

What is an Organizational Culture of Trustworthiness?

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The construct of trust has been widely studied at the interpersonal level (Rousseau et al., 1998) and has gained recognition at the organizational level over the years (Tan & Lim, 2009). Trust as idea construct has meaning and importance within the organizational culture literature where it has been identified as a source of competitive advantage for organizations (Tierney, 2006). The term 'cultures of trust' has been used, although sparsely, in the literature to generally refer to organizational cultures where individuals trust each other, and where that trust facilitates positive outcomes for employees and organizations (Creed & Miles, 1996). Extant literature has identified different facets of trust as well as related concepts such as trust propensity and trustworthiness (Colquitt et al., 2007) which led to the understanding that trustworthiness functions as one antecedent to trust (Tan & Lim, 2009). Therefore, when considering organizational culture as shared behavioural norms (Cooke & Rousseau, 1988), it is more appropriate to examine 'cultures of trustworthiness' that contain behavioural expectations and norms that will, in turn, lead to a culture of trust. Trustworthiness reflects an assessment of another person, or set of people, based on the extent to which the "other" behaves in a manner that engenders the expectation that the individual, or group, is worthy of trust (Colquitt et al., 2007). Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman's (1995) integrative model of organizational trust proposed that trustworthiness is built on the extent to which another is viewed as having 'Ability' (competence to undertake what would be trusted for), 'Benevolence' (a positive intent towards the potential trustor), and 'Integrity' (another holding similar values to one's self) (Mayer et al., 1995). The purpose of this study was to define and operationalize a 'culture of trustworthiness' using the ability, integrity and benevolence framework. The Organizational Culture Inventory (OCI) was used to isolate behaviourally anchored items that reflect the three components of trustworthiness. Using data from the publisher's database, a sample of 800 employees randomly selected from 8 different industrial sectors, an exploratory factor analysis of the items was conducted. The results of factor analysis identified three factors that emerged from the OCI items ('Benevolence', 'Game playing' and 'Competence'), paralleling the ABI framework (with Game Playing arguably the opposite of Integrity). The factors had acceptable reliabilities: Benevolence ($\alpha = 0.91$), Game playing ($\alpha = 0.71$) and Competence ($\alpha = 0.73$). The 'culture of trustworthiness' factors were also related to several individual and organizational outcomes. Within the same sample of 800 employees, 'Benevolence' was positively correlated with clear expectations, organizational fit, increased customer service and satisfaction with organizational membership. Game playing was negatively correlated with clear expectations, organizational fit, and intent to stay. 'Competence' was positively correlated with superior customer service, intent to stay and satisfaction with organizational membership. The results of this study help in understanding the behavioural norms that define a 'culture of trustworthiness' which can act as an antecedent to trust, as well as supporting the positive individual and organizational outcomes associated with such a culture.