

Trust (Amended)

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Editor's Note: This article is an update to a previous piece the author wrote titled "Trust: A New Formulation of a Fundamental Principle." View the original article at https://www.moore.army.mil/infantry/magazine/issues/2022/Fall/PDF/10_Vineyard.pdf.

It is not an overstatement to say that trust is the foundation of the U.S. Army. Doctrinally, the Army profession defines itself as "a trusted vocation of Soldiers and Army civilians whose collective expertise is the ethical design, generation, support, and application of land power; serving under civilian authority; and entrusted to defend the Constitution and the rights and interests of the American people."¹ Based on our definition, we are a "trusted vocation" who is "entrusted to defend." Therefore, trust is foundational to be an Army professional.

While most Army Soldiers and leaders recognize the importance of trust, many struggle with the practical application of building trust. In my last article on this topic, I suggested a formula to build trust in our formations which consisted of these components: character, competence, commitment, and consistency.² Since successfully fielding and training this formula to Soldiers and leaders across Fort Moore, GA, an important suggestion was given in order to better convey the components of the formula and more importantly the principles related to trust.³ This change substitutes the addition signs for multiplication signs in the formula. Thus, the new formula is:

(Character x Competence x Commitment) Consistency = Trusted Relationship

While the major components of the equation remain the same, the different mathematical symbol conveys a new and purposeful meaning. First and obvious, the multiplication principle greatly expands the range and possibilities from mere addition. Simply put, trusted leadership expands exponentially with men and women who consistently have character, are competent, and are committed to the mission and organization. In addition to depicting this expanded potential, the possibility of portraying a decrease in trust is now possible. For instance, a leader with great skills, talents, and abilities (competence), who is committed to the mission but is morally bankrupt, may destroy the trust of the organization.⁴ Another example might be someone who has high morals and standards and yet is completely inept in his or her warrior tasks; this also would completely erode the trust of that person and potentially the entire organization. A zero in any one of the

components immediately makes the resulting answer zero, producing a non-trust relationship. Thus, with the new formulation, trust can be greatly increased and expanded as well as drastically cut depending on the scenario.

One final addition was adding the term "trusted relationship" from simply "trust." The reason for this change is a reminder that organizations are made up of people. And high-trust organizations are filled with high-trust people who have healthy and trusted relationships with one another.⁵ In other words, the people of the organization are the organization, and their level of trust with each other is therefore representative of the organization's ultimate level of trust.

While I still believe that there is no ultimate formula for trust, I do believe that this current formulation is helpful for Soldiers and leaders. It not only gives categories to think about when attempting to build trust with others but also helps us personally to look within and ask, "Am I a trusted agent?" Additionally, this formula can be used when looking both up and down the chain of command to strengthen gaps or increase weak areas within our formations. As Army doctrine reminds us, "trust is the foundation of the Army's relationship with the American people."⁶ It is absolutely that and more; trust is the bedrock that underpins everything that we think, do, and say both professionally at a strategic level and tactically at a personal level with one another. Therefore, let's strive today to build trusted relationships actively and intentionally within our formations by being men and women who consistently demonstrate character, competence, and commitment.

Notes

¹ Army Doctrinal Publication (ADP) 6-22, *Army Leadership and the Profession*, July 2019, 1-2.

² Chaplain (MAJ) Jared L. Vineyard, "Trust: A New Formulation of a Fundamental Principle," *Infantry* 111/3 (Fall 2022): 20-23.

³ This change was suggested over a conference call with Mr. Jeffrey Peterson at the U.S. Military Academy in relation to a One Station Unit Training Character Development pilot project on 7 December 2023.

⁴ The number for character in this case would be zero, which in a multiplication formula would result in a zero for the solution, or in our case trusted relationship.

⁵ This idea can clearly expand to other areas within units such as equipment. Soldiers must be able to trust the equipment that they are issued.

⁶ ADP 6-22, 1-2.

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