

Exercise: TRUSTWORTHINESS AND TRUST (adapted from Mayer & Norman, 2004)

The goal of this group exercise is to explore the factors that lead one person to trust another.

1. Individually, read the following paragraphs that describe three people *who might work for you*. For each, how comfortable would you be turning over to him or her a project that was very important to you if you could not monitor what he or she did? (1= petrified; 10 = completely comfortable)

J.B. was promoted to his/her current position shortly before you were transferred in as head of the department. On paper, J.B. is qualified, but you have some serious doubts about his/her skills. J.B. has an MBA from a well-respected university and has been in the current position for over a year. During that time, you have found some very surprising mistakes and oversights in J.B.'s work. J.B. doesn't seem to have a grasp of how the company operates and what his/her role is supposed to be. When you have tried to explain these things, J.B. claims to understand. However, J.B.'s work doesn't seem to show it. J.B. really likes you and bends over backward to help you out whenever possible. All of J.B.'s peers seem to like him/her, and J.B. has gained a bit of a reputation among them and the customers for being very fair.

| | Petrified | | | | | | | Completely comfortable | | |
|---|-----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|------------------------|---|----|
| How comfortable would you feel with J.B.? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

Sandy has been working with your company for a long time and has worked for you for about a year. Inasmuch Sandy's job is fairly technical, Sandy has continued to attend seminars and read technical journals to keep up to date. Sandy's work is always careful and complete. Sandy has on a number of occasions shown great loyalty to you, the boss. For example, just last month, Sandy blocked information from getting to your boss that would have made you look bad. On several occasions, Sandy has misled people in other departments to keep them from taking resources away from your department.

| | Petrified | | | | | | | Completely comfortable | | |
|--|-----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|------------------------|---|----|
| How comfortable would you feel with Sandy? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

Pat recently transferred to your division from the company's East Coast division. Pat wanted to get back closer to family, Pat's former department head had tried to unsuccessfully to block Pat's leaving, arguing that Pat was "just too important" to let him/her go. The quality of Pat's work appears to justify the former manager's reluctance to let Pat leave. Pat does not seem to have trouble making friends and is quite popular but has refused all of your attempts to get to know him/her. When you have gone to lunch together, Pat mostly listened to what you had to say and didn't say much. Pat often seems to have his/her guard up when talking to you. In dealings with other employees and with customers, Pat is fair and honest.

| | Petrified | | | | | | | Completely comfortable | | |
|--|-----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|------------------------|---|----|
| How comfortable would you feel with Pat? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

Based on your ratings, whom would you trust the most? In your groups, explain your ratings. What factors were most critical to your trust assessments?

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In dealing with you, Terry is a no-nonsense kind of manager. Terry has always acted the up-and-up from everything you've seen and heard. Terry always gets things done well and is respected by all. Your attempts to go to lunch, socialize, and build a relationship have always been politely refused. Terry has a number of friends at work, but you do not seem to be one of them.

| | Petrified | | | | | | | Completely comfortable | | |
|--|-----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|------------------------|---|----|
| How comfortable would you feel with Terry? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

You've worked for Taylor for several years. Taylor has always been honest with you and shown a genuine concern for others, as well as for the profitability of the business. Taylor has been particularly good to you, and it's clear that Taylor likes and respects you. Taylor frequently has problems getting the bills paid and customers served on time, and does not seem to manage the company's finances very well. Taylor does not seem to have clear objectives about what things are important for the operation of the business.

| | Petrified | | | | | | | Completely comfortable | | |
|---|-----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|------------------------|---|----|
| How comfortable would you feel with Taylor? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

You have always found your manager, Jesse, to have strong skills. Jesse is on the phone with another manager. You hear Jesse commit to getting a report done by Friday. Once off the phone, Jesse makes a snappy remark about hell freezing over and continues your performance review. You can recall a number of other occasions when told someone one thing and turned around and told you something entirely different. Jesse has always been nice to you and seems to like you. Jesse tells you you're meeting all your goals and should expect a promotion and pay increase within the next six months to a year.

| | Petrified | | | | | | | Completely comfortable | | |
|--|-----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|------------------------|---|----|
| How comfortable would you feel with Jesse? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

Based on your ratings, whom would you trust the most? In your groups, explain your ratings. What factors were most critical to your trust assessments?