

# The trust issue

*Trust is important in the good times but also in the bad because life goes in peaks and troughs and there's going to be a point when you're going to require that trust, and if you've lost it before, how do you go about demonstrating that actually you are not going to repeat history?*

*John Lewis*

What's your corporate vision statement? Chances are it's got something to do with trust. A cursory glance at the first page of Google's 2,830,000 results for 'vision to be the most trusted' reveals a raft of organisations all with the same ambition...to be trusted.

To be recognised as the most trusted partner to our global clients

To be the most trusted source of aviation and high-integrity solutions in the world

To be the most trusted retailer where people love to work and shop

To be the most trusted provider of essential services...

To be our customers' most valued and trusted business partner

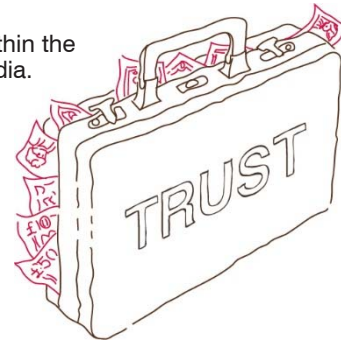
To be the world's most trusted financial group

And on it goes...

## Who's spent the trust fund?

This corporate obsession with trust comes as little surprise when set within the context of a broader erosion of public trust with our institutions and media. Indeed, trust or lack of, continues to be one of the defining issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Our trust in financial institutions, the media, our police and the government has been increasingly tested by the financial crisis, the Hillsborough inquest, an unscrupulous press, MPs' expenses scandal, the Chilcot report and now, of course, Brexit.

Back to business, and some brands are clearly weathering the trust storm. Rainey Kelly Campbell Roalfe/Y&R's last Brand Asset Valuator (BAV) survey named The AA, The Post Office and Boots as the top three most trusted brands in the UK <sup>1</sup>. RKCR/Y&R's CEO Ben Kay said:



*There's been a huge amount of discussion around trust in brands in recent years and this latest BAV study shows us who the winners and the losers in the battle for trust have been... Trust is driven as much by how you act as what you sell.*

The notion of trust being driven by how you act is key. This matters as much for the brand on the outside, as the promise to customers for what to expect, as it does internally, among current and future employees. Trust is as much about how you act as what you sell, and inside, more about your actions than your words.

So, in order to deliver on the corporate vision to be 'the most trusted brand' to customers, you're going to need to have high levels of trust within the organisation too. And this is where the problem comes. There's clearly a trust deficit between employees and the places in which they work. A recent report 'Building Workplace Trust' <sup>2</sup> puts this into sharp focus. When asking 520 professionals worldwide, more than half of those surveyed gave their organisation low marks for both trust and effective leadership. This is reflected in the UK too, with Engage for Success' 'Nailing the Evidence' <sup>3</sup> reporting a colossal 70% of UK employees not trusting their manager.

Employee Engagement Consultant Simon Jacobs agrees and offers one reason why:



*Today, trust in the workplace is in short supply. After years of management incompetence and a widening gulf between the rewards offered to those at the top and bottom of our organisations, most employees now set their default to 'don't trust'. In this way, they're much less likely to be disappointed.*

<sup>1</sup> marketingmagazine.co.uk, 10 April 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Building Workplace Trust, Interaction Associates 2015

<sup>3</sup> Nailing the Evidence, Engage for Success

This dichotomy between the stated vision and the state of trust within organisations is particularly noticeable in the public sector where employee trust is facing strong attack. The Institute of Leadership and Management found that UK public sector workers have the lowest trust in the organisations they work for. It also revealed that managers in the public sector are less trusting of their colleagues, with more than 12% trusting almost no one in their organisation<sup>4</sup>.

Public or private sector, the C-suite knows this matters. KPMG's latest 'Executive Top of Mind' survey<sup>5</sup> reports that 32% of senior executives say building trust is one of their biggest challenges, second only to expansion and top line growth. But what are they really doing about it?



Woodreed's been thinking about trust inside organisations. We consider its role in building engagement by looking at it through the lens of Engage for Successes' four enablers.

We argue that using the techniques brand marketers use externally to drive trust amongst customers can be applied inside too. We look at how turning the established workplace traditions of the 9-5 on its head enabled a culture of trust to flourish.

And, as will be seen from the case studies we feature, we'll prove that organisations who actively seek to grow trust, also increase advocacy, satisfaction and turnover, positively impacting on employee, and in turn, customer engagement - driving trust inside and out.

<sup>4</sup> ILM, 2014: The truth about trust

<sup>5</sup> Global executive 'Top of Mind' survey, 2014 KPMG

# Trust and the four enablers

The Engage for Success movement identified four themes or traits that high performing organisations with engaged workforces share.

# 1

**Visible empowering leaders who can share a strong strategic narrative about the organisation, where it's come from and where it's going.**

Although a two-way thing, trust in the workplace begins at the top. Leaders need to tell the truth and be willing to admit mistakes. They must share information openly and support transparency. Nowadays, according to US author and entrepreneur Peter Shankman, it's the 'nice leader' who wins. 'Nice' CEOs and managers are the best leaders: run better companies, attract innovative and more loyal employees, have better relationships, get more done, and are even healthier than the bad guys<sup>6</sup>.

Trusted leaders seek information from multiple sources and don't simply rely on what they are told by close advisers. They are visible and empowering, sharing their vision of what could be, and bringing their people along with them. Great leaders tell the story of their organisation, painting a picture of where it's come from, where it's going, how it's going to get there and the part each individual employee has to play to make it happen.

AXA PPP Healthcare's IT department did just this. It had set out its ambition to be "Trusted to deliver" along with a set of employee consulted values and behaviours to drive them, and a fresh voice to talk to its people. Its vision and the strategy to achieve it was brought to life through an emotionally engaging strategic narrative, delivered from the top and talking directly to its people. Just a few months into the programme, they'd already seen their engagement scores shoot up from 74-81.



# 2

**Recruit, train and support engaging managers to focus your people and give them scope; treating them as individuals, coaching and stretching.**

Findings in the CIPD's 'Where has all the trust gone?'<sup>7</sup> report demonstrated the pivotal role of line managers as the embodiment of the organisation. Employees who have high levels of trust in their organisation are also likely to recognise their line managers as behaving in a way that's supportive and enabling, they trust them.

Woodreed has just run a series of workshops for over 200 people managers at a leading financial services organisation to highlight how important their role is and equip them with tools, techniques and ideas to help them win the trust of their teams. We've also created a vibrant online community around the topic to share ideas and best practice and provide mutual support as managers put the concepts into practice.



<sup>6</sup> Nice Companies finish first: Why cutthroat management is over- and collaboration is in" Peter Shankman, 2014

<sup>7</sup> "Where has all the trust gone?", CIPD, March 2012

# 3

## Employee voice for reinforcing and challenging views. Acknowledge them as central to solving your business challenges and driving innovation.

High performing organisations trust employees to solve business challenges and drive innovation. A clear link has been established between trust and innovation where employees who feel trusted will be more likely to take positive risks to try something new.

Here at Woodreed we've been using an innovative, digital employee pulse platform to help clients listen transparently and efficiently to their own people. *waggl* (named after the dance honeybees use to convey information to other members of the colony) allows businesses to have fast, transparent conversations with every single person in an organisation at the same time. Clever algorithms rank the data sets and voila, the most popular crowdsourced ideas have risen to the top, all ready to be actioned the next day. It's a clear demonstration of trust in an organisation's people to solve business challenges, as well as contributing towards a culture of trust by the level of transparency it offers.



# 4

## Organisational integrity – ensure the values on the wall are reflected in the day to day behaviours of everyone in the business at all levels.

Values without behaviours to drive them are meaningless, simply words on a poster. Empty sentiments lacking substance, busy eroding trust. Conversely, trust can be built by creating frameworks of behaviours that stem from the values, giving employees what's called 'bounded autonomy'. The cornerstone of bounded autonomy is an 'enabling framework'. This comprises the values, structures and processes that empower and guide people in their jobs. For us at Woodreed it's about creating employee consulted frameworks of behaviours where people are allowed to interpret them depending on their role and responsibility.

Trust's a two-way commitment from leaders and workforce. By establishing frameworks of behaviours to empower people, you demonstrate trust in them to act with autonomy, but within the boundaries of the framework. First Direct's Customer Services Director Karen Walker agrees:



***You can recruit all the right people and train them diligently, but if you don't free them to go above and beyond for the customer you're not using them effectively, which is why we avoid scripting as much as possible and empower our people to resolve an issue first time.***

Add to this what we learn from Dan Pink in "The surprising truth about what motivates us"<sup>8</sup>. Alongside mastery and purpose, it is autonomy – the ability to direct the course of your own life that's a core driver of motivation in the workplace. In trust terms re write that as trusting employees to direct the course of their work lives, trusting them to manage their own time and take the right decisions acting within the boundaries of the behavioural framework. There's a fantastic example of this later on.

<sup>8</sup> The surprising truth about what motivates us" Dan Pink / RSA animate

## Trust in tone of voice

Tone of voice or personality is the way a product, service or organisation communicates in the written, visual and spoken word. It allows a company to get across its values or qualities through the language it uses. When it's used consistently it gives customers a means of recognising the brand and being reassured of expectations...building trust.

The right tone of voice can influence how an audience feels about what is being communicated to them.

Organisations have got the hang of this on the outside. It'll be in part the consistency of external comms which helped the trust winners in the BAV survey. Inside though, it's often a different story; one of robotic, distant, inconsistent and unwieldy comms. Imagine if someone you knew was displaying one set of personality traits one day, and behaving in a totally different way the next. It might be hard to trust them. The same can be said of communications within organisations where multiple creators fire out missives lacking impact, tonal consistency or quality control. Simply having some guidelines created for tone of voice in internal communications along with the proper training in place can go a long way to addressing this.

As part of a broader programme of culture change, Woodreed worked with the PSA Group in the UK (Citroën, Peugeot and DS Automobiles) who was facing just this issue. The result...



**Culture  
change**

***Our new tone of voice for our internal communication has been a revelation! We had a traditional and conservative approach to communications but the focus provided through working with Woodreed has enabled us to create a more engaging and relaxed tone. We've seen a significant improvement in engagement with our communications and have received some really great feedback from our staff.***

David Connell, HR Director PSA UK.

## Trust in developing Employer Brand Propositions (EBP)

Stop any erosion of trust early on by ensuring expectation matches reality. Develop a strong EBP based on truth, then drive it consistently inside and outside your organisation. Recruitment comms should be developed as a clear reflection of the proposition, which in turn is then delivered as the promise to employees inside. Woodreed's delivered this for law firm Rix & Kay, working with them to get to the heart of their EBP, then creating effective comms to attract the best, delivering a real ROI. [See here for the full story.](#)

## Shifting the emphasis from output to input



Woodreed's MD, Jo Moffatt presents the weekly Engage for Success radio programme, as part of her work in the E4S Guru group. She interviews a range of professionals all demonstrating best practice in their fields.

Take Lucy Semmens, ex Head of HR at The Cystic Fibrosis Trust, for example. She talked of how, while at the Trust, they'd driven a new culture by enabling a new way of working, a way of working based entirely on trust. The old system was hampered by a traditional cultural legacy which was all about 'clocking on and off'. She compared it to being at school with an old style, 9-5 patriarchal system of presentism. For Lucy, it wasn't enough to say to employees "we trust you", she wanted to demonstrate trust for employees through actions too. Colleagues were told they could choose their hours and where they worked. "The office can be wherever you need it to be, and we'll give you the right technology to enable you to do this". The focus shifted from input to output.

Lucy established a new culture, trusting people to choose how they delivered their work. Hot-desking encouraged collaboration, removing silos, breaking down barriers and further increasing levels of trust.

The results shone through, both in terms of anecdotal evidence and KPIs. During their 'Investors in People' audit, employees fed back a positive increase in feeling trusted. In Best Companies they moved from 'One to watch'; to a 'One Star' organisation, with many of the supporting comments again alluding to how trusted people felt. It also had a positive impact on employee retention, supporting their KPIs. Listen to the full interview here <http://bit.ly/29mVXaE>

Bianca Best, Chief Client Officer at digital agency 360i has a similar policy. It's not about being seen at your desk from 9-5, but about getting the job done. Hot desking, working from home and no limit on holidays are just a few of the ways her agency is driving trust inside:

**No limit on holidays!**

***Our workforce is empowered by being entirely outcome focused. I care about the results, not the how or the where. It's the when and the what. Introducing our agile working policy six months ago has improved staff retention and happiness whilst delivery has continued at pace and with higher levels of innovation. It's entirely win win!***

Netflix similarly trusts their people, assuming that the majority will make good decisions. Lengthy policy, procedure and disciplinary documents are rejected in place of trusting the 97% of employees for whom the policies will never need apply. They too have no limit on holidays and it's a place where social media use is not just tolerated, it's actively encouraged.

Woodreed's forward thinking clients use our Enterprise Social Business platform **challenger.com** which seamlessly fuses gamification with serious corporate strategy, driving engagement levels through the roof. It encourages trust in two ways: Top down from managers to their teams as ideas are developed, shared and implemented, and up and across from colleagues as they make new connections, discover shared interests and bond over challenges.



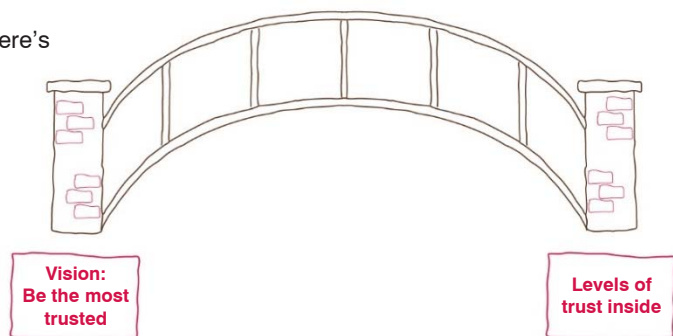
## Bridging the gap

Strong levels of trust inside drive strong performance and more consistent success. When employees have a high level of trust in management and the organisation, the whole company performs better. Fact.

But it seems not everyone's got the memo. There's clearly a mighty disconnect between the external ambitions of brands to be 'the most trusted' among consumers and the state of trust within their businesses.

Without effort inside among their own people, it's hard to see how companies will ever achieve their ambitions of trust outside with their customers.

It's not impossible though. Although there's no quick fix, you can take some simple, positive steps inside to begin to create a culture of trust. The results will be tangible and come quicker than you think.



## About Woodreed

Woodreed is a specialist advertising agency that's been putting brand at the heart of internal communications since 1991. We use the tools, methodologies, insights and creativity that marketing teams use to engage consumers, but we use them to engage your existing and future employees.

Woodreed is driven by our ambition to make workplaces better places to be. We do this by using the power of brand.

Woodreed plans brands and helps shape company cultures using various research tools and methodologies as well as the latest technology platforms. We create and run employee and customer workshops and focus groups. Our in-house creative teams devise multi-channel comms campaigns designed to move people.

If you'd like to know more about Woodreed's proprietary approach to building brand-hearted cultures, please call Jo or Charlotte on 01732 424341.



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