



5 Minute Strategic Mindset

“Society’s course will only be changed by a change of ideas.”

— F. A. Hayek



Is it 'normal' to trust, or to distrust?

Nearly all of my clients are now talking about how to get people back to work, to 'normalcy': back in offices, back in front of clients and customers, taking public transport to and from work. The problem is, they're up against what I call the Trust Dilemma. Many of us have had a taste of relative freedom, where we can sleep until 15 minutes before our first Zoom meeting, we can walk the dog between meetings, we can take our kids on a bike ride in that late afternoon gap in our schedule. And, yes, we'll work on reports and presentations and business cases at 6.30am, or 10.30pm, to get the job done.

But, now, we're asking whether all these people, who society trusts to pay off mortgages and credit cards, look after children and elderly parents, are to be trusted to work independently when back at work. My clients, government, non-profit and for-profit, are faced with basic ethical questions that boil down to: "Do we trust our people?". In the past, we've asked them to sign in on timesheets, be physically present at specified locations at specified times, and to be accountable for work done, on an hourly (or sometimes a 6-minute) basis. What do we do from here?

The Brazilian industrialist, [Ricardo Semler](#), in the 1980s transformed his organisation on the basis that he wouldn't control and regulate the 2% of 'unethical' staff at the expense of the 98% who did the right thing. Now, in 2020, can we do the same?

Question: How far can you trust your people to self-manage, and reform your work practices as you return from lockdown?

"How was it for you?"

My good friend, Sean, and I were talking about the Trust Dilemma, and he said to me, "Andrew, there's no dilemma here. Let me tell you what I do". He's head of a teaching department at a tertiary education provider, and he has a simple solution. All of his team teach virtually now, and every day, after classes are done, he phones each of them (old school, yes, but it works) and asks, "How was it for you today?".

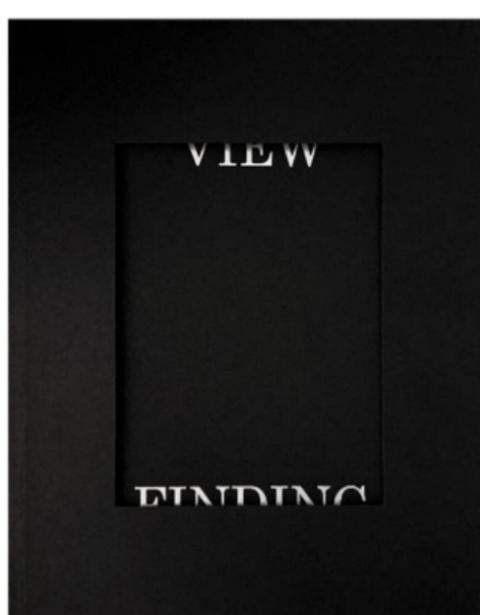
They spend a few minutes debriefing, and Sean's observation is that it reduces secrecy, reduces oppositional or argumentative behaviour, and it dramatically increases trust. The message is, "I care, I'm curious, and I trust you to tell me what I need to know".

Your challenge: Ask each of your direct reports this question on a regular basis for a month. Notice how it alters the dynamics between you.

Connecting with "true fans"

This week, I took part in a fascinating social experiment, run by [Monash Gallery of Art](#). My wife and I are supporters of this unique gallery: it specialises in photography, is operated by a local government, and celebrates its 30th year in 2020.

They'd normally run an annual fund-raiser but, this time, barring physical gatherings, they held a virtual dinner party. It was small, just 30 or so 'true fans' bought tickets, which entitled us to a hand-delivered dinner box (cooked by others, but needing preparing and plating ourselves) plus a bottle of wine, and a copy of their newly published retrospective, [View Finding](#).



The run sheet was concise: 90 minutes of curated Zoom-based conversation, with breaks for us to jump up and get our pre-prepared dinner, and dessert, from the oven. I honestly thought the format would be a severe compromise, but I was wrong.

A suite of superb songs sung by one of Australia's best blues singers, [Nina Ferro](#) (in her living room), some super-engaging and candid conversations with three photographers, [Hoda Afshar](#), [Cherine Fahd](#), and [David Rozetzky](#), and the piece-de-resistance, quite spontaneous, was when a number of the attendees took their laptops / iPads and gave us tours of their photographic collections in their homes.

For the voyeurs amongst us (probably everyone), it was a fascinatingly informal look behind the scenes to see what other collectors have on their walls (and hear them talk about their significance to them): a welcome access to something usually inaccessible.

We reflected afterwards: It may not have been a hit as far as raising money went, but it certainly went a long way to strengthening relationships amongst the gallery's core supporters.

Question: What new forms of social connection can you create amongst your 'true fans' during lockdown?

And, as usual, please send me your feedback by email to ww@workwell.com.au.

Which bullet above is your favourite? Let me know!

Have a wonderful weekend, all.

Andrew

Andrew Hollo wins the international award for the Society for the Advancement of Consulting's Consultant of the Year 2020



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