

TRUSTLETS™

QUICK CASE STUDIES ON ORGANIZATIONAL TRUST

Do the Most Trusted Technology Companies Take Advantage of Trust?

By Kent Grayson

Today's biggest technology companies achieved their dominance because they improve lives. Facebook and WeChat help people learn about the world and stay connected with others. Apple and Samsung offer portable electronics that allow people to more easily enjoy entertainment and stay productive. Amazon and Alibaba help people buy things more efficiently. Companies like these are incredibly successful because customers have come to trust them to deliver a set of valuable benefits.

When you trust a person or a company, you do not usually require detailed explanations for every action or decision that the person or company makes. Because of trust, you spent less time communicating and negotiating at each step of the way. If you trust your doctor, you do not necessarily need a detailed explanation of how she came up with her diagnosis and recommendation. If you trust your mechanic, you do not necessarily want him to take the time to show you your worn brake line or your faulty gasket.

Yet, companies, brands, and people can advantage of the fact that trusting customers do not require full information about every decision. A trusted doctor may recommend that patients use a particular rehabilitation center without revealing that she is a primary investor in the center. Or, a trusted mechanic may recommend that a customer pay for car repairs that are not strictly necessary. Below are some articles that describe how some of the world's most trusted technology companies have made decisions that affect users, but have not told them about it.

Articles to be read before discussion:

Read *CNN Tech*: [Facebook: We're Still Experimenting On Users](#)

Read *Motherboard*: [Apple Doesn't Trust You](#)

Read *The Register*: [Windows Updates? Just Trust Us Says Microsoft Executive](#)

Read *Vox*: [Apple Admitted It's Slowing Down Certain iPhones](#)

Questions for discussion:

- Rank the four examples listed above in terms of how serious you think the trust violation was. Which was the most serious trust violation, and which was the least?
- What factors helped you to assess the seriousness of the trust violation? More generally, what factors influence whether a company is breaking trust when it does not inform customers about a decision?
- Consider the trust violation that you thought was the most serious. What should the company have done to reduce the seriousness of the violation?
- Consider the trust violation that you thought was least serious. What additional information about this decision would change your mind and turn this into a violation that you think is more serious?

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