
7

The Cultural and Occupational Roles Attributed to 'Trust' in Talent Management

Derek Cameron

Learning objectives

This chapter provides:

- An explanation of talent and trust expressed through cultural complexity using in-group organisational and out-group occupational processes
- An application of talent recognition through the concept of cultural mutual-equivalence based on trusting beliefs as to what is valuable for the organisation and occupation
- An assessment of motivational considerations in the workplace and the assertion that talent potential should be a developmental process, inclusive to all
- An analysis of trust and talent through the influence of corporate values and human resource policies
- An examination of talent and connotations of trust to problematic scenarios based on operational *push-pull* realities given to an organisational climate subjected to the management and development of change.

After reading this chapter you will be able to:

- Reflect on the importance of trust and trusting beliefs to applications of talent management
- Understand the relationship of in-group, out-group processes through the concept of cultural mutual-equivalence
- Discuss cultural complexity within organisations in the deployment of talent management
- Observe problematic dilemmas of talent and trust brought about by the management change from the perspective of HR management and the labour market.

Introduction

This chapter considers the significance of 'trust' in talent management and assesses its critical nature through cultural and occupational roles, by observing group dynamics within the social framework of mutual-equivalence. Positive forms of trusting beliefs can create an organisational climate that conveys a sense of confidence. This in turn, could inspire generative learning and an innate driving force for talent to manifest itself throughout an organisation's workforce. Notwithstanding, realities of work-life balance and the management of change could, for example in recessionary times, impede notions of mistrust, replacing confidence with some degree of suspicion. By implication this could cause reduced productivity and talent potential. Managing social diversity or unpredictability to on-going organisational dilemmas can be assisted when observed within a cultural setting of in-group (e.g. organisation), out-group (e.g. occupations) processes. Using an applied concept known as mutual-equivalence (Wallace, [1961], ed.1964), an analytical insight could assess positive or negative *push-pull* environmental and operational behaviours such as, for example, a 'recession push' vs. 'prosperity pull' (e.g. Brünjes and Diez, 2013). Such social perceptions (and others) could affect opportunities for talent acquisition or create or inhibit inspired aspirations amongst employees, for which trust would be an important variable to consider.

Trust and talent: in-group, out-group cultural complexity

The question of talent relative to work-performance can be seen as an occupational affiliation with that of corporate culture. From a socio-cultural perspective, organisations are functional entities whose role is to serve society. Applied to the hotel industry, organisations can provide talent opportunities for occupational out-groups; for example, an aspiring chef can play out a quasi-professional role as an occupational member within an in-group (e.g. an organisational culture and its corporate identity). This relationship can be of a reciprocal nature (Cameron *et al.*, 1999; Cameron, 2001). An organisational climate could alternatively be adversarial to less positive forms of trusting beliefs where, for example, there could be a sense '*...that management is not making wise or even prudent decisions*' (Shaw 1997: 45). Where there is such an effect on trust, this will invariably affect talent and its potential for organisational development. An example of mistrust (e.g. the lack of confidence) among occupational group members can create a work climate of suspicion in an organisation. Moreover, discourses attributed to distrust (e.g. to have no confidence) can intensify organisational low-trust perceptions to suspicions of disbelief and cynicism (Warnock-Smith *et al.*, 2016).

In contrast, fundamental to corporate policies and practices, there should therefore notably be an avoidance of motivational loss. This could be achieved by addressing issues of commitment and trust to what is mutually 'valuable'

(Becker, 1960) to both the in-group and out-group(s). Talent attributed to shared trusting beliefs among occupational members and a corporate organisation provides an interesting premise when observed through the conceptual framework of cultural 'mutual-equivalence' (Wallace, [1961] ed.1964). A key component of this theory resides in the principle '*that societies are held together by an organisation of diversity*' (Wallace 1985: 24). As an applied concept, mutual-equivalence confers self-percept to an individual's social-concept that is, for example, through a series of in-group/out-group(s) consensuses that are attributed to cultural norms, practices and values. These are based on standardised cognition but not necessarily cognitive sharing (Wallace [1961] ed.1964: 40) where performance outcomes are culturally beneficial for the occupation (e.g. from the perspective of self-achievement, personal development) and for the organisation (e.g. corporate identity and good reputation). In short, organisations can be talent management gateways for an individual to be inspired through a cultural representation of occupational out-group identity. Moreover, the management of group dynamics can assist in maintaining adaptive strategies-in-use and competence-base functions that effectively engage in human capital and knowledge. Related to the principle of a learning organisation, knowledge learned can and should culturally transcend, disperse and defuse as an accumulation of internalised tacit knowledge. Subsequently, the tacit process (in the form of knowledge) would need to externalise and transform to a mind-set of business strategy.

In short, organisations are systemised processes resembling outcomes of tacit and explicit knowledge, transformed to represent products and services (e.g. Saint-Onge (1996), Leroy and Ramanantsoa (1997), Haldin-Herrgard 2000, Becker 2001). In essence, the process of what has been learned, albeit developmental or otherwise, should be a reciprocal process. For example, strategically a learning organisation is capable of synergising knowledge processes with those of opportunities for innovation. Likewise for occupational groups, a learning organisation allows for career progression such as for example, developmental opportunities for aspiring chefs (Cameron, 2001), or waiters and pursers on board cruise-ships (Dennett *et al.*, 2014). To elaborate briefly, Senge (1990) sees a 'learning organisation' as operationally representing:

'...shift in the mind-set of employees to readily foster generative learning and ultimately, a personal mastery of their job...employees, often inspired by leaders, work in multi-functional teams and are invariably encouraged to see the company, its environment and its systems as a whole rather than in parts'

(cited in: Cameron, *et al.*, 1999: 227).

Put simply, a high performing learning organisation infers constant renewal as it evolves and innovates and therefore, can be the bedrock for talent management within in-group and out-group processes.

Trusting beliefs, behaviours and talent

Shaw (1997), cited in Caproni ed. (2012: 84), perceptively observed: *'the importance of trust becomes clear when we try to imagine a world without it'*. Trusting beliefs and behaviours more often rely on the confidence of others. To reiterate, this can be conveyed by social categorisation to forms of group dynamics. In the employment world, this is invariably expressed by the culture and identity of occupational and organisational work systems and subsequently transmitted to an affiliation of norms, practices, policies and procedures. The trustor, in this case the employee, and the trustee in a typical organisation is likely to be the basis for psychological *'propensity'* given to *'perceived risk'* as an association that develops with components of *'ability, benevolence and integrity'* and; where a *'relationship is likely to alter the relative importance of the factors of trustworthiness'* (Mayer *et al.* (1995: 715-722). In other words, the notion of trustworthiness would need to be manifested in commitment such as an *'identification [of] pride in the organisation [and] the internalisation of the organisation's goals and values'* (Cook and Wall 1980: 40). The aforementioned, when observed, could infer an alignment with the cognitive sharing that would involve the inclusion of occupational values. Notably, the representation in some literature tries to draw the concepts of trust and talent more closely together to characteristics such as *'loyalty and integrity'* with themes relative to *'congruence between individual and organisational values and the role of organisational culture in retaining and attracting talented people'* (Martins and von der Ohe, 2002: 56). Other perspectives link trust to issues of corporate social responsibility as a management tool for *'...combining talents to better processes...'* (Rok and Mulej, 2014: 358). Moreover, in a recent survey *'high-trust companies are far more likely than low-trust companies to have highly engaged and involved workforces and better employee retention ...[when]... leaders prioritize policies to talent acquisition and retention...'* (Atkins 2014/2015: 15). A consensus suggests that the underlining concept of trust and talent needs to be synergised. This can be enacted upon by a work-engagement and involvement being relative to confidence. Here, self-esteem, and esteem from others where work-outcomes are to be competence-based, would be important criteria to consider if talent management is to thrive.

In a review given to hospitality and tourism issues, Kusluvan *et al.* (2010) observed skills (amongst others) to be more effectively employed when organisations demonstrate transparent-functional attributes based on: a *'high-trust culture'* (p.185) where for example; *'...jobs with employees characteristics, needs, and talents...'* (p.197) have been effectively realised within human resource policies and procedures. Further research suggests high trust organisations are better able to deploy and develop talent to *'capabilities leveraging the power of collaborative action'* that effectively aligns employee engagement with strategies of high performance (Dunki, 2009: 63). On a similar sentiment, recent research purports a need for employee engagement to *'actively'* transcend to *'involvement'*, thereby allowing *'opportunities for employees to give their input and/or participate in the decisions that affect them'* (Atkins 2014/2015: 19). It is worth noting that a collaborative approach