The Dynamics of Public Trust in a Business Organisation

Perspective from a Focus Group of Business Consultants

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Objectives

• Identify factors that drive public trust in a business organisation

• Examines the causal structure of the factors

• ... from the perspective of a group of business consultants
Data collection

• Focus group of 8 business consultants
  – Clients (Banking, Financial Serv., Retail & Media)
  – Grades (Associate, Manager, Senior Mgr, Director)

• Three segments in two hours
  – Elicit and debate the trustworthiness dimensions
  – Identify factors that drove public trust in business
  – Discuss and debate the causal relations of the factors
Finding 1 Trustworthiness Dimensions

• Common trustworthiness from literature
  – ability, benevolence, integrity, identification/value congruence, openness/transparency and reliability

• Insights from focus group
  – ‘ability’ was the primary criterion
  – a compromise in ability would not automatically result in a reduction of trust but instead in a ‘deeper evaluation of trustworthiness’
Finding 2 Trust Drivers

• Drivers
  – direct experience, personal background & knowledge (PB&K), personality traits (PT), media-portrayal, friends/family opinions, organisational response

• The group argued that
  – Direct experience and second-hand sources directly influence trustworthiness assessment
  – PB&K and PT mediate direct experience and use of second-hand sources
Finding 3 Effect of Trust Drivers

• Direct experience is more dominant than second-hand sources

• Transfer of trust (word-of-mouth effect)

• Same factors are used to assess ability and deeper character dimensions
Conclusion

• The perception of business consultants the public trust in a business organisation
  – Insights
  – Causal loop diagram

• Limitations
  – Small sample size

• Future work
  – Focus on specific case of public-business trust
  – More empirical data collection (different actors)
  – Comment or feedback?