first of which is rooted in one's personality--the belief system developed through one's life experiences related to trust. Second, it may be based on a set of rules and norms established by institutions/society. Third, trust may be based on experiences within a given relationship.

Trust comes into play in two main areas: professional and personal. Professional relationships are normally task-oriented and aimed at achieving objectives, while personal relationships deal more in the social/emotional realm and focus on the relationship itself.

Types of Trust
Lewicki & Wiethoff further break trust into two types: "calculus-based trust" (CBT) and "identification-based trust" (IBT). In CBT, which is most often related to the workplace, people tend to operate on a reward/punishment system. The value in completing a task or goal is not seen as personal satisfaction, but rather because of consequences of doing so. People may also perform in order to protect their reputations. In CBT, trust is built very slowly, one step at a time. However, if one mistake happens, it is possible for an individual to slip back several steps at once and need to begin to rebuild the trust again.

In contrast, "identification-based trust" (IBT) is seen more in the personal arena, although it may come into play to some degree in professional relationships. In IBT, parties come to know and understand the expectations of one another. In time, they develop the ability to know what one another would want in a given situation and take the initiative of acting for each other in certain situations. Often, these individuals share common values and have an outlook based on mutual benefit, and over time are able to develop a collective identity. It is as though both parties have learned a dance, and are able to lead and follow as necessary, trusting one another along the way. If this type of relationship can develop in the workplace, it will be much easier for parties to work together as a team, understanding the expectations, goals, and needs of one another.

Lewicki & Wiethoff point out that trust and distrust are two very different concepts. In trust, one has positive expectations regarding the other's actions, thereby implying a belief in another person. Conversely, distrust is also a confident expectation, however, one that is negative and implies fear of the other.

Relationships do not happen overnight, but rather, over time based on interactions between the parties involved. Again, in work relationships, trust tends to be CBT, but has the possibility of developing some IBT over time. And, while personal relationships tend to be IBT, there may be times that parties need to develop CBT in order to accomplish goals. The ability to trust in a relationship is based on a person's disposition to trust, experience, others' reputations, and actual experience within a relationship. As parties work together, these four items come into play and, as experience builds, the amount of trust or distrust in a relationship can shift.

Relationships are multifaceted; therefore, elements of trust and distrust can exist in all relationships. Based on CBT and IBT, there are four possible positions individuals may take:

1. CBT (calculus-based trust) has its foundation in impersonal interactions, in which a person shows a high positive expectation regarding others.
2. CBD (calculus-based distrust) also has its foundation in impersonal interactions, but holds high negative expectations regarding others.
3. IBT (identification-based trust) is grounded in perceived compatibility, common goals, and positive attachment to another, and is characterized by a high degree of confidence in positive expectations regarding others.
4. IBD (identification-based distrust) is grounded in perceived incompatibility, dissimilar goals, and negative emotional attachment to another and is characterized by a high confidence in negative expectations regarding others.

Managing Trust and Distrust in Conflict Situations
Levels of trust/distrust will be adjusted based on interactions between parties. During times of conflict, however, it is important to take steps to increase trust and decrease distrust.

In building CBT it is important for parties to do the following:

- behave consistently over time and situations
- work to meet deadlines
- follow through on promises made

This can be accomplished by both parties explicitly explaining their expectations, agreeing up-front to the steps necessary to complete tasks, outlining consequences of not meeting expectations, and having procedures in place to evaluate performance. In addition, alternative ways to have needs met should be discussed and communication should remain clear regarding how performance is viewed by others. Cultural diversity issues may need to be discussed and clarified. For example, if people from dissimilar cultures hold differing beliefs regarding work habits, it is important for those expectations to be discussed and agreed upon up-front.

In order to build IBT it is important for persons to set aside time to get to know one another, thereby discovering common interests, personal values, perceptions, motivation, objectives and goals. They may even discover that they react similarly in certain situations. A strong emotion component is present in IBT, and will help to establish a secure base from which to build. It is important that the parties develop enough CBT to create a base of comfort in which each person is able to state their expectations of one another, negotiate expected behaviors, and even openly acknowledge their areas of mutual distrust. In some situations, it may be necessary for people to maintain a certain level of distrust, especially in situations which could cause harm to oneself or others, or when two parties do not know one another very well.

What Happens if Trust is Violated?
When parties are unable to conform to set expectations, either trust or distrust is violated, and what happens depends upon the type of relationship that has been built. Reactions may range from mild annoyance at the unmet expectation to angry or upset feelings as one party may feel a direct challenge to their values and beliefs. This can be corrected by the parties discussing the violation and working together to solve the problem. If the violation continues, CBT may turn to CBD, thus increasing the distrust on the part of one or both parties. In a professional situation, this could increase work conflict.

IBT relationships involve a high level of emotional investment. If IBT is violated, the situation must be addressed in order for a high IBT relationship to continue. If the parties are unable or unwilling to communicate about the problem, the relationship will probably end. This is not always the case in a work situation, however, where tension may continue to build as parties try to work around one another. In order to restore IBT, it is

important for both parties to talk about the perceived trust violation in order to clarify any miscommunications. Further, it is important for both parties to reaffirm their commitment to working together and finding strategies to avoid future misunderstandings. IBT relationships hit at the core of people's values and conflict must be resolved in order to avoid developing distrust as in IBD.

Implications for Managing Conflict Effectively

1. "*The existence of trust between individuals makes conflict resolution easier and more effective.* The levels of trust or distrust in a relationship, therefore, definitively shape emergent conflict dynamics."
2. "*Trust is often the first casualty in conflict.*" When conflict occurs, the foundation of trust that has been built breaks down and parties may become defensive, thereby creating a cycle of distrust and decrease in actions to rebuild said trust.
3. "*Creating trust in a relationship is initially a matter of building calculus-based trust (CBT).*"Over time, as each person acts with consistency and reliability, IBT may slowly be rebuilt as well.
4. "*Relationships can be further strengthened if the parties are able to build identification-based trust (IBT).*" While it is important for parties to develop a level of trust in which to work (CBT), it is more important for parties to work together to build common goals and values, thereby increasing their investment in one another and in finding ways to resolve conflict (IBT).
5. "*Relationships characterized by calculus-based or identification-based distrust are likely to be conflict laden, and eruption of conflict within that relationship is likely to feed and encourage further distrust...*Once such negative expectations are created, actions by the other become negative self-fulfilling prophecies...which often lead the conflict into greater scope, intensity, and even intractability."
6. "*. . . Most relationships are not purely trust and distrust but contain elements of both.*" These relationships are characterized by ambivalence and depend upon how individuals internally deal with conflict and outwardly handle conflict with others. This is more common in relationships than to see high trust or distrust.
7. "*Finally, it is possible to repair trust...*Effective trust repair is often a key part of effective conflict resolution" (p. 101-103).

Repairing trust takes time because parties must slowly rebuild what has broken down. It may be easier to begin by working to "manage distrust," by:

1. "*addressing the behaviors which created distrust,*
2. *having each person responsible for a violation of trust apologize and explain the violation,*
3. *having each party negotiate expectations for one another and agree to the terms,*
4. *establish evaluation procedures that can be agreed upon by both parties, and*
5. *helping parties to establish alternative ways to get needs met*" (p. 103).

Lewicki, R.J. & Wiethoff, C. (2000). Trust, Trust Development, and Trust Repair. In. M. Deutsch & P.T. Coleman (Eds.), The handbook of conflict resolution: Theory and practice (p. 86-107). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

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