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Chapter VIII

An Extended Trust Building Model: Comparing Experiential and Non-Experiential Factors

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Abstract

This study examines a model of factors influencing system troubleshooter trust in their supervisors, contrasting experiential and nonexperiential factors. System troubleshooters keep important organizational systems operating. Traditional research suggests that trust forms through interactional experience. Recent research indicates that initial interpersonal trust develops through nonexperiential factors that are dispositional (individual differences-related) or institutional (structural/situational). This chapter combines initial and experiential factors to see which remain effective over time. We found that both institutional and dispositional factors affected troubleshooter trust in the supervisor even after parties gained experience with each other. Quality of experience with the supervisor affected interpersonal trust, while quantity of experience did not. Surprisingly, institutional trust, an initial trust factor, predicted trusting beliefs as strongly as did quality of experience. The

study shows that both experiential and nonexperiential factors are important to troubleshooter trust even after parties know each other well.

Introduction

Trust is defined as the willingness to depend upon another with a feeling of relative security, even though negative consequences are possible and one cannot control the other (Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995). Researchers have found trust to affect performance in many information systems (IS) tasks (Hart & Saunders, 1993; Jarvenpaa, Knoll, & Leidner, 1998; Nelson & Cooprider, 1996). This chapter investigates the factors that lead to the development of trust in one IS environment—troubleshooting—that is increasingly important to the ongoing performance of mission-critical information systems. The organization of the chapter is as follows. The remainder of the introduction overviews two general theories of trust building, defines the troubleshooting task, and introduces the research questions. The second section presents two versions of a trust-building model. In the next two sections, the methods and results are presented and discussed.

Two General Theories of Trust Building

While there is widespread agreement on the importance of trust in the workplace (Kramer, 1999; Zand, 1972), less agreement exists about the factors upon which trust is built. Two general theories of trust-building factors compete at the center of the trust-building debate today.

Experiential Trust Building

The most dominant general theory posits that trust grows through positive interaction and experience with the trustee (Blau, 1964; Gefen, Karahanna, & Straub, 2003a; Jarvenpaa & Leidner, 1998; Kramer, 1999; Ring & Van de Ven, 1994). This makes sense, because people build a mental image of the other's trustworthiness via interactions over time. The more one interacts with another, the more information one gains about their attributes and the more confidence one has about predicting their actions, which translates into trust. What are the managerial implications of this theory? The supervisor controls the interactional relationship with the employee. Supervisors can develop a positive relationship with the employee over time through interactive steps that reveal the supervisor's trustworthiness.