



Book Review

Covey, S.M., & Link, G. (2012). *Smart Trust*. New York, NY: Free Press. Hardcover, \$29.99. 322 pages. ISBN: 978-1-4516-5147-8.

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The book that will be reviewed in the following pages is *Smart Trust*. The book was coauthored by Stephen M. R. Covey and Greg Link. The book is classified under the management section in most book stores, and is one of the leading sellers in various publications. The writing engages the eponym title, trust, in which the writers argue that one of the leading causes for the global recession and many of the current global problems is the decaying trust between people, governments, and business.

The authors' purpose for writing the book is to convey the importance that trust plays in the prosperity for business, government, and people. They use various anecdotes and cases where leading companies that have built high-trust relationships with their employees, partners, and customers, consistently outperform non high-trust companies up to three times (Covey & Link, 2012). Additionally, many executives value Covey's and Link's perception of trust as it can be demonstrated by the commentary of Randall Stephenson, Chairman, President, and CEO of AT&T "We've turned to Stephen M. R. Covey to help us train more than 100,000 AT&T managers... I recommend *Smart Trust* to anyone trying to succeed in today's fast-paced, global business environment." Altogether, the book seeks to instill in its readers the need to develop trust with the people around them and their employers, and lays out a five step blueprint of how to do so.

Before describing the five steps to build high trust, it is important to understand what the authors mean when they say "smart trust." The authors describe smart trust as a judgment (Covey & Link, 2012). They believe it is the process that allows people to trust in a low-trust world (Covey & Link, 2012). They use eBay as an example to illustrate the aforementioned. eBay is an internationally recognized online auction market. It is estimated that one million transactions take place in eBay markets every day (Covey & Link, 2012). With such a high number of sales volume, one of the problem that eBay faces are false transactions. The transactions can rob buyer's money and significantly hurt the reputation of eBay in the eyes on consumers. However, consumers trust in eBay. For they are constantly investing in their trust and safety division, in which software engineers create protocols that allows staff to track dealers that are conducting fraudulent transactions (Covey & Link, 2012). The aforementioned serves to illustrate the concept of smart trust. Dealers and buyers alike know that they face the risk of engaging in fraudulent transactions in which they know they could be robbed of their

money or their products. However, they make a judgment to trust in eBay's security for it is constantly policing the auction site to detect fraudulent merchants or sellers. One of the top dealers in eBay, Tom Hayes, trusts in the self-policing of the website, "If we believed that we would or might be cheated, few of us would be eager to transact on eBay, but we do trust, not only eBay as the intermediary, but also the user community itself" (Covey & Link, 2012, p. 55).

Now that the concept of smart trust has been covered, the steps of developing it will be reviewed. The authors say the first step to develop smart trust is to choose to believe in trust. They say that an individual must identify what their individual perception of trust is. For one can argue that they trust in the individuals around them, however, their actions point out the complete opposite. Once they have identified their individual level of trust, they must initiate a process in order to believe in the say of others. The authors say that belief in trust arises from three specific principles, "As we work and interact with high-trust individuals, teams, and organizations worldwide, it's become increasingly clear to us that their actions grow out of three specific beliefs about trust: 1 A belief in being worthy of trust, 2 A belief that most people can be trusted, 3 A belief that extending trust is a better way to lead," (Covey & Link, 2012, p. 90). The authors argue that trust is a virtue that has to be given in order for it to be received, which is why it is important for an individual to believe in trust first. That way they can genuinely be able to trust in others when needed.

The second step to develop smart trust is to begin by trusting in one's own self. The authors claim that in order for other individuals to trust in another human, the person has to show competence and self-worth. Such was the case for the CEO of ING Direct Canada, Peter Aceto. Upon completing his first year as being CEO of the 1000 people employed company, he sent out an email asking for the review of his peers which reads briefly, "May 1st was my 1-year anniversary as your CEO and enough time has elapsed for you to decide whether you would like me to lead this great ING Direct team," (Covey & Link, 2012, p. 117). Aceto demonstrated competence because he was willing to leave his position if his peers did not think he was doing a good job managing the company. Most importantly, it demonstrates his self-worth for he was humble and willing to hear the commentary of the rest of his colleagues which would increase the trust of his co-workers towards him.

The third step to develop smart trust is to declare the intent and assume positive intent of others (Covey & Link, 2012). What the authors are saying is that individuals must be clear of the actions they are trying to make. For example, when an individual goes to ask for a business loan they must have a valid business plan. The business plan acts as a roadmap for the intentions of the business, and the financier will then validate if the actions are competent for the bank to extend the loan. Much like the aforementioned, the authors argue that people should declare their personal intentions right away, that way others don't think they are orchestrating malicious acts.

The fourth step to develop smart trust is to actually attain to what was said. Considering the previous example of the business loan, it would be erroneous for the entrepreneur to deviate from what was mentioned in the business plan. It would raise questions in the mind of the financier, and would culminate in the financier no longer trusting the entrepreneur (Covey & Link, 2012). Thus the entrepreneur would no longer be able to ask the financier for loans in the future, and the stimulation of the economy would cease. Take in consideration the words of John Mackey, co-founder and CEO of Whole Foods Market, "I'm the most visible person in the company... I know that in virtually everything that I say and do, our team members are always studying me, trying to determine whether they can trust me and the mission of the company. I'm always on stage. So walking the talk is very important," (Covey & Link, 2012, p. 179). As it can be demonstrated by Mackey, it is important for him to adhere to what he has said for otherwise

the trust from people towards him will deplete.

The last and final step towards smart trust is leading out and extending trust. The message that the authors are communicating is that individuals should tell others that they trust and believe in them (Covey & Link, 2012). They say that when such events occur, people become deeply touched and inspired in favor for the individual that extended the trust to them. As a result, their performance in an organizational level significantly increases (Covey & Link, 2012). More so, they say that extending smart trust is extremely beneficial in three ways, "There are three primary reasons why extending Smart Trust is smart: (1) it produces results (2) it increases trust; and (3) it elicits reciprocity," (Covey & Link, 2012, p. 208). The writers use the example of BestBuy.com's extension of trust to their employees when they allowed them to work wherever and whenever they wanted as long as the work got done (Covey & Link, 2012). As a result of management's decision, they saw productivity levels increase by nearly 35%.

Altogether, authors Stephen M. R. Covey and Gregory Link do an adequate job instilling principles to readers that develop trust. As depicted in their book, the loss of trust throughout the world is leading to a decline in the overall prosperity of the human population. Such decrease in prosperity is caused as citizens' trust less in corporate entities and the government. The overall quality of the writing is good, and although the principles discussed through the text are fairly simple, both of the writers do an outstanding job explaining in depth why each step is important. In summation, they hope that the five principles covered will help its readers once again begin to develop the virtue of trusting correctly, better known as *Smart Trust*.