99 Bottles Of Trust On The Wall

Wager, Ritual, and Repair

Operational principles for trust in cyber communities

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Verification Is Expensive — Trust Saves Lives

"Trust, But Verify"

This is zero trust by another name.

In operational environments, trust enables rapid response without bureaucratic friction.

Design Implication:

Build systems optimized for operational tempo.

Enable 'sufficient trust' under time pressure, not perfect verification.

Trust Is A Wager We Place Together

Design Implication:

Trust building is not about infrastructure. It's about operational culture. And culture lives in people, not procedures.

It's not a contract. It's not a checklist.
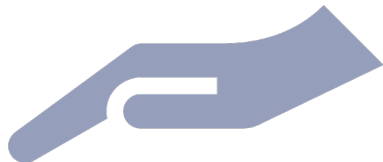
It's A Calculated Operational Risk.

Trust Is Contextual, Not Binary

Trust Isn't An On/Off Switch.

In critical incidents, trust isn't just a soft value.
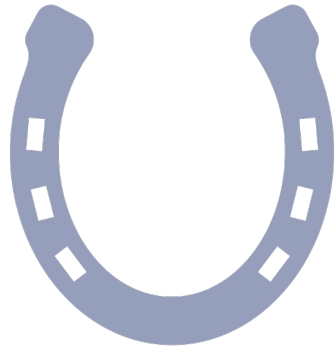
It's Operational Bandwidth.

Design Implication:

Build systems for graduated trust levels.

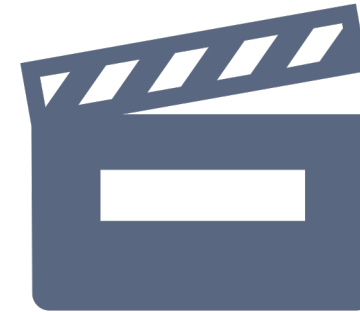Enable provisional access and contextual judgment calls.

Trust ≠ Credential —
It's Competence + Ethics + History

Titles Don't Build Trust.

Patterns of reliability, skill, and care under pressure do.

Design Implication:

Trust must be earned through demonstrated action and shared experience, not credentials or organizational affiliation alone.

Trust Begins With Curiosity, Not Control

Mirror Neurons Before Memos.

Begin with sincere questions. Let people tell you what matters to them – before assigning roles or obligations.

Design Implication:

Build culture that prioritizes genuine inquiry and ethical attunement over procedural dominance.

Trust Lives In The Moment Of Necessity

Trust Survives Stress.

It's the call at midnight. The unsent email. The favor returned.
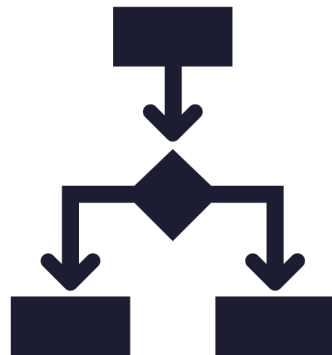
Design Implication:

Build for the edge cases – the late nights, the cross-border incidents, the quiet call for help.

Silence Corrodes — Repair With Care

Damaged trust can't be healed by silence.

When trust fractures, silence is a mold that grows. Repair begins by naming the damage without shame.

Design Implication:

Design graceful trust repair mechanisms.

No purity tests – just paths back.

Conviviality, Not Coercion

🤝 Real trust systems empower participation without forcing alignment.

📡 Design for voices that carry signal, not just rank.

🌍 Cultural norms vary – adapt with care, not arrogance.

Design Implication:

Minimize gatekeeping.

Maximize meaningful voice.

Build for pluralism, not uniformity.

Circulate Trust Through Ritual

Trust Must Move; It Shouldn't Be Hoarded.

Larger systems need scaffolding for circulation.

Don't Let The Trust Pool Stagnate!

Design Implication:

Institutionalize informal trust-refreshing practices.

Examples: shout-outs, peer intros, retrospectives, mentorship pairings, cross-team shadowing, backchannel spaces.

Sometimes, Trust Must Be Given Before It Is Earned

Crisis often demands a high-risk loan of trust, offered before proof, in hopes of solidarity.

Design Implication:

Create pathways for onboarding and meaningful early participation – not probation barriers.
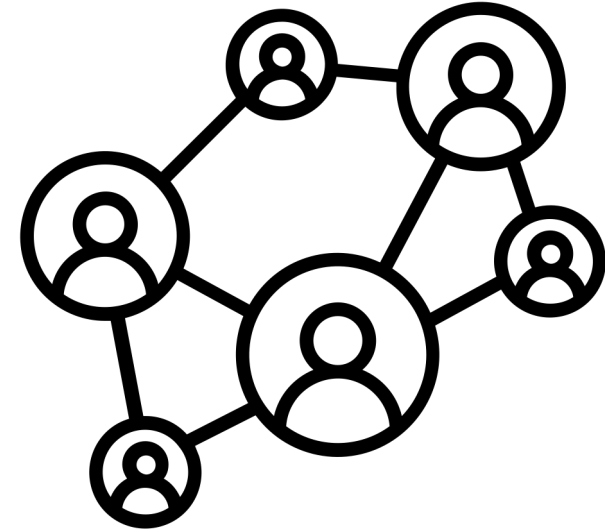
Trust Is An Ongoing Operational Commitment

Trust Is A Practice

We build trust not once, but continuously – so the next person who needs to speak up in crisis has established channels and known allies.

Trust isn't a one-time decision. It's sustained operational practice.

Design Implication:

Build systems that support individuals who need to raise concerns, share critical information, or request assistance under pressure.

Final Reflection:

The difference between a resilient system and a brittle one is not redundancy; it's whether trust can circulate faster than fear.
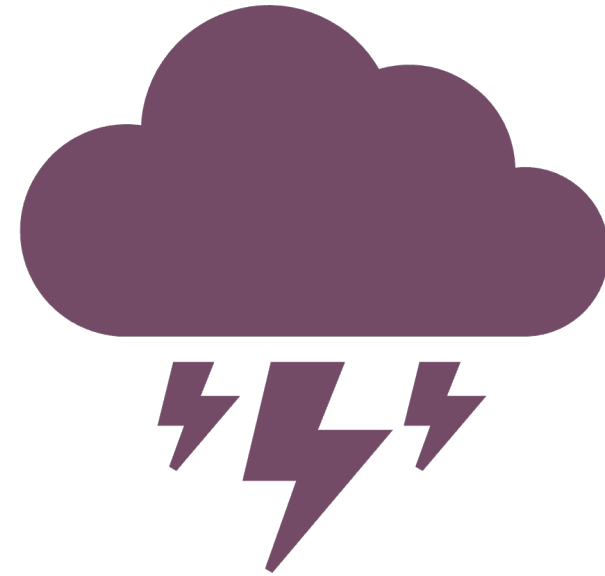
In Crisis, Information Flows Through Trust Networks First.

Appendix A: Trust Anti-Patterns

Examples Of What To Watch Out For:

- **Credential Inflation:**
  Relying on titles over demonstrated behavior.

- **Signal Extraction:**
  Treating community trust as exploitable attention.

- **Gatekeeping By Default:**
  Prioritizing control over participation.

- **Ritual Mimicry:**
  Using backchannels or shout-outs performatively.

- **Silent Withholding:**
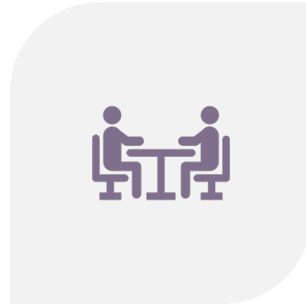 Withdrawing feedback or care out of spite or fear.

**These Behaviors Weaken Trust!
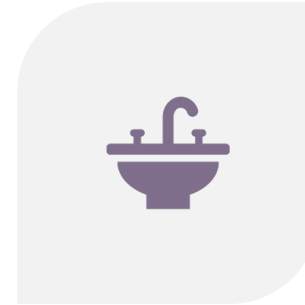Watch For Them In Yourself As Much As In Others.**
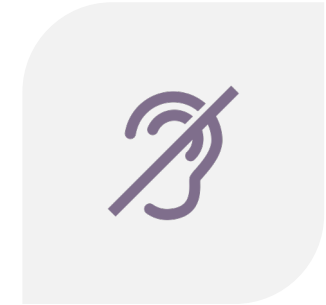
Appendix B: Four Questions For Team Reflection

When was the last time someone in our team took a risk by offering trust first?

Do we have informal rituals that refresh trust, or do we rely only on formal hierarchy?

How do we respond when trust is broken? Do we succumb to silence, or attempt to repair?

Are there voices we've unintentionally excluded from our trust networks?

What Are Your Reflections?

If There Is One Takeaway:

Read Ron Westrum's classic 6-page paper "*A Typology of Organisational Cultures:*"

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/8150380_A_Typology_of_Organisational_Cultures

Westrum's typology reveals that the flow of information - whether it is hoarded, tolerated, or shared - is the defining signal of an organization's culture, and the clearest predictor of operational resilience.

Thank You For Your Time And Attention Today.