THE TRUST LIFECYCLE

How Trust Is Created, Maintained and Changes

RESOLUT: PHILOSOPHY & STRATEGY

Introduction

Trust is often treated as though it is something that either exists or does not exist. In reality, trust changes continuously.

- A new employee joins an organisation.
- A supplier begins a relationship.
- A professional demonstrates competence.
- An audit confirms compliance.
- A service level is consistently achieved.
- A promise is broken.
- An incident occurs.
- A regulation changes.
- A previously reliable participant stops meeting expectations.

Each of these events can alter confidence. Trust is therefore not a static condition.

It is a lifecycle.

The Resolut Trust Lifecycle describes how trust is established, verified, experienced, measured, maintained and, when necessary, restored.

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1. TRUST BEGINS WITH PARTICIPATION

Trust begins when a participant enters a relationship.

In the Resolut model, that may begin when an invited participant opens an account and chooses to participate in the trust network.

But the account itself does not create trust.

It creates the opportunity to establish it.

The participant establishes:

- identity;
- role;

- responsibilities;
- capabilities;
- relevant obligations;
- and the evidence that supports their claims.

The first stage is therefore not “trust.”

It is **participation**.

Participation makes trust possible.

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2. TRUST BEGINS BEFORE IT IS MEASURED

A participant does not arrive with a blank history.

They bring experience, qualifications, relationships, reputation, evidence and behaviour.

The Trust Lifecycle therefore begins with a baseline.

What is already known?

What can be verified?

What remains uncertain?

What does

the relationship require?

The objective is not to assume trust.

Nor is it to assume distrust.

It is to establish a rational starting point from which confidence can develop.

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3. THE FIVE DIMENSIONS OF TRUST

Trust can be understood through observable dimensions.

The Resolut model uses five:

Care

Does the participant demonstrate appropriate regard for the people, information, obligations and relationships affected by their actions?

Sincerity

Can others reasonably believe that the participant means what they say and represents their position honestly?

Reliability

Does the participant consistently do what they have committed to do?

Competence

Do they possess the capability required to fulfil their responsibilities?

Compliance

Do they meet the applicable rules, obligations, standards and commitments governing the relationship?

These dimensions do not operate independently. A participant may be highly competent but unreliable. They may be sincere but fail to maintain compliance. They may be compliant but demonstrate poor care.

Trust emerges from the combined pattern.

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4. TRUST IS ESTABLISHED THROUGH EVIDENCE

Claims create expectations. Evidence creates confidence.

A participant may claim:

- "I am qualified."
- "I am compliant."
- "I can deliver this service."
- "I maintain these controls."
- "I meet this standard."

The Trust Lifecycle asks what supports those claims.

Evidence may come from:

- documents;
- certifications;
- assessments;
- audits;
- credentials;

- attestations;
- system records;
- performance data;
- feedback;
- observed behaviour;
- or other verifiable sources.

The important principle is that evidence must remain connected to the claim it supports.

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5. VERIFICATION

Evidence becomes more valuable when its provenance and validity can be established.

Verification answers questions such as:

- Who produced the evidence?
- Who checked it?
- When was it checked?
- Against what requirement?
- Does it remain valid?
- Has anything changed?

Verification therefore creates a bridge between evidence and confidence. But verification is not necessarily permanent. A verification has a context and a point in time.

As conditions change, confidence may need to be reassessed.

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6. TRUST IS EXPERIENCED THROUGH BEHAVIOUR

Evidence establishes what a participant can demonstrate.

Behaviour demonstrates what a participant actually does.

This distinction is crucial.

- A participant may have excellent policies and still fail to perform.
- A supplier may hold the correct certification but repeatedly miss service commitments.
- A professional may possess excellent credentials but fail to behave appropriately.

Trust therefore develops through experience.

The network observes:

Did they do what they said they would do?

Over time, observable behaviour becomes part of Trust Status.

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7. PERFORMANCE MAKES TRUST VISIBLE

Trust becomes increasingly meaningful when commitments can be measured.

- Service levels.
- Response times.
- Delivery commitments.
- Compliance obligations.
- Audit findings.
- Issue resolution.
- Renewals.
- Feedback.

These are examples of observable events. Each event can contribute to a participant's evolving Trust Status. This creates an important principle:

Verified Evidence + Observable Behaviour + Consistent Performance over Time = Measurable Trust.

Trust is therefore not merely declared.

It is demonstrated.

8. TRUST EVENTS

The Trust Lifecycle is shaped by events. Some events strengthen trust. Others weaken it.

Examples include:

- a successful verification;
- completion of an obligation;
- achievement of a service commitment;
- positive relationship feedback;
- renewal of a credential;
- a compliance failure;
- a missed commitment;
- an incident;
- an unresolved issue;
- a material organisational change.

These events do not necessarily determine Trust Status individually. They contribute to the evolving picture.

This matters because trust should not be controlled by a single event unless that event is sufficiently material to change the relationship itself.

9. TRUST STATUS CHANGES

Trust Status is therefore dynamic.

- It can increase.
- It can decrease.
- It can stabilise.
- It can become uncertain.
- It can require attention.

A participant who consistently performs well should be able to demonstrate increasing confidence.

A participant who begins to fail obligations should not retain an unchanged Trust Status simply because an old audit remains valid.

The lifecycle therefore creates a distinction between:

what was once verified

and

what can reasonably be relied upon now.

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10. MAINTAINING TRUST STATUS

Maintaining Trust Status is an ongoing responsibility.

- The participant must keep relevant information current.
- Evidence must remain valid.
- Obligations must continue to be met.
- Changes must be addressed.
- Issues must be resolved.
- Relationships must continue to operate as expected.

This is why trust is not something that can simply be "achieved."

It must be maintained.

The responsibility belongs primarily with the participant because the participant is closest to the conditions that determine their current state.

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11. TRUST CAN WEAKEN WITHOUT FAILING COMPLETELY

Trust is rarely binary. A participant does not necessarily move directly from "trusted" to "untrusted."

- Confidence can weaken gradually.
- A supplier may begin missing deadlines.
- An organisation may have unresolved findings.
- A professional may allow credentials to expire.
- A control may become less effective.

- A relationship may become less responsive.

These signals may not immediately justify termination. But they will likely affect confidence.

A useful trust lifecycle therefore allows for degrees of confidence rather than a simplistic pass/fail condition.

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12. RESTORING TRUST

Trust can be damaged. But damaged trust does not necessarily have to remain damaged permanently. Restoration requires action:

- The participant must address the cause.
- Evidence must demonstrate improvement.
- Performance must become consistent again.
- The relationship may require additional verification.

Confidence can then rebuild over time. This creates an important distinction:

Trust is not immutable.

It can be strengthened.

It can weaken.

It can be repaired.

But restoration must be **demonstrated** rather than simply declared.

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13. TRUST IS CONTEXTUAL

The same participant can have different Trust Status experiences across different relationships.

A professional may be highly trusted to perform one role but not authorised to perform another.

A supplier may be trusted to provide a low-risk service but require additional assurance before accessing sensitive systems.

An organisation may satisfy one regulatory framework while having further obligations elsewhere.

Trust is therefore contextual.

The Trust Lifecycle must preserve a participant's overall Trust Status while allowing individual relationships to apply their own requirements.

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14. THE LIFECYCLE NEVER REALLY ENDS

There is no final stage at which trust becomes permanent. The lifecycle continues:

Participation → Establishment → Evidence → Verification → Experience → Measurement → Maintenance → Change → Improvement → Confidence

Then the cycle begins again.

- New evidence appears.
- Old evidence expires.
- New relationships form.
- Old relationships end.
- Requirements change.
- Performance changes.
- Circumstances change.

Trust therefore remains alive because the organisation remains alive.

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15. FROM AUDIT CYCLE TO TRUST LIFECYCLE

The traditional audit cycle asks:

When should we check again?

The Trust Lifecycle asks:

What has changed since we last checked?

That is a profound difference. Periodic assurance remains valuable. But the Trust Lifecycle places assurance inside a continuous system of change.

The audit becomes one source of evidence. It no longer has to carry the entire burden of trust.

Conclusion

Trust is not a certificate.

It is not a document.

It is not a score.

It is not a single event.

Trust is the evolving confidence created by evidence, behaviour, performance and experience over time.

The Trust Lifecycle provides the mechanism through which that confidence can be established and maintained.

It begins with participation.

It develops through evidence.

It strengthens through verification and consistent behaviour.

It becomes measurable through performance.

It changes through events.

It can weaken through failure.

And it can be restored through demonstrated improvement.

The central principle is simple:

Every participant is responsible for maintaining their own Trust Status so that every connected participant can operate with greater confidence.

The participant maintains it.

The relationship experiences it.

The network benefits from it.

And the lifecycle keeps it alive.