TOWARD
TRUST & ETHICS

A PRACTICAL APPROACH

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

DEFINE TRUST

UNDERSTAND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRUST & PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

ANALYZE ASPECTS OF TRUST, & CONNECT TRUST TO BROADER THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What does **trust** mean to you?

- What **attributes** or characteristics does trust have?

- Is trust a belief, an **attitude**, an intention, a habit, and/or a behavior?

- When trust is not present, what **behaviors** can you expect?

- How much does **distrust** cost?

- How is trust related to **professional ethics**?

WHAT IS TRUST?

↱ Trust is an **expression** of character because it demonstrates integrity.

↱ Trust **results from character** that includes wisdom, courage, and temperance.

↱ Trust involves **accepting** risk.

↱ Trust begins where **prediction ends**.

↱ Trust is the **glue** that bonds relationships together.

Sources: Xu, J. (2019). "The value of trust in construction supply chains" (Doctoral dissertation, University College London)

PRACTICAL DEFINITION OF TRUST

"A willingness to accept personal risk based upon another person's actions."

"Choosing to make something you value vulnerable to another person's actions."

"The feeling and belief that a person has our best interest at heart; that they will behave in a consistent manner, and their behavior honors the expectations that we have for them."

TRUST IS NOT

➔ Trust is not **luck**.

➔ Trust is not a product of **technique**; no recipe, formula, or strategy will guarantee trust.

➔ Trust is not **familiarity** (however, familiarity can breed trust through repeated interactions).

➔ Trust differs from **confidence**.
  - o Confidence depends on contingency and danger, whereas trust depends on risk.
  - o Risk is different from danger.
  - o Trust is not a subjective probability.

➔ Trust is not entirely about **actions**.

Sources: Lewis and Weigert, "Trust as a Social Reality" (1985:976); Xu, J. (2019). "The value of trust in construction supply chains" (Doctoral dissertation, University College London)

TRUST & PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

- Trust is an **individual attitude** which is directly related to **risk** in decision-making.

- **Professional obligations** include holding paramount public health, safety, and welfare; being ethical in dealings; providing expertise only in areas of competence; and maintaining public trust.

- Attributes of **ethical professional practice** include:
  - A daily zero tolerance attitude and mindset.
  - An understanding we are not perfect.
  - Engage and if you see something, say something.

TRUST IN WHAT OR WHO?

➥**Objects/Things**:
- Relationships with items (e.g., cars, money, technology).
- Should ideally be *symmetrical*.

➥**Individuals/People**:
- Belief in someone's character, ability, honesty, etc.; a person confidence is placed in.
- Relationships, particularly with authority figures, (parents, supervisors, doctors), are often *asymmetrical*, with care expectations and decision-making considerations in play.

Symmetric: a balanced trust relationship, wherein the consumer can have enough knowledge to make an informed choice.

Asymmetric: an imbalanced trust relationship, wherein one party has more power or knowledge than is realistically possible for the other to obtain.

TRUST IN WHAT OR WHO?

Trust placed in a **GROUP**

- The individual must trust that they will receive fair treatment; that the group will behave ethically, reliably and responsibly in their dealings.
- Often _asymmetrical_
- Potential for serious issues – e.g., exploitative practices, corruption, income inequality, and barriers that discourage innovation and entrepreneurship.

TRUST IN WHAT OR WHO?

Group Types
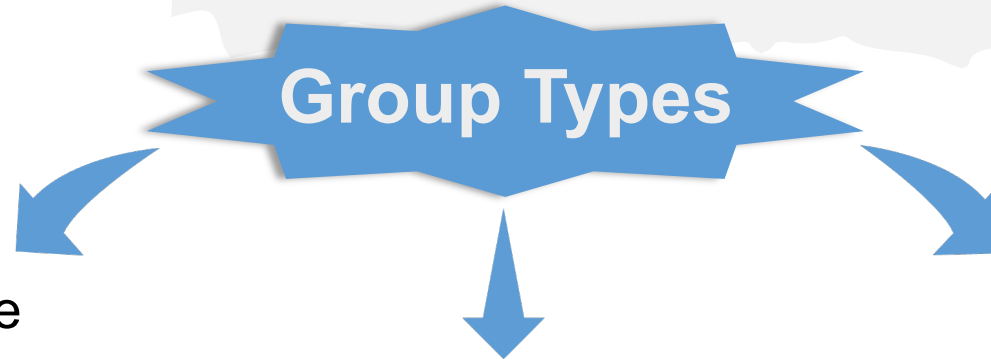
Institutional

- Trust in entities like the government (e.g., US/WI *DOT, **FHWA), legal, religious, financial, & educational organizations.
- Create 'checks and balances' for private enterprise/free. market (regulatory, oversight).
- Acts to protect and serve the public.

Business

- Trust that the product/service being purchased is safe, fairly-priced, reliable, etc.
- Trust that the relationship is mutually beneficial.

Intra-organizational

- Trust within an organization, such as among team members, boss/employee.
- Hinges on factors like trust in management, safety procedures, and product quality.

*Department of Transportation, **Federal Highway Administration

TRUST IN WHAT OR WHO?

Trust in Professional Expertise & Ethics:

➜ Many professionals possess highly **specialized expertise** that laymen/clients do not.

➜ Examples: doctors, lawyers, engineers, contractors, accountants

➜ When a client enters into a **business relationship** with a professional, they must trust the professional has the appropriate level of expertise (formal education, practical experience, professional judgment).

➜ Trust is at the very heart of the **professional-client relationship**—and the professional has a paramount professional ethical obligation never to take advantage of that trust in a way that does not serve the client's interest.
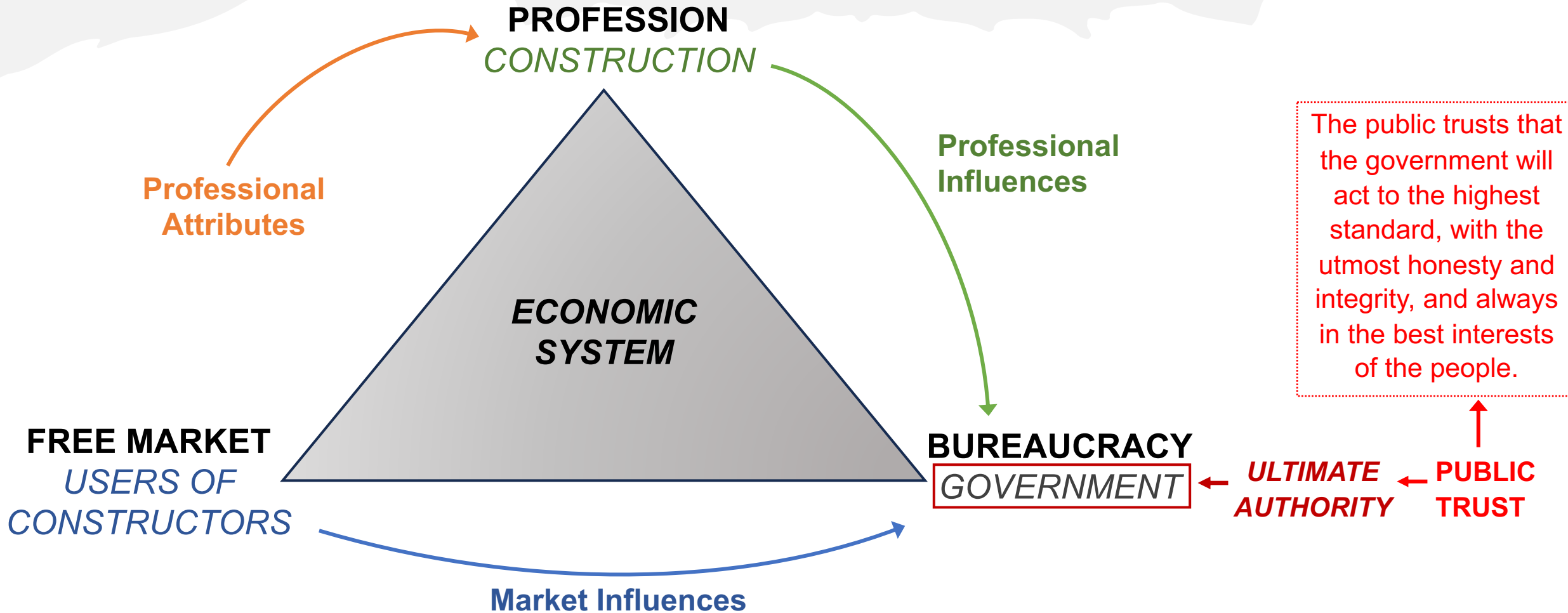
BUSINESS ETHICS

"Sound *business ethics* *requires all parties to understand the rules of engagement, and all parties to follow the rules, resulting in outcomes that are predictable, equitable, and sustainable."*

→ Say it aloud.

→ Communicate the rules to participants.

→ Accept the outcome.

PUBLIC TRUST DIMENSIONS
FREIDSON'S THIRD LOGIC

PROFESSION
CONSTRUCTION

Professional Attributes

Professional Influences

ECONOMIC SYSTEM

The public trusts that the government will act to the highest standard, with the utmost honesty and integrity, and always in the best interests of the people.

FREE MARKET
USERS OF CONSTRUCTORS

BUREAUCRACY
GOVERNMENT

ULTIMATE AUTHORITY

PUBLIC TRUST

Market Influences

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Source: Freidson, Eliot. (2001) *Professionalism: The Third Logic.* (University of Chicago Press)
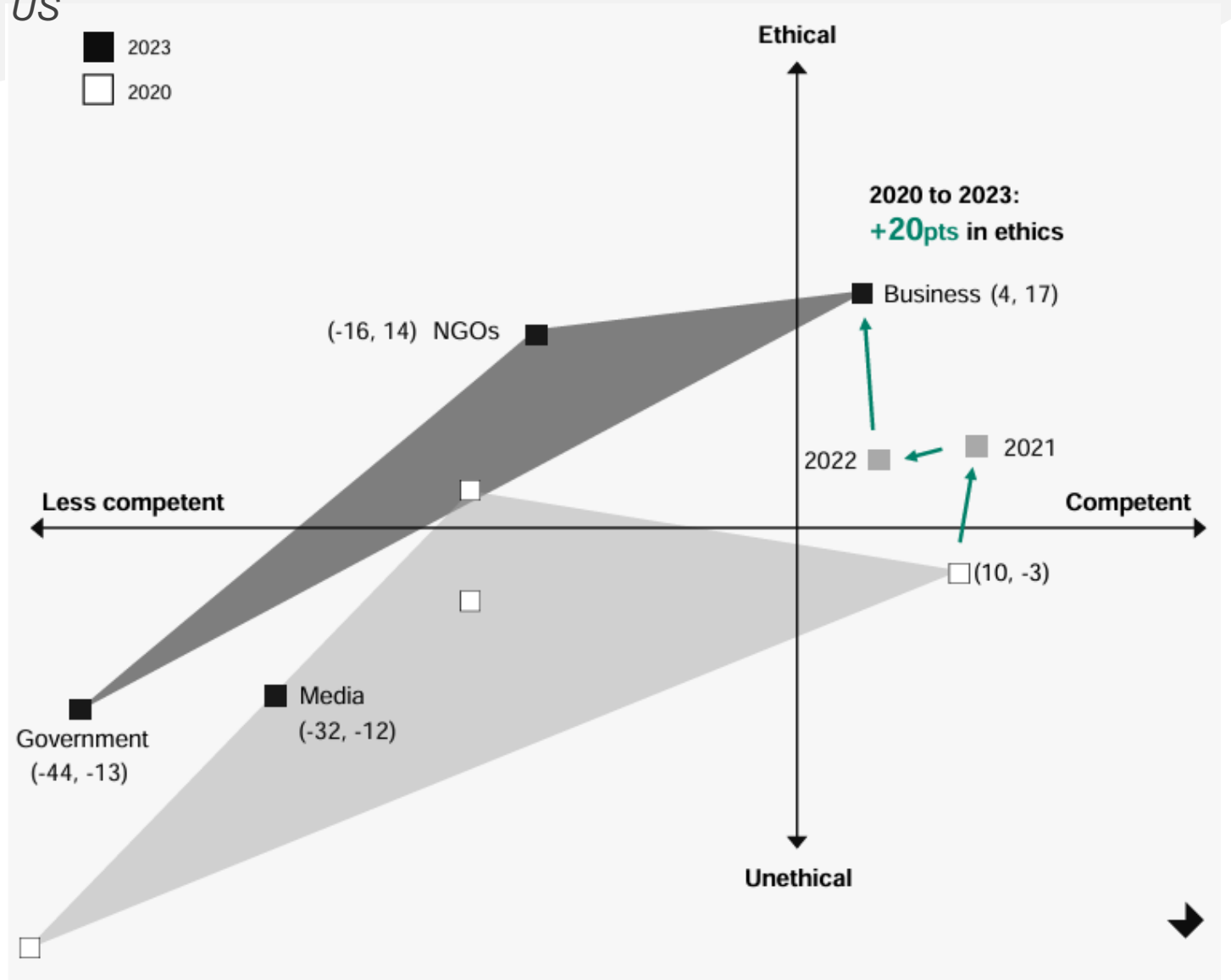
PUBLIC TRUST DIMENSIONS
DIMENSIONS OF TRUST

Competence score, not ethical score, in the US

NGO: non-governmental organization. Typically, a voluntary and/or non-profit group or institution with a social mission that operates independently from the government.

- ■ 2023
- □ 2020

Ethical

2020 to 2023:
+20pts in ethics

■ Business (4, 17)

(-16, 14) NGOs ■

2022 ■ ■ 2021

Less competent ← → Competent

□ (10, -3)

■ Media
(-32, -12)

Government
(-44, -13)

Unethical

ETHICS IN CONTEXT

- Ethics, at an individual level, manifests itself as **integrity**.

- Ethics externally is seen as one honoring one's **commitments**.

- Professional ethics are a set of **expected behaviors**.

- **Professional ethics** is one factor that comprises or gives tangible evidence of **trustworthiness**.

- **Trustworthiness is the first virtue of an ethical professional life**.

PUBLIC TRUST CONNECTS TO THE ATTRIBUTES OF A PROFESSION

KNOWLEDGE → Professionals serve clients, not customers
- Body of theory
- Professional authority ← **TRUST**
- Education

- A measure of trust in the profession's ability to handle the clients' affairs
- Related to professional authority where trust is key

ATTRIBUTES OF PROFESSION

The client-professional relationship places moral obligations on the professional

ORGANIZATION
- Professional associations
- Monopoly & licensing ← **PUBLIC TRUST**
- Professional autonomy

TRUST →

ETHICS OF PROFESSIONAL SERVICE
- The service ideal ← **TRUST**
- Code of ethics
- Professional career

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PROFESSIONAL TRUST DIMENSIONS

GALLUP® **POLL** Honesty/Ethics in Professions
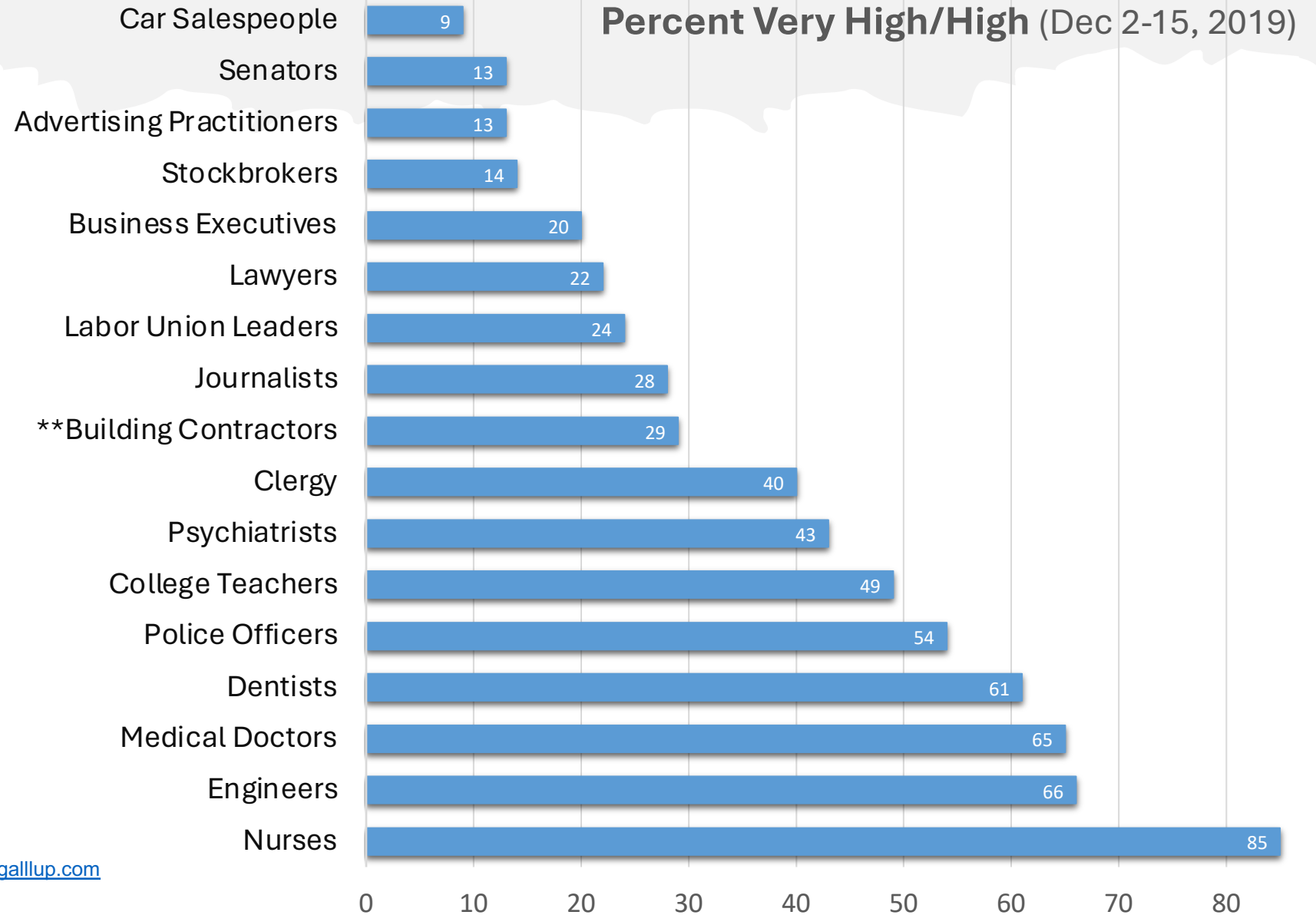
Percent Very High/High (Dec 2-15, 2019)

"Please tell me how you would rate the honesty and ethical standards of people in these different fields -- very high, high, average, low or very low?"

Survey randomly samples of 1,020 adults aged 18+ living in all 50 US states and the District of Columbia.
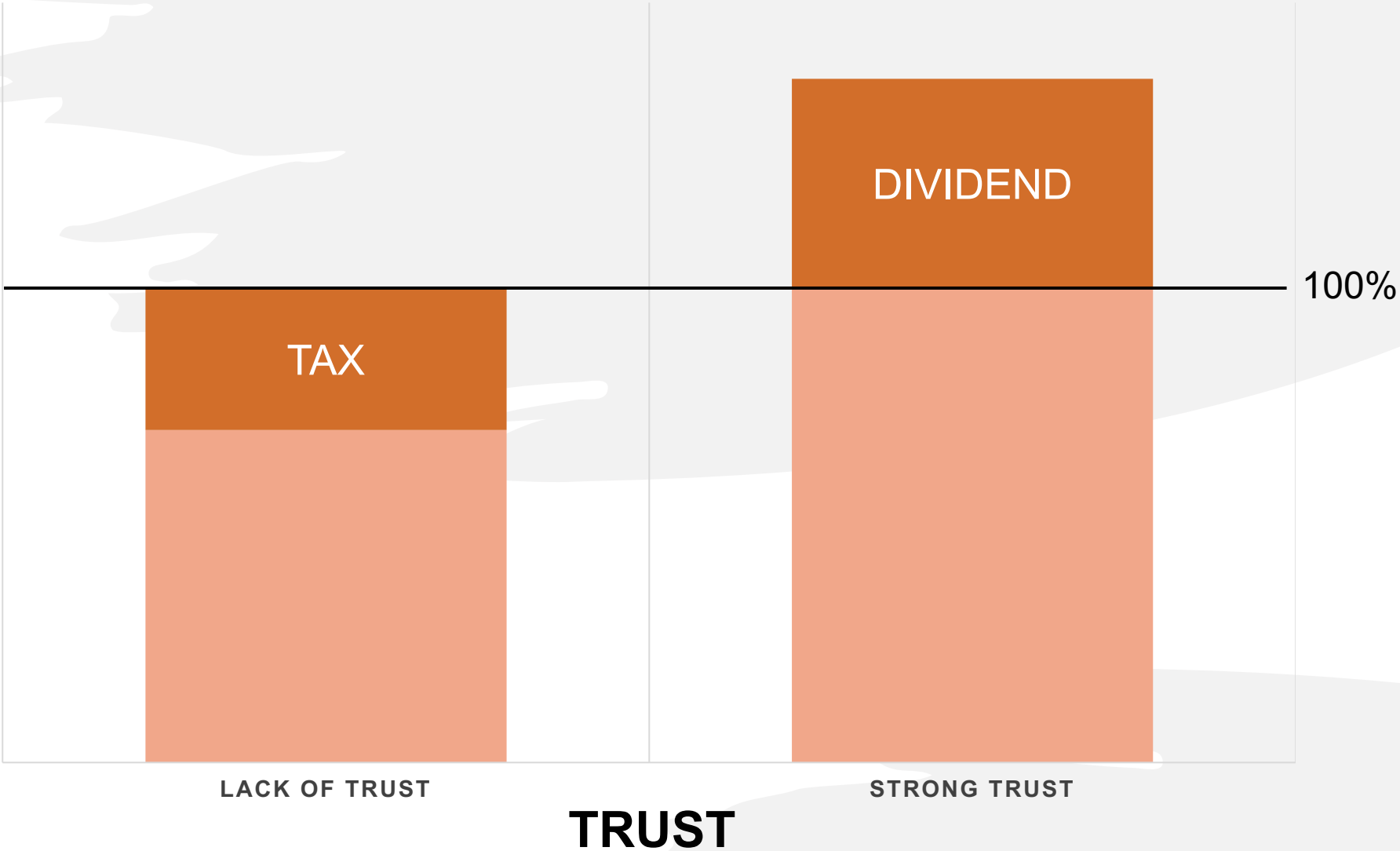
**Building contractor data from 2018 Dec 3-12

Source: Gallup. (2024). Honesty/Ethics in Professions. News.galllup.com

Profession	Value
Car Salespeople	9
Senators	13
Advertising Practitioners	13
Stockbrokers	14
Business Executives	20
Lawyers	22
Labor Union Leaders	24
Journalists	28
**Building Contractors	29
Clergy	40
Psychiatrists	43
College Teachers	49
Police Officers	54
Dentists	61
Medical Doctors	65
Engineers	66
Nurses	85

WHY DOES TRUST MATTER?

DIVIDEND

TAX

100%

LACK OF TRUST

STRONG TRUST

TRUST

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Source: Covey, Stephen M.R. (2018). *The Speed of Trust: The One Thing That Changes Everything.* Simon and Schuster.

TRUST THEORIES

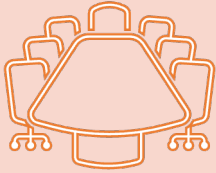**Dispositional trust:** the general willingness of a person to trust others. e.g., faith in humanity, trust in authority, etc.

Source: Lawson, William D. (2004). Trust and Trustworthiness in Professional-Client Relationships: Procurement of Architect/Engineer Services by Texas Municipalities. (Doctoral dissertation, Texas Tech University); William Lawson's Spring 2022 lecture to UW–Madison CE4200 Professional Engineering Practice Issues

TRUST THEORIES

Encapsulated interest: a rational and economic approach to trust, where all parties value the relationship. For instance, a client entrusts a professional, anticipating that mutual interests will drive behavior beneficial to both parties.
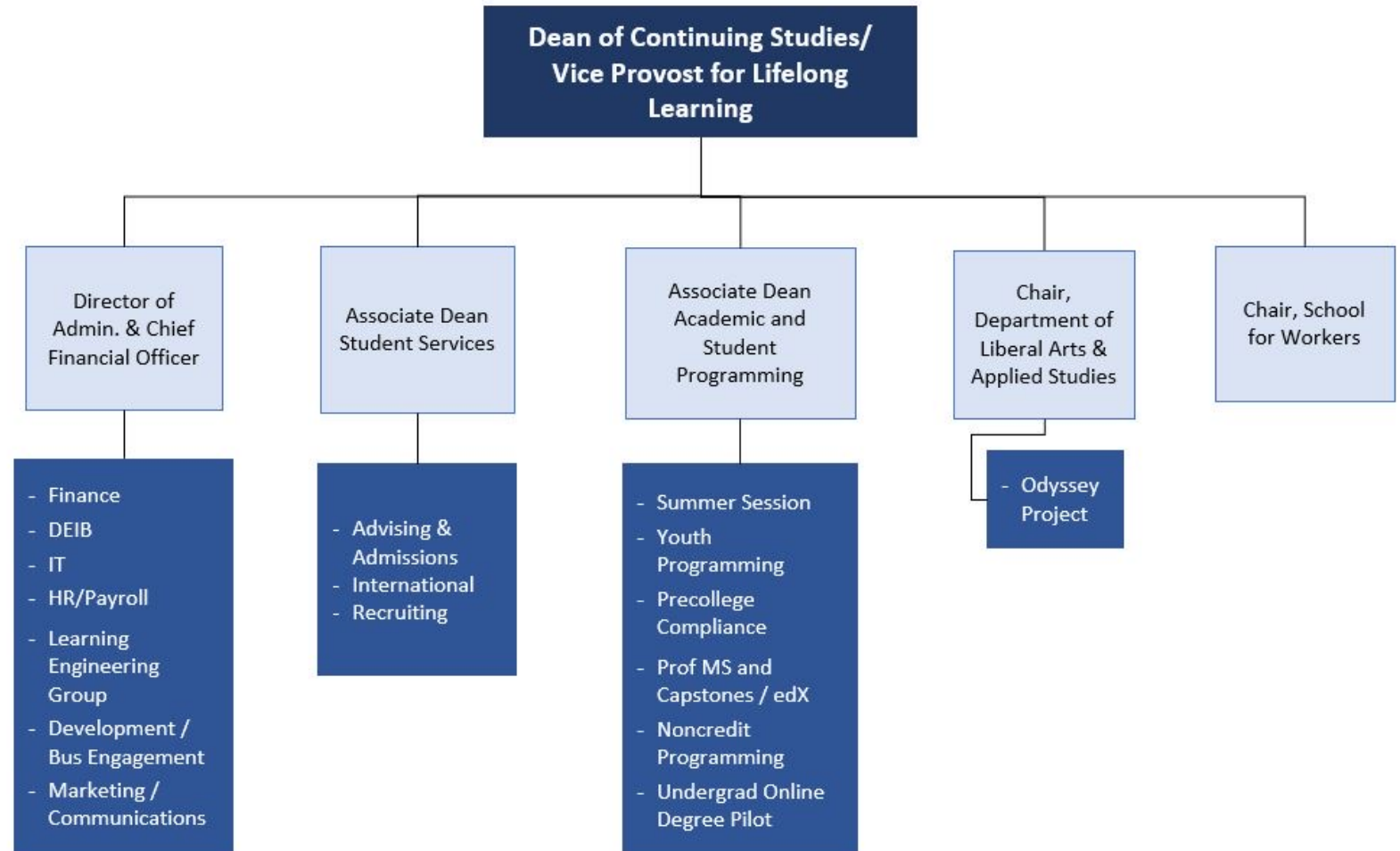

Carter Machinery

Autotrader

Source: Lawson, William D. (2004). Trust and Trustworthiness in Professional-Client Relationships: Procurement of Architect/Engineer Services by Texas Municipalities. (Doctoral dissertation, Texas Tech University); William Lawson's Spring 2022 lecture to UW–Madison CE4200 Professional Engineering Practice Issues

TRUST THEORIES

Assessment of Trustworthiness:

Involves a cognitive, cautious, reflective form of trust granted after evaluating reliability, competence, benevolence, moral integrity, fiduciary obligations, responsibilities, and the interpersonal dynamics in the relationship.

Dean of Continuing Studies/ Vice Provost for Lifelong Learning

Director of Admin. & Chief Financial Officer

- Finance
- DEIB
- IT
- HR/Payroll
- Learning Engineering Group
- Development / Bus Engagement
- Marketing / Communications

Associate Dean Student Services

- Advising & Admissions
- International
- Recruiting

Associate Dean Academic and Student Programming

- Summer Session
- Youth Programming
- Precollege Compliance
- Prof MS and Capstones / edX
- Noncredit Programming
- Undergrad Online Degree Pilot

Chair, Department of Liberal Arts & Applied Studies

- Odyssey Project

Chair, School for Workers

Source: Lawson, William D. (2004). Trust and Trustworthiness in Professional-Client Relationships: Procurement of Architect/Engineer Services by Texas Municipalities. (Doctoral dissertation, Texas Tech University); William Lawson's Spring 2022 lecture to UW–Madison CE4200 Professional Engineering Practice Issues

TRUST THEORIES

Case: Flint, MI water crisis

Institutional trust:

Recognizes the power asymmetry between professionals and clients, where one party has significant control and potential harm capabilities, while the other has limited influence. This form of trust relies on the existence of professional, legal, and bureaucratic safeguards to protect the client against potential opportunism.

FLINT WATER PLANT

2015: Flint River without Corrosion Control

2016: Detroit Water with Enhanced Corrosion Control

Flint   Detroit

ATTRIBUTES OF TRUST

Trusting Belief

- Beliefs/Attitudes that inform decision-making

Trusting Intention

- Willingness to depend on someone

Trusting Behavior (outcome)

- Actions resulting from belief and intention
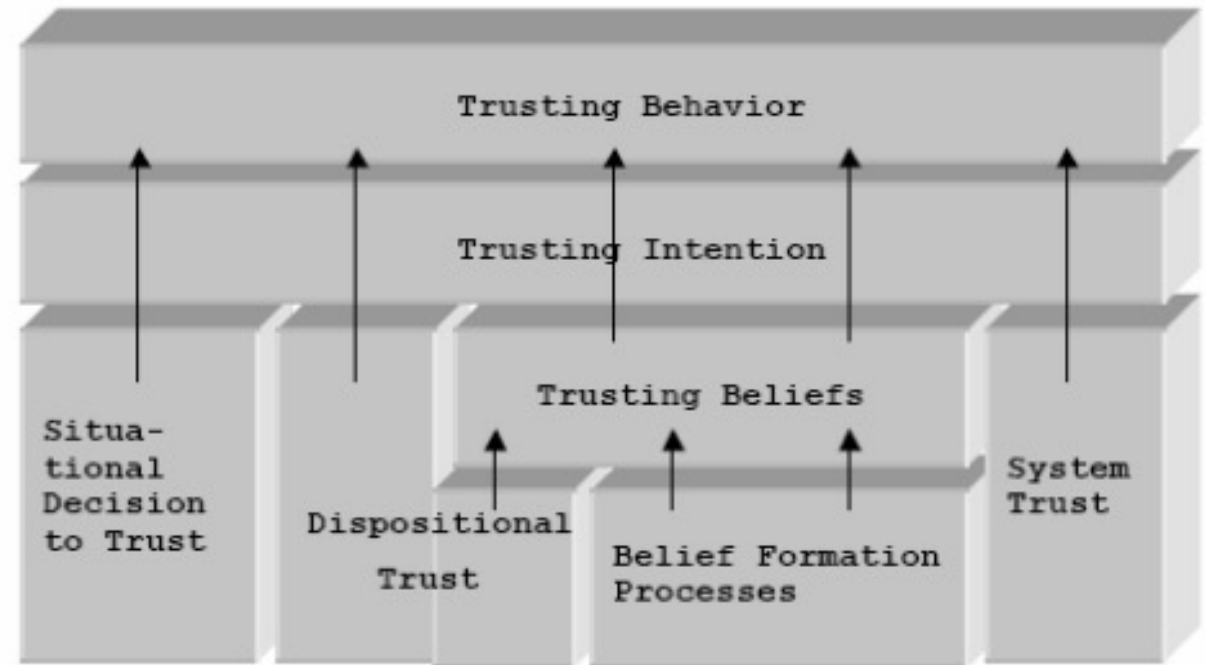
Figure 2.1. Relationships Among Different Forms of Trust. *Source*: McKnight and Chervany (2000, Fig. 1). *Used with permission.*

TRUST MODELS

Competence
& Character

Competence, Character,
& Communication

Competence, Sincerity,
Reliability, & Care

Competence, Moral Integrity,
Benevolence, Client
Orientation, & Chemistry

TRUST MODELS

		COMPETENCE-BASED	
		Low	High
CHARACTER–BASED	**High**	**2** - Many meetings. - Many verbal agreements and lots of "understanding". - Lots of compromise, negotiation & trading. - Sympathy that seldom leads to resolution.	**1** - A focus on looking for and leveraging strengths. - Positive communication. - Mistakes seen as learning opportunities. - Transparent relationships. - Inspiring and creative work.
	Low	**4** - Hot, angry confrontations or cold bitter withdrawal. - Defensive posturing. Labeling others as enemies. Guarded communication. - Letter wars. - Mistakes used as weapons. - An obsession with protection. Nothing gets resolved.	**3** - Work must be defendable against aggressive review. - Policies and procedures must be followed to the letter. - Method wars. - Little real communication. Many "cordial" meetings. Little progress. - It is a war of attrition.

There is no direct route from 4 to 1

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

"Life is like a project: it works on a cost-to-complete basis.

There are no shortcuts to living and working well." – Peter Strange, 2019

Vulnerability

- Clients **expose** vulnerability by hiring an engineer and contractor.
- The engineer and contractor are also **vulnerable** to the owner and their representative's actions.
- Actions and unethical practices that break trust have **consequences** and can inflict losses. Not always easy to accept the outcome.

Leadership

- Requires
  - developing **people** of competence and character.
  - being **transparent**, acknowledging results, and understanding options.
- As a leader, you will get
  - **30%** of what you **demand** from those around you;
  - **60%** of what you **teach** to those around you; but
  - **100%** of what you **model** for those around you.
- Information is not engagement; communication is not engagement; only **engagement** is engagement.

Source: Mike Vorster

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Trust is not luck

- We **control our own** competency and character.

- Trust is, can be, or should be, a two-way proposition. In the best of **relationships** of trust, the trust between the trusting and the trusted is mutual.

Perception

- Contracts, specifications, submittals, inspections, and testing make us feel we are not trusted. These are **opportunities to demonstrate** trust.

- **Actions** are judged by how others **perceive them**.

- We are all human and make mistakes—if we violate trust, **fix it quickly**.

- Trust drives **satisfaction**. Satisfaction drives **loyalty**.

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Source: Vorster, Nelson, Lawson

TO GROW OR RECOVER TRUST

High-impact actions to gain relationship trust:

- Demonstrate **empathy**.

- **Say** what you **mean** and **mean** what you **say**.

- Be **reliable**. Honor your commitments with others.

- Make **fewer and better** agreements.

- **Renegotiate** as early as possible, especially dysfunctional agreement.

TO GROW OR RECOVER TRUST

- Never **blindside** the other person.

- Share **credit** for accomplishments, ideas, and contributions.

- Resist the temptation to **blame** others, even when it is warranted.

- Respect **differences** and help others to find their **strengths**.

- Be mindful of **context** and **time**.

- Be willing to **forgive**.

MANAGING THE TRUSTWORTHINESS OF OTHERS

We have less power over another person's trustworthiness than our own; however, **our perception** of another person as untrustworthy is a major hurdle.

Considerations for dealing with our perceptions of others' trustworthiness:

- Do not **overload** trust; act to reduce risks.
- Trust others when they **deserve** it.
- Give both **praise** and **criticism**—precisely.
- Allow **time** for trust to **develop**.

Sources: James Gray, "Building and Managing Working Relationships"

MANAGING THE TRUSTWORTHINESS OF OTHERS

- Treat concerning or problematic conduct as a **joint problem**, not a crime.

- **Assess** the conduct of others **correctly**.

- Judge **benefits** and risk rather than **morality**.

Source: James Gray, "Building and Managing Working Relationships

MANAGING THE TRUSTWORTHINESS OF OTHERS

- **Disputes** do not just happen, they **grow**.

- The best way to prevent a dispute is to understand the way it grows from a simple disagreement into a full-fledged, complex dispute.

- Say I am **sorry** when wrong, **forgive** and let it go.

Source: Vorster, M.C. (1993). Dispute Prevention and Resolution. Construction Industry Institute, Austin, TX.

SUMMARY

- Trust is to **human performance** what water is to **human health**.

- For individuals, trust is about being **trustworthy** and being **trusting**.

- Professional ethics **embody** the characteristics of trust.

- Trust requires **character and competence**.

REFERENCES

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SUMMARY

Trust

- is to **human performance** what water is to **human health**.
- for individuals, trust is about being **trustworthy** and being **trusting**.
- trust requires **character** and **competence**.

Professional ethics

- **embody** the characteristics of trust.
- **asymmetrical** trust relationships underscore the need for professional ethics.

Theories and models of trust

- help us understand trust **in relation** to the world around us.
- permeate in our personal and professional **relationships** and societal systems.

In practice

- trust is **fragile** and can be easily lost.
- a trusting relationship requires joint participation.
- growing or recovering trust requires **action**.