

# Development of trust in B2B relationships calls for common goals

September 25 2015

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The development of trust in business-to-business relationships calls for goal congruence, according to a recent University of Eastern Finland and Cranfield University study shedding new light on power symmetry in business-to-business relationships. However, power does not play as key a role in the development of trust as previously thought.

The significance of power in business-to-business relationships is an essential yet also a controversial topic in marketing research, as diverging approaches have resulted in contradictory findings.

"Some researchers say that power asymmetry has a negative effect on trust, while others claim exactly the opposite. Our study is the first in the world to overcome this inconsistency," says Mika Gabrielsson, Professor of International Business of the University of Eastern Finland Business School.

The study focused on business-to-business relationships in organisations that had contradictory or unpredictable viewpoints. The case studies found that power does not play as key a role in the development of trust as previously thought.

"First and foremost, the development of trust in business-to-business relationships calls for goal congruence. However, this is independent of how evenly [power](#) is divided between the organisations," Senior Lecturer Saara Julkunen of the University of Eastern Finland Business School explains.

According to Julkunen, the findings of the study are reassuring for companies, as they provide support for the idea that companies of different types and sizes can establish successful relationships. On the other hand, the results also emphasise the importance of goal congruence in order for the relationship to grow and flourish in the long run.

"In business-to-business relationships, it is essential for the organisations' strategies to meet and be compatible. Goal congruence is of key importance for the [development](#) of a shared vision and, consequently, for the emergence of [trust](#) in success. These are always needed in order for business-to-business relationships to succeed at the practical level."

The results were published in *Industrial Marketing Management*.

**More information:** er symmetry and the development of trust in interdependent relationships: The mediating role of goal congruence. Javier Marcos Cuevas, Saara Julkunen, Mika Gabrielsson. *Industrial Marketing Management* 48 (2015) 149-159. [dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2015.03.015](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2015.03.015)

Provided by University of Eastern Finland

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