

VALUES THAT DEVELOP RELATIONSHIPS OF TRUST
IN BUSINESSES AND ORGANIZATIONS

by

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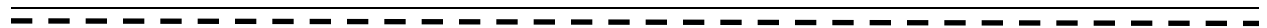
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Abstract

Trust in the business world is something that has been studied to some depth over the past few decades, as salesmen and scholars have come to realize the importance that commitment and trust has played in their transactions. In this paper, research on trust and commitment presented within the business relationship will be reviewed to see what points and discoveries have already been made by researchers and scholars, on the practices and advantages of developing trust between organizations. This paper seeks to discover what the possibilities for those in business, and particularly Christians, who find themselves within these organizations, to use the values that they find within Christianity to develop relationships with buyers, suppliers, customers, and stakeholders, that will not only help their organizations become competitive in the marketplace, and lead to decision making that will be in the best interests of those involved.

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I.

Introduction

Trust is something that we find in every aspect of our lives. It is something that is either a conscious or subconscious calculation which is based on norms and information gathered through life-experience and observation. Then there is the type of trust that is more relationally based, that can cause one to believe that a spouse will be faithful “till death do us part.” This type of trust is one which can only develop through a cooperative relationship between two people. Both of these types of trusts are applicable to the businesses world. There has been an increase in the study of trust and it’s affect of buyer-seller relationships in the past few decades. These studies have strived to discover if profitability that comes from the development of these relationships causes these relationships to develop, and what their affect on the perceptions of image of those firms or people that are involved. Throughout this paper, the terms “firm,” “business,” and “organization,” will be used interchangeably, since it is this authors belief that the concepts and theories discussed in this paper are not only applicable to the business world, but also to non-profit organizations, governmental organizations, and to some extent, individuals, though applications to the individual will be pointed out in this paper.

During the past few decades businesspeople have begun to realize that price isn’t the only selling point of a product, but the people, communication, and relationships are central to the business process (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Due to the fact that doing business is so firmly based in interpersonal and organizational interaction, trust is vital to developing a platform in which both parties are comfortable and eager to do business with each other. The term that developed to encompass the development and maintenance of business relationships such as contracts,

marketing, partnerships, and alliance is “relationship marketing” (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Businesses have been eager to learn how relationship marketing is able to positively affect long-term growth, sales, and profitability. Therefore in recent years, the literature on the subject of trust and commitment in relationship has grown. Morgan and Hunt (1994) did a great amount to further the research of relationship marketing, showing how developing trust, while not an easy thing to do, is multifaceted and, if done correctly, particularly with the right intentions, creates a long lasting relationship between cooperating businesses. Since there are a variety of benefits that stem from long term, cooperative relationships between organizations, particularly between buyers and suppliers, there has been a desire to learn as much as possible about the trust component of these business relationships. Practically, there has been literature written that theories about the steps of the development of a relationship of trust (Dwyer, Schurr & Oh, 1987). Researches have also looked to discover which interpersonal factors are important in a salesperson or company representative in order to facilitate the development of trust has also been done (Moorman, Deshpandé & Zaltman, 1993). Significant study on the long-term benefits of developing relationships between suppliers and buyers has not been left untouched (Downey, Cannon & Mullen, 1998; Kalawani & Narayandas, 1995; Gaesan, 1994). All of these different dimensions of the development of a relationship of trust will be discussed and explained in this paper.

Since there can be no denial of the rewards that come from developing trust in buyer-supplier relationships the question becomes, how can one foster these positive, relationship building values and characteristics with members of another business organization and eventually between organizations themselves? Through research, scholars have been able to discover different interpersonal and organizational attributes that foster this type of corporate

culture and system of values. This author has taken notice of how many of these values align with the values taught by Jesus Christ. Therefore, as this paper looks to understand the nature of trust between organizations with economic interests in one another, it can be seen that fostering these values within oneself and within the organization will help trust develop within buyer-supplier relationships and support to an organization, business, salesperson, or other business professional as they seek to stay ahead in an increasingly global and competitive marketplace. This paper will also attempt to connect the theology of Jesus Christ with the practical daily actions and strategic decisions of Christians in the workplace as they seek to develop business partnerships with other organizations. This paper was written in the hope of giving businesspeople and people within organizations who consider themselves member of Christ's Kingdom, a better understanding of how trust development in professional relationships is important and useful in their organizational partnerships, and to show them how the values of Christianity help the development of these relationships.

Research Question

What do the values of trust, commitment, and relationship have to do with the development of trust in business relationships and how do the values taught by Jesus Christ help facilitate the growth and maintenance of these relationships of trust in both businesses and organizations?

II.

Trust

There are a variety of different definitions of trust in the scholarly business literature, as researchers have worked to fully explain and define it. When trying to characterize trust, it can be, in its simplest form, seen as a calculated process, in which the decision to trust or not to trust is based on a calculation of risks against the possibility of rewards that could be gained from trusting the other party (Lindskold, 1978). From a business perspective, and considering the expectations of the responsibilities that are included in the relationship of trust, trust can be defined as “the firm’s belief that another company will perform actions that will result in positive outcomes for the firm as well as not take unexpected actions that would result in negative outcomes for the firm” (Anderson & Narus 1986, p. 326). A fuller definition should be required of trust. It must be one that not only takes into about the expectations and result of the relationship, but also focuses on the underlying relational values and beliefs that make up the core foundation, which allows two firms to function together in a partnership. Take for example the observation that Morrman, Deshapandé and Zaltman (1993) make concerning the predominate feeling about the general nature of trust in the market, when they say that it is, “a belief, confidence, or expectation about an exchange partner’s trustworthiness that results from the partner’s expertise, reliability, or intentionality” (p. 82). This seems to be a more holistic definition that takes into account the underling values that allow trust to develop and puts more of an emphasis on the relational factor of a business partnership.

Before a discussion and exploration of the development of trust, foundational questions must be asked. Why does there need to be trust in the relationship? Why should a business seek

to facilitate the development of trust in the business relationship at all? What value does it bring, after all, should one allow their business to become vulnerable to an outsider, when one could have a relationship where power and control guarantee results? Thankfully, people before us have asked these questions, and through research, they have found answers. Morgan and Hunt (1994) found that relationships of trust are highly valued in businesses and that there is a desire to expand these relationships among those who already have these types of relationships. Morgan and Hunt (1994) talk of how collaboration is necessary to compete in the market, “To be an effective competitor (in the global economy) requires one to be a trusted cooperator” (p. 20). What a relationship or partnership between businesses does is that it looks to work together to satisfy the demands of the market (Anderson & Narus, 1990). This desire to develop these relationships further should tell us something about the positives that people see within these relationships of trust. Selnes and Sallis, as well as Smith and Barclay (cited in Grayson, Johnson & Chen, 2008), found that having trust in an organizational partnership “increases relationship investments, communication, and performance and reduces costs and opportunistic behavior” (p. 82).

Researchers have numerous positive results pertaining to cooperation business relationships that are defined by trust. There have been findings that show if there is more trust in a supplier then the buyer will be more cooperative (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). It is also possible for trust to lower the transactional costs between the partners (Norodewier, John & Nevin, 1990). Additionally, Scholars have found that if there is trust, then the buyer will work harder within the scope of the relationship as it develops (Anderson, Lodish, & Weitz, 1987). It has also been revealed through research, that levels of trust are related to the expectations that, in the future, the relationship between the two will continue (Doney & Cannon, 1997). Not only is there this

perception that the relationship will continue, but that this trust will give the partner the expectation that the future of the relationship will be productive (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). This trust also helps managers more easily implement their strategies, as it helps them better synchronize their goals, thoughts and ideas with other managers (McAlister, 1995). If there is no trust between suppliers and buyers, then the other is more likely to act dishonestly and is more likely to be unreliable (Doney & Cannon, 1997). “If there is trust then there will be the ability to work through difficult circumstances, even low profitability” (Sullivan & Peterson 1982, p. 30). What trust does is that it “reduces the perception of risk associated with opportunistic behaviors by the vendor, it increase the confidence of the retailer that short-term inequities will be resolved over a long perception and it reduces the transaction cost in an exchange relationship” (Ganesan, 1994, p. 3).

The Growth of Trust

Trust in the business relationship, between two organizations, or two representatives of those organizations, is very similar in development, to the trust that develops between two people who are exploring one another as they try to discover how they can build an effective cooperation. The first type of trust that people have when they are in the exploratory and initial stages of the relationship is calculative trust, the simplest and weakest form of trust (Doney & Cannon, 1997). The relationship develops first on a calculative basis as both parties try to figure out what is needed in the nature of their relationship and where the risks need to be taken, so they know how and when it would be best to allow themselves to become vulnerable (Downey, Cannon, & Mullen, 1998). This vulnerability is essential in the relationship, because the act of allowing for vulnerability shows trust, otherwise, the relationship will breed suspicion, and the

relationship will be about power and control, as opposed to being about interdependence and cooperation (Moorman, Deshpandé, & Zaltman, 1993). Due to the fact, that at the beginning of any relationship, there has not been any trust developed, it is essential that there be an understanding that the direct experience in the early interactions of the relationship will probably end up being the main instances that the two firms will use to judge the trustworthiness of the other business (Dwyer, Schurr, & Oh 1987). The hope for both is that eventually, if a long-term relationship is discovered to be desirable and useful, that an internalization of the other's desires and intentions would occur, because when this occurs then the strongest form of trust is able to develop (Doney & Cannon, 1997).

Dwyer, Schurr and Oh (1987) have developed five phases through which a relationship of trust develops: Awareness, Exploration, Expansion, Commitment, and finally, Dissolution. As can be seen with these steps, developing trust between relationships takes a good amount of effort and time (Doney & Cannon, 1997). The awareness and exploration phases have been discussed in the previous paragraph. When businesses learn of the need for the relationship, they begin to interact analytically and cautiously as they begin to interact and develop a relationship with a partnering firm. The Expansion phase, which comes next in the five phases, will now be discussed. As the relationship develops, the partners start to see more and more of the benefits that come from the cooperative relationship (Dwyer, Schurr, & Oh, 1987). There is a type of "Courtship" between the two businesses that occurs, as the relationship develops and both firms see whether the other should be trusted, and enter a long-term relationship together (Doney & Cannon, 1997). If there is a desire for the relationship to continue to grow then there are two essential components that need to be present in order for an interdependent relationship of trust to develop.

These two components are vulnerability and uncertainty. Both are necessary for trust to develop, because if the partners did not feel vulnerable then there would be no chance that a negative outcome would occur, therefore negating the need to trust. It is essential that those who are within this type of buyer-seller relationship feel safe (Selnes, 1998). Yet, uncertainty must also be present, because without it, one party will control the other in an attempt to gain power and control over the partner, which would most likely be caused by a desire to decrease the risk of transaction (Deutsch, 1958). A relationship characterized by trust allows for a long-term investment in one another to be made by both groups involved, in the hopes that the cooperative investment will bring about successes for parties. However, any move to use power and completely remove vulnerability or uncertainty would hurt the relationship and thus hurt chances of the benefits that can come from the benefits of partnership (Ganesan, 1994).

One of the most important factors, which actually helps develop the trust between to organizations, is the expertise that is shown through the interactions of the two businesses (Moorman, Deshpandé, & Zaltman, 1993; Root & Kinnear, 1991). Since it has been show that reputation leads to trust (Ganesan, 1994). If an organization can show itself to be one that knows it product or service, and is knowledgeable about the market, then the other organization is going to be much more likely to put its trust in them. Once the other partner is satisfied, possibly impressed, by the expertise that is shown by the firm or representatives of the firm, and then this reputation will surely spread. This will lead to positive trust within the organization, which could even be transferred from this developed relationship of trust to other organizations through the process of transference with whom this trust has not been built up (Doney & Cannon, 1997).

One of the more interesting topics involving the process of developing trust early on in the relationship is this idea of transference. It is a very simple concept to understand, because it is something that people do often on the interpersonal level. Take for example, a man who has two friends. He introduces his two friends who do not know each other to one another. Currently, there is no relationship between these two friends of the man, but they already have a stronger foundation for developing trust, then two other strangers, because the trust that they have in the man, whom they both know, is transferred to this new 'friend of a friend' whom they have just met. Since they have already developed trust with the man, they are able to more easily trust this new person, because they can base their new relationship of trust, not merely on a calculative basis, but also on the trust that they have with the man who introduced them, and who claims both of them as friends. In that way, the relationship of these two friends will be, based on trust transferred from the man to each of them, initially stronger. This is also true in a business relationship, whether it be between two firms or between two sales people from the cooperative organizations. If there is an organization that has trust in another, then the reputation of trustworthiness will have the potential to be transferred through the outside contacts of both organizations. This trust is then transferred, not only to partners of the member, but to individuals within the organization.

Commitment

The relationship between commitment and trust is similar to that of the chicken and the egg. Does commitment leads to trust, or that trust leads to commitment? In actuality, they work hand in hand; one will not and cannot trust another unless they are willing to commit to a relationship of some capacity. If there is not this commitment to a relationship then there is no

point to putting in the effort into developing trust. One does not want to commit to a relationship where there is not trust. It would be foolish to allow oneself to become engrained in a relationship where there was not trust. When you can have calculative trust early on in the relationship there is less of a need for commitment, but the rewards of the relationship are also less because this is not a type of trust that will allow for the benefits of cooperation, due to the fact that there is still a good deal of caution and fear in the relationship. Even in the youngest of buyer-supplier (business) relationships there is the concern over the switching cost that will occur if the relationship fails, which gives the businesses, particularly the buyer, an additional reason to work to develop commitment in the relationship (Dwyer, Schurr, & Oh, 1987). Trust, the type that comes from relational interaction, is able to shift the focus of business relationships to the long-term (Ganesan, 1994) in the hopes that developing this relationship will become a healthy investment with long-term payoffs for the company (Doney & Cannon, 1997). The deciding factor of whether to continue the relationship or not, comes from whether the relationship will be economically efficient and was fair in past transactions (Selnes, 1998). Dwyer, Schurr and Oh (1987) divided commitment into three characteristics. These three characteristics are inputs, durability, and consistency.

Both partners in the relationship need to have input into the relationship, otherwise both partners will not be able benefit from the relationship, and if one feels as though they are inputting into the relationship all the time, but not receiving any input from the partner, then they will lose their desire to be a part of the relationship, because they are not getting anything out of it (Ganesan, 1994). If there is going to be commitment in the relationship, then there also needs to be durability, the relationship of trust needs to be able to last a considerable amount of time and needs to be able to withstand issues and problems that are bound to occur. If the relationship is

not durable, then it will surely crumble at the first problem that gets in its way, and if it is destined to crumble and there is no possibility for the long-term, then the relationship is not worth the required effort that comes with commitment. Consistency is also very important for the development and maintaining of commitment in the relationship (Dwyer, Schurr, & Oh, 1987). In relationships, and particularly in business relationships, in which the fate and efficiency of the business is concerned, it is important that there be an effort on both sides to decrease risk in the relationship. The best way to do this is to help the relationship to be partially defined by consistency, in this way everyone is going to be able to understand what the purpose of the relationship and where the relationship is for. Relationships that are characterized by trust increase the possibility that business will be done between the firms in the future, because if there is knowledge of a commitment to the future, then there is an understanding that the partnering firm will not do anything that they believe will hurt the parties involved, which most likely means there will be a desire on both sides to keep the relationship consistent (Doney & Cannon, 1997).

What the level of commitment in the relationship really helps show is the quality of a relationship and it is quality of the relationship that really shows how rewarding the relationship will be, the better the quality of the relationship, the better the futures sales opportunities. Relationship quality is also a long-term indicator of the overall sales success of the relationship (Crosby, Evans, & Cowles, 1990). If there is a commitment in the relationship along with trust, then as the relationship between the two firms develops, they are going to become more and more interdependent (Selnes, 1998). What is needed in effective relationships that enjoy commitment is the ability to developed shared goals and cooperation planning, along with trust

and commitment. Then there relationship will enjoy even more inputs, durability, and consistency as they become more likeminded and interdependent (Dwyer, Schurr, & Oh, 1987).

Morgan and Hunt (1994) have concluded that “cooperation arises directly from both relationship commitment and trust” (p. 25). While Anderson and Narus (1990) believe that “cooperation leads to trust which, in tern, leads to a greater wiliness to cooperate in the future, which then generates greater trust, and so on” (p. 54) . In the end, we see that trust and commitment to the relationship are interrelated to the point where one does not cause the other, but both have to be present in order for there to be a relationship of trust or a developing relationship of trust. If there is trust in the relationship then it allows for people to focus on the long term benefits of the relationship (Ganesan, 1994) “ultimately enhancing competitiveness and reducing transaction costs” (Noordewier, John, & Nevin, 1990).

Communication

In much of the research on trust, the idea of communication is prevalent, but the information is either based on the assumption that trust causes communication (Dwyer, Schurr, & Oh, 1987) or that it is communication that causes trust (Anderson, Lodish, & Weitz, 1987). Fang, Palmaiter, Scheer and Li (2008) noticed in their research that the organization teams that they studied need to share information, ideas, and insights in order to work effectively. What can be taken from this is just how vital communication, both inter-organizational and intra-organizational, is since efficiency is so closely connected to it. If a Supplier wants to get the best information so that they can have all the information they need to make the best decision they need to openly share information, so that the communication is able to go back and forth, both ways (Cannon & Homburg, 2001). There is a need for mutual disclosure if only one side

discloses this will result in distrust (Crosby, Evans, & Cowles, 1990). Suppliers cannot just assume that Buyers will give out information without some sort of reciprocity. This is why trust is so vital to develop in these relationships. These relationships cannot and will not develop unless the partners exchange information on their needs, wants, and expectations of the relationship (Dwyer, Schurr, & Oh, 1987).

One of the results of this open communication is conflict, since it is probably going to be caused by the goals and values of the two partners, which are not fully aligned. If these issues are correctly dealt with through functional conflict, with honesty and openness, the relationship between the two firms will come out of the conflict stronger (Cannon & Homburg, 2001). Having this type of open and honest communication reduces uncertainty in the relationship, which adds value to the relationship (Zaltman & Moorman, 1988). When there is a relationship, people have to expose themselves and allow for the potential of loss, if they have a desire to have a relationship of trust (Anderson & Narus, 1990). Uncertainty in the market means the best thing for a customer to do is to initiate and maintain these relationships, so that both firms have the correct information to be more competitive (Crosby, Evans, & Cowles, 1990). Responsible handling of issues and conflicts increases trust because it shows responsibility and a desire to continue the relationship (Selnes, 1998). One interesting point that has been made in the literature on functional conflict is that it is a result of a relationship of trust (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). This means that it is actually a positive thing to have functional conflict, because it means that there is enough trust already developed within the relationship where the fear that comes from conflict is less, because there is a trust there is also a belief that the two parties will be able to work through any issues that might occur.

Now that it has been shown that open and effective communication is important to and necessary to developing a strong relationship of trust, the way that a firm communicates with its partner is important. It is imperative to note that in order to make sure that the venture between the two companies is a success there must be working relationships between the two firms (Fang, Palmiter, Scheer, & Li, 2008). There are messages that can be sent through the types and styles of communication that are used when interacting, that will help facilitate the development of trust and commitment. One must be careful that interactions do not become too formalized, because that has been found to be significantly and negatively affect the trust in the relationship. It has also been found that if an organization conducts it self as being highly layered then that also leads to lower trust (Moorman, Deshpandé, & Zaltman, 1993). Consistent and frequent communication between the two organizations is essential in maintaining the quality of the relationship (Crosby, Evans, & Cowles, 1990). It is also important that the representative of the company to the other organization has and is able to show expertise in the product or service that the relationship is used for, because this also increases trust as the partner is able to see the experience of the representative and therefore gains more confidence in not only the representative, but also the organization as a whole (Moorman, Deshpandé, & Zaltman, 1993). For through the sharing of information can the relationship develop into something that creates a competitive advantage for both parties involved (Ganesan, 1994).

Trust Development through Relationship Management

Now that an understanding about the development of relationships of trust, and the reasons behind the desire to develop these relationships at an organizational level has been discussed, the exploration of trust will now be shifted toward the individual within a business. A

lot of times, especially within a buyer-supplier business relationship the main contact person for one of the firms is a salesperson from the other firm. This however presents a challenge, since there tends to be a distrust of salespeople (Swan & Adkins, 1980/81). If, however, a business understands the need to develop relationships of trust in their business relationships they must learn to view their employee, who has the main responsibility of interaction in the relationship, as a 'relationship manager' (Crosby, Evans, & Cowles, 1990; Swan & Nolan, 1985). Since it is trust in a relationship that influences the plans for future purchases, then it is important that a salesperson develop trust with the other organization. This facilitation and development of trust should be considered a part of the companies marketing strategy and possibly should be the primary focus (Doney & Cannon, 1997). The salesperson has to understand that while organizations may have developed trust through reputation and transference, it is primarily through them that the trust between organizations will develop (Lewis & Weigert, 1985).

Though sales are dependent primarily on the quality of the relationship of trust between organizations, there are a variety of characteristics that can be used by the salesperson to help increase the quality of the relationship, one being similarity between the two partners and another showing their expertise (Crosby, Evans, & Cowles, 1990). It is these interpersonal characteristics, skills, and abilities that will help develop the interpersonal relationship, which will be, in turn, transferred to the organizations and help develop trust between the two companies (Moorman, Deshpandé, & Zaltman, 1993). Golembiewski and McConkie (1975) go further to suggest that "perhaps there is no other single variable which so thoroughly influences interpersonal and inter group behavior" (p. 131).

The "service quality" is what the salesperson has the most immediate impact in the relationship (Crosby, Evans, & Cowles, 1990)." Since trust between salespeople and their

companies are so interconnected, a salesperson (relationship manager) must constantly trying to build up trust with the partner company, and delivering on promises that are made. If a salesperson cannot complete something that he has promised to do, then that will adversely affect the trust in the relationship between buyer and supplier (Doney & Cannon, 1997; Swan & Nolan, 1985). If one can provide the benefits that were promised affectively, and within the time said then this will improve the customer's relationship (Ganesan, 1994). After all, fulfilling a promise is one of the best ways to show trust, because it actively shows truthfulness (Deutsch, 1958).

There is a good amount of research on how interpersonal qualities provide positive outcomes in relationships. A person's personality has been found to help develop the relationship between the two firms (Rotter, 1980). Some of these interpersonal factors that are so important to the development of trust in business relationships are: "perceived researcher integrity, willingness to reduce research uncertainty, confidentiality, expertise, tactfulness, sincerity, congeniality, and timeliness" (Moorman, Deshpandé, & Zaltman, 1993). Some of the other characteristics included credibility, benevolence and reliability (Ganesan, 1994). Many of these perceived qualities do not have as much of a long-term affect on sales or future expectations, but they do positively affect the perception of the buyer-seller relationship (Crosby, Evans, & Cowles, 1990). Interestingly enough, if a salesperson is focused on the long term relationship, then it positively affects the buyers perception of the relationship, because this shows a long term commitment to the relationship which and, as we have already discussed commitment helps lead to trust (Crosby, Evans, & Cowles, 1990).

Thinking about a salesperson who is beginning with an organization whom he is looking to, or having already been partnering with his business, develop a relationship of trust with, he

must look to find his way past the initial calculative trust so that he can begin to help developing trust for his organization. If there are ‘credentials,’ such as education, years of experience, etc., that the salesperson can provide them; this will help instill more confidence in his abilities and therefore, will provide more initial trust (Swan, Trawick, & Silva, 1985). The overall image of the firm, itself, can also increase trust in the relationship and for the salesperson (Kotler, 1984). The salesperson also may already have a bit of trust, through transference, from the buyers experience with the salespeople and the firm, if there has already been some sort of a previous relationship (Lindskold, 1978). What businesses partners really need and would benefit from, is having salespeople who themselves are researchers of their product, that have quality information and are able to interpret the changing market. Then they will be able to provide better advice to the partnering firm which is very important because of a partner’s reliance on their decisions and information (Moorman, Deshpandé, & Zaltman, 1993). Someone who is able to be flexible and has the ability to change as the needs of the specific relationship change is also a confidence and trust building characteristic of a good relationship manager (Cannon & Homburg, 2001). Frequent contact also helps develop the relationship, because it conveys the fact that the partner is both valuable and necessary to the partnering organization (Doney & Cannon, 1997).

Personality also can help the front-man of an organization build trust and increase the overall quality of a relationship. As mentioned earlier perceived, benevolence was found to have a positive affect on trust in a relationship. As defined by Doney and Cannon (1997):

“Benevolence is the extent to which one partner is genuinely interested in the other partner welfare and innovated to seeks joint gain” (p. 36). Likeability and similarity are also positively associated with developing the quality of relationship between business partners. Knowledge of

a salesperson's motivation also helps them build trust (Doney & Cannon, 1997). People need to know the motivation behind a salesperson's actions so that they feel as though they can more easily predict the actions and if they know their motivation they will have a much clearer window in the beliefs and values of the salesperson.

III.

Managerial Implications

The marketplace is growing, and thanks to globalization, competition is also growing. This has caused global and multinational organizations to look for new ways to harness the benefits of diversity that is now common in business, and these organizations are seeking to better understand the impact that this new multiculturalism has on the overall behavior of their organizations (Cox, 1991). Managers need to understand that their salespeople and the relationships that they are given to build and maintain are going to be the key to developing partnerships which are going to lead to lower costs and allow both organizations to become more competitive. The only way for these partnerships to develop in a way that will provide these competitive advantages, is by developing relationships of trust with these partners. Therefore, managers should make sure that those under them who are representatives of the companies understand the importance and methods of trust development, open communication, being honest and being benevolent. Since good managers should take the responsibility of implementing their organization's vision, mission, and corporate culture, they should look to put in place practices and process that would facilitate these relationships of trust to develop, and particularly, for Christian managers and businesspeople, how the values taught by Jesus Christ help people better understand how to live life and how to conduct business. One must not forget that the concepts and values in this paper are applicable and useful to non-profit organizations and other associations that are not seeking to make a monetary profit.

Relationship

Often when people hear the word “business” and think about “business” they think of something that is very quantitative, a force that is only focused on lowering prices at all costs. In order for this force to work well, it really doesn’t require any human feeling or relationship. Then, if trust is mentioned within the business world, some people might even laugh at the thought that such a trait would be found in this ‘quantitative force,’ a response that has only been expanded by the scandals involving large corporations such as Enron and WorldCom. The idea that trust plays a primary role in the cutthroat world of commerce might strike some people as foolish. This is simply not the case. Relationship is extremely important in a business, just as it is of utmost importance if one ever wants to complete a task, or reach a goal through the help of others. What trust does to a relationship is that it allows the parties involved to work closer together, and if trust does develop within the relationship the relationship becomes even more valuable. As the trust in the relationship increases, so does the value of the relationship, not only because of the amount of time that has been invested in building this relationship of trust between the two firms, but also because of the potential competitive advantages that can be gained from a relationship of trust, including shared information and resources, consistent sales for suppliers, and reduction of operation costs.

What needs to happen for partnerships between buyers and suppliers, or between any two organizations that are looking to develop a collaborative partnership, is to view it as a relationship that needs to be developed, invested in, and protected, just like any other important interpersonal relationship or business asset. Levitt (1983) takes this view of the relationship even further, in the way that he parallels the business relationship to a romantic relationship, as he says, when describing the completion of a sale, “...the sale merely consummates the

courtship. Then the marriage begins. How good the marriage is depends on how well the relationship is managed by the seller” (p.111). If an organization wants to keep their relationships healthy, they must make sure that the people whom they have given the responsibility to develop and maintain these relationships have the right personality, beliefs, and values, to improve the image of the organization, so that this relationship can lead to the cooperative competitive advantages that are the desired benefits of these types of business relationships.

What leaps out when looking over the literature on the nature of trust, which was just presented in a consolidated form, in these business relationships, is those values which are needed to build a strong relationship of trust between two partnering business organizations, is the parallels between those values that are desirable in these business relationships and the values and teachings of the Bible. What can be taken from this? Well, if the values that are desirable to trust building in relationships match the values that are desirable in Christianity, then it would follow that those who believe in, have, and live by the values presented in the Bible would have the skills and characteristics that are desirable in a relationship manager who is charged with developing a relationship of trust between two partnering organizations.

Personality

Personality has been shown to be very important to a relationship manager because not only is it something that is natural to them but it does not necessarily have to be learned or built. Out of all the characteristics of a person, their personality is probably the most noticeable and most memorable, particularly during those initial interactions. The same is true with salespeople, personality is probably going to be one of the most important traits of the relationship manager, because it is not only the first thing that the representatives of the partner organization is going to

see, but it is also an intangible relationship style that is essential to developing normalcy and comfort in the relationship. This creates a situation that facilitates the building of a relationship of trust. Jesus even applauds the manager in the Parable of the Shrewd Manager (Lk. 16-1-6, *The New International Version Bible*) who uses his master's resources to build relationships with his master's customers. Though this is a difficult passage to understand and interpret, one thing that can be taken from it is that an important key to doing business well, which is also true in life, is developing these relationships and partnerships.

Research has show that if the partnering firm is able to feel that there is similarity between the salesperson and themselves or their organization, in such things as appearance, lifestyle, and socioeconomic status, then it is going to have a positive affect on the growth of trust in the relationship (Crosby, Evans, & Cowles, 1990). In the Bible, it points out how much more people that are more comfortable are at accepting new ideas and people if they are feeling those things are similar. Paul writes, "...I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some" (I Cor. 9:22b). Though the connection may not immediately seem apparent since Paul is writing here about spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ, should Christians not be looking to further the Kingdom and be a blessing to their stakeholders, a group which includes their partnering firms? Christian businesspeople, working in an organization that either shares or does not share their values or beliefs, can bring about positive development in their relationships, by becoming or employing people who are similar to those you are looking to reach by developing relationships of trust. In this way, it is a blessing to them, because of the comfort that is given through being similar to a partnering organization that leads to an increased desire to build a relationship with the business.

It has also been shown, through research, that if the partnering organization perceives that there is sincerity, integrity, dependability, timeliness, and congeniality, it also helps allow for the development of trust in the relationship (Moorman, Deshpandé, & Zaltman, 1993). Some of these characteristics such as timeliness and congeniality, have more to do with personality and cultural norms that are valued by our culture, and are not universally desired. They can also differ from person to person. The others: sincerity, integrity, and dependability, all have foundations in values and beliefs that are promoted in the Bible. Honesty, the speaking of truth, is one of these core beliefs that serve as a foundation for sincerity, integrity, and dependability. Proverbs 8:7, “My mouth speaks what is true, for my lips detest wickedness”. The Bible talks about God being the God of Truth (Is. 56:16). It has been deep grounded in the Western and Christian traditions that seeking truth is of the paramount importance. From this trust comes honesty, and if one is honest they will be sincere, full of integrity as they seek to do what is right, and will be dependable to their word. It is important that a businessperson be able to do what they say, and say what they do. If a businessperson says that his company will be able to have five hundred widgets shipped by Monday, they had better be able to have five hundred widgets shipped by Monday. If they sincerely cannot complete that order then they are not having integrity to let the partnering firm on their capabilities, because of the lack of sincerity in the promise, lack of integrity (if it was known by the salesperson that the order could not be completed by Monday), and the lack of dependability that occurred in the transaction will result in a lack of trust by the buyer.

Expertise

This is also why expertise is so important. The salesperson needs to know what his company and product is capable of doing and in what amount of time, so that he can have

integrity and sincerity as his is informing the partnering firm about the product or service. If this relationship manager is not given the tools and knowledge to inform the buyer, so that they can make an informed decision about the purchase, then the salesperson will not be able to develop that trust well. Jesus tells his disciples, "Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves (Mt. 10:16)." As businesspeople, Christians need to be "innocent," honest, benevolent, and good, but this does not mean that they should not be "shrewd" and allow themselves to be taken advantage of or be content with not being the best or most knowledgeable, with the expertise that allows them to be competitive within the marketplace. It is also through this conveyance of expert information that can be another opportunity to develop trust. It has been found that if the salesperson has a long-term orientation in the advice that he gives to the partnering firm, then that firm will see that there is a desire by both relationship manager and their organization to develop a long-term relationship with the firm, even if it means limiting the initial sales amount. It shows that the selling firm has an understanding of the lifetime value of a customer and that developing this relationship of trust is more important than making 'a quick buck.' When the partnering firm sees this desire for a long-term orientation, and the selling firm's desire to do what is best for the partnering firm, even if it means sacrificing initial profit, that firm is going to be much more apt to desire to develop a relationship of trust with the buyer, because they have seen first hand that the concern that the selling firm has for the interests of the partnering firm. Yet, one cannot forget the natural and key competitive value of lowering costs for buyers (Cannon & Homburg, 2001).

Often times, it seems as though Christians overlook this need for expertise and quality in the field of business, particularly when doing business or interacting with other business, organizations, and people that also base their values on the Bible. To take from the teachings of

Jesus in the Parable of the Talents (Mt. 25:14-30) in which the master of the house expects his servants to use their expertise and skills in business to invest his money. When the master of the house returns, he rewards those whom used their expertise and resources to the best of their ability, and rewarded those who used what he has given them to make a profit. Yet, the one who didn't invest his money, wasting his expertise, was condemned and punished when the master returned home. Jesus requires that Christians use the talents and resources to the best of their ability in the work of growing the Kingdom for the King. Yet, there seems to be the expectation, that the expectations and requirements of doing business between Christians is not the same as between Christians and those who are not Christians. These expectations that there is natural trust and additional leeway that is innately entitled too because of the similarity of religious beliefs and values. Some Christians have exploited these similarities and sense of entitlement to encourage and perpetuate bad business practices. Though a Christian's religious values and beliefs should holistically affect aspect of their lives, they must also realize that in the market it needs to be a level playing field and Christians cannot show favoritism to people who share beliefs, because of the risk of elitism and isolationism, for Christians there is the idea that Christians would be 'in the world, not of it' (Jn. 15:19). Rather, Christians should work to use the expertise and skills that they have been blessed with to bless those around them through business, which should be done with non-Christians and Christians. It also is simply not smart business practice to limit oneself to doing business with those who are believers and think in the same way, or to choose suppliers and business partners on the basis of similarity in religious beliefs, as opposed to things that are necessary for a healthy business relationship, such as trustworthiness, expertise, reliability, services provided, value and price.

Perception versus Reality

Out of all of those characteristics that were found to help develop relationships of trust it was found that perceived integrity was the most important for determining trust within the relationship (Moorman, Deshpandé, & Zaltman, 1993). With perception being such a large variable in research done on trust in the business relationship, it is important that throughout the relationship, there is going to be a need to keep up this perception. The best way to do this is to actually have an organization whose activities are characterized by integrity, and other interrelated values such as benevolence and honesty. If an organization and managers value integrity and puts it at the forefront of its business practices, then the perception of this integrity will follow. This sentiment is echoed by Jesus in the Faithful Servant Parable (Lk. 12:42-48, Mt. 24:45-51) in which it is the “faithful and wise manager,” the one with integrity, who is watchful is put in charge of his servants, and tells of the issues, problems, and punishment that is ensured, of a manager who acts wickedly, who is one that does not take care of the employees, and does not have a long-term commitment to the master.

By building these values into an organization allows for the natural and long-term allowance there is not the worry or work that would be put into creating a false sense of integrity. Even if an organization is able to create a false perception of integrity, much energy and effort is going to be put into continuing to keep this false perception of integrity in place. Initially there may not be much difference in the relationship if an organization is able to keep the perceived integrity high, without genuine integrity behind the perception. Eventually, something will occur that will destroy this false perception of integrity and the relationship of trust will be shattered. Therefore, in order to create a perception of trust without a foundation of integrity is impossible in a long-term relationship. It follows, that in order to create a long-term cooperative

relationship, it must be based on integrity, the most important determining factor in creating trust (Moorman, Deshapandé, & Zaltman, 1993). For the Lord also blesses and protects a man who is upright and full of integrity (Prov. 2:7-8).

Benevolence

If the desires of one of the partnering firms is benevolent in nature that it is possible that the partners will eventually have similar values and expectations (Macneil, 1980). This connection between partnership, benevolence, and creation of shared values in a unique and wonderful opportunity for those who are looking to share the truths that they have discovered from their Biblical values with those that they are interacting with on a daily basis in the work setting. It also helps support the arguments that businesses which are socially conscious and have a benevolent nature and mission, looking to be a blessing to their shareholders, actually helps these business gain a competitive advantage.

Luke 16:9 says, "I [Jesus] tell you, use your worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings." The focus in the business of Christians should not only be on the current and the material but must also be focused and rooted in the eternal. This verse shows just how important the development of all types of relationships are, both inside and outside of the business realm. It is relationships and people are something that is eternal. Christian business people must learn to find a balance between working with what is urgent now and what is eternally important. While wealth and profit can do a lot of good things for people and for the world, when it is used right, the relationships of trusts that are developed have value in and of themselves. As the Proverb states, "A generous man will himself be blessed, for he shares his food with the poor" (Prov. 22:9).

IV.

Conclusion

Through this exploration of how values develop relationships of trust in businesses and organizations, it has been shown how the values of Christianity, taught by Jesus Christ, parallel many of these values that are desired to create these long-term partnerships with other firms, with the hope of gaining a competitive advantage in the marketplace. Trust, itself, was shown as being a valuable characteristic of relationships in business. If these relationships are able to develop into partnerships, that are healthy and characterized by trust, commitments, and open communication, then it was found that these relationships would lead to positive monetary, strategic, and operational benefits for both firms. After it was shown, through the research of other scholars, that relationships of trust were valuable, and perhaps vital, in the ever-changing marketplace in an ever-changing world, it was discussed what characteristics and actions, based off of a variety of values, salespeople (relationship managers) and organizations would need in order to help build and preserve these inter-organization partnerships with whom these relationships of trust are built. The characteristics found in connection to developing these relationships included: the personality of the relationship manager, the expertise that the relationship manager was able to show the partnering organization, and the benevolence of the manager and his organization.

Ultimately, the values that were revealed to help form relationships of trust between businesses and other types of organizations aligned with some of the values that are presented in the teaching of Jesus Christ, particularly through the principles that he encourages in the stories that he uses to relay morals, parables. Honesty, integrity, and a desire to be a blessing and help

others are just some of the values that form the foundation of a healthy Christian worldview, and they are also some of the values that the theories and practices of building interdependent cooperative partnerships between organizations are rooted in. What can be concluded from this, other than the fact that developing partnerships and relationships of trust with the right organizations will allow both organizations to reap the rewards of cooperation? If the values in the teachings of Jesus Christ, which Christianity is based on, then those who are truly living by these values should be at an advantage, when developing relationships of trust, against those who do not live by these values.

Implications for Future Research

What this paper has done is merely explore the results of and possibilities around the importance of and development of trust in organizational, particularly business, relationships. Due to the limitations caused by a lack of individual research, it is important to realize that the conclusions of this paper are based on comparisons between the literature that has been written on the topic of relationships of trust in business relationships, standard Biblical values, and personal observations. What I, the author, was able to complete in this thesis was a literature review that gives an overview of the current literature on the role of trust and commitment in the buyer-supplier relationship and in inter-organizational partnerships. I have made a variety of claims based off of observations that have not currently been proven through research. Therefore, I invite other scholars, Christian and not, to freely use my ideas to complete research that will give us further information on the development and roles of trust in the business relationship and what parallels this may have with Biblical values, Christian businesses,

organizations, and individuals, including relationship managers, who base their commercial transactions on moral values.

This perspective, connecting the values behind developing relationships of trust with the Biblical values taught in Christianity, could lead to a variety of different topics for further research. There is the affect that doing business based on Christian values can positively affect the development of relationships in business. One could develop the ideas of this paper, what the affect a Christian in a secular business or organization can have through the use of their values. It could also be developed more for people to research what the differences between the companies that have Christian values built into the culture, mission, and vision, compared to those who do not have these values of honesty, integrity, and benevolence engrained in the organization. It would also be interesting to compare the differences and similarities between businesses founded in religious values and organizations that adhere to these values compared to businesses and organizations that also adhere to these values but not because of religious beliefs. One could even research more the Christian network of businesses in the hopes of discovering what the expectations are between Christians who do business with one another, patterns that may stem from this, as well as the similarities and differences that the Christian business network has with other types of business networks. Though a topic that could really bring about a positive shift in the business world would be research that sought to show how being socially conscious and have a vision to bless shareholders would actually gain a competitive advantage for a business, with the expectation that business will begin to more and more base their mission and vision, in people, which are eternal, as opposed to simply being focused on making as much profit as possible.

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