

Transcript - Dr Brennan Jacoby - How much do you trust your colleagues?

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Transcript

Ross D 00:07

Hello, you're listening to the Future Talent Learning podcast developed to help you build your leadership and management skills. I'm Ross Dickey,

Ross G 00:13

and I'm Ross Garner.

Ross D 00:14

This week, we're asking how much do you trust your colleagues?

Ross D 00:17

Do you need them to trust you? And how can we rebuild trust once it's been broken? To answer these questions, we were joined by Dr. Brennan Jacoby, philosopher and founder of Philosophy at Work, an organisation that helps businesses think their best.

Ross D 00:30

Brennan fills a BA, MA and PhD in philosophy and his doctoral context of interpersonal relationships and corporate character. How's it going, Brennan? Yeah.

Brennan 00:39

Very good. Thanks both. It's great to join you today for this conversation.

Ross D 00:43

Absolutely, it's good to have you here. So to start with a question that sounds simple, but I think is actually possibly very complicated. What is trust and why does it matter?

Brennan 00:52

Yeah, I think you're right. It is a question that sounds simple, but I don't know if it is, I like to think it's not complicated, but maybe it's like it's multifaceted and rich. There's a lot of depth to it, but maybe if we start with a phrase that again sounds simple, but I think says a lot is, I like to think that trust is basically counting on those who could betray you.

Brennan 01:12

How does that sit with you both? Has that idea of trust is counting on people when they could betray you?

Ross G 01:19

it creates an element of danger, doesn't it? Because I mean, I was thinking about it as almost like you would want to have a reasonable understanding of the extent to which someone's going to do something that they claim.

Ross G 01:32

And if you think they're not going to do that, have strategies in place to avoid that. So I was kind of thinking about it as like, maybe as a spectrum of expectation, where I was minimising the opportunity to be betrayed.

Ross G 01:43

But the way that you've pitched it makes me think that I am not making myself a trusting part of that relationship, because I'm going in with my guardrails up.

Brennan 01:56

Yeah, I think that's right. There's a lot of times when we talk about trust, particularly in the context of economic theory, for example, or business, or I don't know, where we think about it at a high level.

Brennan 02:11

Even closer to home, I suppose, if you're thinking about, you know, can I trust this person that I'm working with or whatever. We do put it into quite transactional sort of risk analysis kind of terms, even if we're not meaning to.

Brennan 02:22

And I think you're right that that misses something that's really good about trust. So when we say that trust is counting on those who could betray you, maybe there's a couple terms to pull out there.

Brennan 02:35

So what I mean, first of all, is that trust always involves counting on something. It's always a reliance, but it's just one form of reliance, right? So, you know, I know this is audio, so people can't see us, but I'm sat in a chair at the moment.

Brennan 02:51

I'm relying on the chair to hold me up, and it could quite literally let me down, right? But if the chair breaks under my weight, I don't think I would say, turn around and look at it and say, you know, how dare you?

Brennan 03:04

How could you do this to me? You know, we had a deal, I feel betrayed, right? And that's reliance that is not trust. But instead, if, say, the three of us were giving a presentation or, you know, having a podcast conversation, and we all said, hey, we'll prepare in this way, we'll show up at this time, we'll do these things.

Brennan 03:25

And that's a bit of an implicit agreement. And then, you know, I just feel the show up or I show up in a state, you know, not fit for a valuable conversation, then I think it would make sense for you to feel not only let down, but maybe even betrayed, perhaps even if you sort of feel that I did it for some reason that was against you, not just because I'm an irresponsible person in general.

Brennan 03:47

And so when we talk about trust, it's not just counting on, it's not just reliance, the distinction. And when you get into the literature on trust, where, you know, philosophers are arguing about, well, is it trust?

Brennan 03:59

Is it reliance? What is it? And the line seems to be, if you're vulnerable to being betrayed, then it makes more sense to think that you're in the sort of realm of trust. If you could be let down, but betrayal isn't a sort of salient concept, then it's probably just reliance.

Brennan 04:15

And I mean, maybe something of where we want to go, you know, far be it for me to say, we're wanting to fund the conversation. But maybe something that might be interesting is thinking about, you know, why does this even matter?

Brennan 04:24

My, I guess, exactly what I was thinking. That was what I was going to ask next. Yeah. Why does it because it does on the face of it feel quite, you know, just theoretical or conceptual? Why does it matter if it's trust or reliant?

Ross G 04:37

If I could just jump in a sec just with the, because what I was saying earlier was I don't think I am trusting people then if I'm thinking about how to protect myself. I'm pretty sure you're going to always turn up late for this podcast, Brennan, and you're going to be dishevelled and with nothing prepared.

Ross G 04:52

If I anticipate that, then I can rely on you to underperform and I can have certain strategies in place to get around that. So maybe I think, well, I'm going to have to prepare more because I know that Brennan's not going to be prepared.

Ross G 05:05

But that strategy is fine at work, right? We could get by fine with an expectation that people are going to let us down as long as they consistently let us down and we work around that. So, I mean, in that context, I wonder why we need to trust one another.

Ross G 05:21

I sound like a total dick, but why would it matter if anyone trusts me?

Brennan 05:26

Yeah, yeah no I think that's right I and I guess my answer is trust matters at the limits of our strategies right so I need to unpick that yeah trust matters at the limits of our strategies so you're right if if you just go do you know what I know Brennan's track record you know just going along....

Ross G 05:49

You have been great and charming by the way, just it was a hypothetical.

Brennan 05:53

Yeah, thank you. Let's say that I'm disorganised for a moment, you can predict that I'm gonna show up late and dishevelled and all that stuff and you can use strategies to call me ahead of time, or make sure I'm set, or put scaffolding in order, and that's a strategy that works fine if you're just needing to manage a reliance where I have some sort of special skill that is outside what you can do so you have to delegate to me otherwise you'd rather just do yourself.

Brennan 06:21

But you know so that's sort of a situation that I'm painting is is reliance that happens a lot of times, but it's trust becomes really important when our strategies don't reach. You know when we feel like okay well I actually I can't, I can't control this person, I don't feel like I can even fully influence them, and maybe I don't even want to. You know I mean if we pivot out of the space of sort of like so far I feel like the view is fairly from a perspective of like scarcity where we've got to try to lock down things, get it right manage you know all those sort of fallout.

Brennan 06:58

But instead if we said no actually we're trying to work in a world where we're benefiting from diversity of thought, we're bringing people with different experiences and different perspectives because they bring all kinds of value that that we don't have and there's there's no one person that's asking all the right questions, has the right ideas, so we need to rely on each other and actually if we micromanage we're kind of shutting down some of that brilliance.

Brennan 07:20

If not shutting down a lot of it and so our strategies are limited and it's at the sort of end of that rope that trust becomes relevant, that trust is really beautiful, because then if I go right actually I don't want to try to manage Ross because I'm holding him back you know but then I have to trust you because now you know you could not you know I'm sort of taking away the scaffolding and I'm not trying to to control the situation and you could let me down and you could maybe even betray me you know because we're working on something that's sensitive or whatever it might be. How's that feeling?

Ross G 07:57

It feels warmer, doesn't it? It reminds me of Ross and I used to work with someone who, I'm not going to name names, but their approach to management was, they called it the Prussian military model. So they would say that they would choke their subordinates with responsibility until such a time as they fail, because the place where they fail is probably much further down the responsibility path than you would expect.

Ross G 08:27

And then from that point on, then you know the limits of their capability. Now, he was kind of a sardonic sort of fellow. And I think that that is, he is putting a kind of jokey spin on what he's actually doing.

Ross G 08:40

Because I think what he was really doing was saying, it's assumed competence. I'm going to trust the people who report to me, they are probably much more competent than they've had an opportunity so far to demonstrate.

Ross G 08:50

And if I just take away the guardrails like he described, probably we'll see, you know, just how far they can perform on their own. Now, the second piece of that is, did they then trust you that you're going to support them when they need it?

Ross G 09:03

Or do they feel that they're able to come to you before they fail? Or when they see the things are going wrong, and they know that they're not going to get chewed out for it, or whatever.

Brennan 09:12

Right, right. But I think that also raises part of the value of how we understand trust. So again, if trust is counting on people that could betray you, and some of the value of it is going beyond the limits of our strategies, the limits of our control and all that stuff, then, you know, if I imagine being a member of the team working for that colleague that you mentioned, if I have a sense that that's why he's loading me up with responsibility to sort of test me, I don't think I feel as valued, right?

Ross G 09:43

I don't think that's how he phrased it to them.

Brennan 09:45

Yeah. The pressure's on, right? Whereas if I go, oh, this person is not trying to micromanage me. They give me lots of responsibility because they value the work that I can do when I'm able to exercise my own agency.

Brennan 10:03

And then there's a sort of respect, a mutual respect that goes on. And I think that's really new to trust as well. So yeah, I think trust is counting on people that could betray you. And something that's wrapped into that is the value and the sort of beauty that comes from laying down our guard and going, I'm going to make myself vulnerable because I think the business, the team, you know, you and I both are better, we'll do better work when we're able to exercise our agency when we trust each other.

Brennan 10:32

And that's, you know, sometimes there's situations where it's just mere reliance is what we need, you know, it's very transactional kind of work. Maybe there's, I don't know, so much power at play that we want a lot of oversight and it makes sense for it to be sort of reliance plus scaffolding.

Brennan 10:50

That's fine. You know, maybe it's the relationship with my accountant where, you know, with financial things, maybe it's right to have lots of oversight and stuff. And it's right for that to be more about reliance than this sort of expensive trust that I'm talking about.

Brennan 11:02

But I think most, you know, most times we're thinking about leadership and learning and management and stuff. It's more that expensive. How do we empower people? And that's where I think trust and the way we're talking about it is really powerful.

Ross D 11:15

How do you determine which people to place your trust in? So I think what we're talking about requires, as you say, like a degree of vulnerability. So it's counting on people that could betray you. And I'm thinking, Ross's example, you could come onto this podcast and it might be that Ross's distrust for you is all in his head.

Ross D 11:35

And he's actually, like you say, micromanaging you and sort of not giving you an opportunity to shine and sort of bring out the best in you. But it could also be that you're just genuinely untrustworthy.

Ross D 11:48

And there is a cost to the organisation and to Ross personally for doing that. So how do you go about, I think like in an ideal world, everybody would be inherently trustworthy and good at their jobs and competent. That's not always the case.

Brennan 12:02

Yeah, no, definitely. That's a great question. So I mean, I think on the face of it, the practical answer is in incremental steps, right? And this is what we, I think, do fairly naturally.

Brennan 12:13

But we're all on a sliding scale of this, right? Some people feel more comfortable just sort of diving right in and giving people lots of trust. Other people are much slower to do that. But if we're saying how do we, you know, and this is a really important question actually in the sort of context we're in at the moment.

Brennan 12:34

So, you know, in recent history, a lot of people have joined teams completely virtually. And there's this question about how do we build relationships with people that we've never met in person because we like to think, and I think there's some truth to this, that we sort of have a sense for people when we're in a room together that somehow we have, it's harder to have.

Brennan 12:55

Actually, I don't think that's always true. And I think we're really able to get a good sort of sense of people, you know, in even how they message us and things. But all that to one side, there's been a lot of people that have onboarded or have been working distributedly remotely and are now coming together in various hybrid ways.

Brennan 13:12

And so this is a big question. Well, how do I know, how should we interact, you know, and how much trust is appropriate? And so the sort of pragmatic initial answer I think is, you know, in baby steps, you know, start small in this, what we naturally sort of do is we say, well, you know, new the team, why don't we try this out?

Brennan 13:33

I want to sort of feel out, how do we think about these things? Are we on the same page? And that actually puts me into, pushes me towards more of a robust answer, which is about what it really means to be trustworthy, right?

Brennan 13:44

So we're saying, well, how do we work out who's trustworthy then? We need to have a view of what trustworthiness is. And trustworthiness, I think, boils down to three things. The concept, the three things that it boils down to all sort of helpfully start with the same letter, which is nice, but it's competence.

Brennan 14:02

One word that you mentioned, Ross, also commitment and character. And so what I mean by competence is, you know, as you would think, the ability to do the thing, you know, the ability to do the job. So we have a pitch that we're doing for a client and we're both working on it.

Brennan 14:17

You know, someone's gonna be trustworthy if we think that they have the experience and the ability to sort of get it done on time and in a professional way. And a lot of times that's where we stop. We sort of think, you know, our colleague is trustworthy if they can just do the thing, if they can be professional in that way.

Brennan 14:32

But actually, when we scratch beneath the surface, there's a lot more to it. There's also commitment, you know? So not just do they have the skills, but are they motivated to use the skills for the benefit of the project we're collaborating on, right?

Brennan 14:44

So someone might be the best surgeon, but I wanna know, are they gonna use those skills to their best ability on me? Or am I on the operating table on a slot at the end of the day when they've got a lot on their mind and they've got to go, you know, not saying anything about our friends in a surgical sort of profession.

Brennan 15:04

But we need to know that people are not just capable, but they're also committed. And then lastly, character is a huge thing. And this is, I think, the sort of sweet spot for trustworthiness and trust.

Brennan 15:15

And this is really getting to the heart of what we wanna be looking for, going back to your question of when we're trying to work out who's really trustworthy and who can I trust. What I mean by character is not just sort of integrity, to sort of be an upstanding citizen and I can trust them, but rather, are they the kind of person who is sort of switched on enough, if I can use that sort of phrase, to know what's at stake in an interaction with me and with a project, and that they're able to spot what's sort of going on in the room, what's implicit and unspoken.

Brennan 15:52

They sort of have a significant degree of emotional intelligence, in other words. They're aware of what's going on and we're on the same page enough. We don't have to have all the same values. We don't have to have all the same, everything.

Brennan 16:04

And that would be bad. We want that diversity of thought and value and of income together. But this is really important because someone can be super competent, best professional in the world. They can be committed to using their skills on this project, but we might just not quite be on the same page where I say, okay, do you want to do this part of the page and I'll do this part?

Brennan 16:26

We go, yep, great. And then we show up and that meant something can be different to them. So to come back to what you're asking about, so how do we know who to trust? We're looking for those subtle signs that were on the same page.

Brennan 16:40

Do they seem to be nodding maybe at some of the same things during the meeting? Are they resonating around some of those same things? Not just thinking the same way as us, but are they understanding things in a similar way?

Brennan 16:53

When we say, hey, do you want to do this? And they play that back, it's as we understood it. That makes sense.

Ross D 17:00

Yeah, well, definitely. And then on the sort of flip side of that, what are the kind of things that if that's what it takes to sort of build trustworthiness or those sort of constituent parts of trustworthiness, what is it that damages trust besides simply not doing what you say you're going to do?

Brennan 17:16

Yeah, that's a really good shout. A lot of times we think, well, hey, we've avoided the big betrayals, so big let down, so we should be fine. But actually, there's a lot of things that are seemingly benign, or maybe not even seemingly so benign in our professional work culture these days, that are not really very good for trust.

Brennan 17:32

So things like busyness. It's really hard to notice what's going on in the room or to communicate that we get it. In other words, to communicate our trustworthiness to our colleagues when we don't have time for conversation.

Brennan 17:48

I was in a meeting a number of years ago with someone, she was quite senior in a global law firm, and she said to me, I used to always think of relationships as the sort of stuff I had to get through to get the work done.

Brennan 18:02

I've sort of got to bring a few people inside, I've sort of, unfortunately I can't do it all by myself, so I've got to work with these people. But then she said, but now I realise that the relationships are the work, and maybe not all of the work, but they count equally as the work as well.

Brennan 18:20

And so there's a lot of pressure to just, very few of us will have sort of relationships on our to-do list for the day, and so there's other things that feel like, you know, burning buildings, we've got to start.

Brennan 18:31

And so the busyness hurts us because we're not able to communicate who we are, or who we're communicating to others, it's just that we're someone who's just super transactional. And that's okay sometimes, but if we're talking about building this more robust trust, then that's not good for it.

Brennan 18:47

The other thing is an overemphasis on efficiency, which is maybe a similar point, but, and this is something that I see being really, really important going forward wherever we are in history sort of post-March 2020.

Brennan 19:03

I don't really want to say post-pandemic because things are sort of... Everybody knows. Maybe ongoing and all that. All right, say that again.

Ross G 19:10

Who knows when the post pandemic will end.

Brennan 19:13

Who knows, who knows when that's going to be, but post-March 2020, I feel like back then we all got really good at putting out fires and just doing what had to be done to keep the show on the road, right?

Brennan 19:26

Because it was a crisis, super stressful, all that. And now, as some of that, you know, there's always, there's loads of different crises going on, but arguably we're coming into a space where we're starting to work together again, maybe in person, we're doing different things.

Brennan 19:43

And if we're still in that, because it's a hard sort of habit to shake that sort of, you know, super transactional, boom, boom, boom, get stuff done. If we're not moving out of that, it's going to be harder to build trust because actually we build trust by just, you know, spending time together, whether or not that's in person or not, we can, we can build lots of trust by spending time together, you know, virtually as well.

Brennan 20:05

But yeah, so I think those are a couple of the things that are, that might not be immediately obvious. They're not the sort of, you know, telling lies or, you know, spreading secrets. It's not that sort of stuff.

Brennan 20:15

It's the sort of nature of the beast that also gets in the way.

Ross G 20:18

So you can have the sudden removal of trust, some sort of profound betrayal, your Julius Caesar stabbed in the back moment, but I think a work that's very, very unusual for that to happen. I think what you normally see instead is, Bernie Brown has this concept of a marble jar, and so every interaction can either add or remove marbles from the jar.

Ross G 20:37

I think that tends to be what happens. So something like going to the funeral of a colleague's parent or whatever it might be. That's a big marble then, because that's something that you don't have to do, but you're showing that you care for that person.

Ross G 20:49

But likewise, you can take marbles out all the time with these tiny little interactions that seem to, they don't add up too much. You would see them just kind of on their own, but the focus on efficiency, or they're not being available for people who are being too busy, or these kinds of things.

Ross G 21:02

You're constantly taking marbles out, and then suddenly you find that, actually, you have a terrible relationship with this person, you can't even work out when it happened. It was just this little drip, drip, drip.

Ross G 21:10

I was going to ask, and I'm aware that I might sound like a meme, and this might be a super, superficial question, but where do you stand on a trust being something to be gained versus something to lose?

Ross G 21:25

Oh, can you say what? Because you were talking earlier on about kind of like, you were talking about trust being incremental earlier on. You might have incrementally trust someone by giving them increasing responsibility.

Ross G 21:36

Or you could do the, I'll use the phrase Prussian army approach from earlier on, where you just assume that you're going to trust that person completely at the start, unless they give you evidence to the contrary.

Ross G 21:47

Because it feels like giving that person trust is the, that's making yourself as vulnerable as you can be. And that could be a really powerful way to build that relationship, although you're exposing yourself to greater risk doing so.

Brennan 21:57

I think it's true. So I'm gonna give an answer that might be a little bit annoying because it's a little bit annoying to me, but I think it's realistic and I hope it's not a cop-out. The answer, I think, is that it's context-sensitive and we should...

Brennan 22:13

That is annoying. So it's annoying, but I can give more of an answer. I'm not just gonna leave it saying that. Yeah, sure. It's annoying because it feels like, well, there's no, you know, come on, Brennan, stick a claim here.

Brennan 22:25

So if I had to say, I would err in favor of trusting people because I think there's reasons to trust beyond just that it's good for the work. So on the one hand, you could say trust is good because it's sort of the grease of collaboration.

Brennan 22:47

Grease is the wheels of collaboration and it helps us. The more we trust, then the less we have to check up on each other. We can actually be more efficient. All of that. I think that's good. That's fine.

Brennan 22:56

But actually there's a lot of reasons to trust apart from that, which are the more sort of humane things. Not that efficiency is inhumane, but the sort of more human level. I'm gonna trust someone because I want to communicate that I believe in community.

Brennan 23:16

So I don't know, take a friend or let's say, I think it still plays for a colleague as well. You might even go, do you know what? I don't think this person is fully trustworthy, but I don't go around just trusting just because I think everyone's perfectly trustworthy.

Brennan 23:35

And because again, then that pushes trust back into this like hedging my bets scarcity kind of space. And instead it's much more, it can be much more powerful and positive than that. And so if we just go around saying, I think Ross, your question about who, how do I know who to trust is a great one.

Brennan 23:52

I'm not saying anything against that. We do need to work that out. But if we just go around saying, well, I'm only gonna trust the people that I've worked out to be trustworthy, then again, it's- The ones you've earned it.

Ross G 24:02

Right. My trust is a precious commodity that they have to gain through their interaction.

Brennan 24:08

Yeah, and there's something strange that goes on there if we talk about earning trust. If I've earned your trust, then I think... I mean, this is something that I've sort of pondered for a long time and I'm not quite sure where it lands, but if we talk about earning trust, then the person whose trust is earned almost has an obligation to trust, right?

Brennan 24:33

I mean, if we extend the financial metaphor, if I earn some money, you have an obligation to pay me that money or something, right? So if I earn your trust, you have an obligation to sort of pay me the trust that I've worked so hard to earn, right?

Brennan 24:46

And again, we don't want to be doing that. We don't want to be sort of tying people's hands to say, well, you've got to trust me now. No, trust is only valuable if it's freely given. And so I don't think we should only go around thinking that we only trust people that have shown us to be trustworthy.

Brennan 25:01

There's a lot of value to say, do you know what? I'm the kind of person that cares about community and vulnerability. And so I know no one's perfect, so I'm going to step out and trust. So that's where if I have to say, I'm probably leaning...

Brennan 25:13

I'm on the dial sort of leaning towards trust rather than distrust until proven otherwise. But the reason I say it's context

sensitive is I think what that really looks like is going to depend quite a lot.

Brennan 25:24

So if we're... I don't know, I've done work with teams that are in different countries, right? And some teams in one country will be really sort of... If I'm really open right off the bat, they'll see that as a sign that I'm not trustworthy.

Brennan 25:38

Because like, well, where's this guy coming from? That is too much vulnerability. That's not how we do things around here. I'm not going to trust Brennan with anything because he's a bit of a loose cannon.

Brennan 25:48

He's so open. Whereas other countries are other just teams. And if we sort of don't do that, they'll go like, well, where's this guy? I just... I don't know who Brennan is. I need him to sort of share himself with me, right?

Brennan 26:00

So that's what I'm saying. I think we need to... It's a bit of a chicken and the egg because how do we know how to do that until we get to know people? And that's again why I sort of push us back towards the incremental stuff.

Brennan 26:11

You can't beat the time it takes to get to know someone.

Ross D 26:15

No, to extend your financial metaphor too far, but it would cost you more to not to trust, like for your default position just to be distrust of everybody. It'd be very difficult to get things done, constantly taking everything on yourself, and it would deplete all of your resources, I think.

Ross D 26:29

I don't think any of us would like to live in a world where just don't trust anybody until they've earned it in some way. Just as a sort of final question before we wrap up, let's say I've lost your trust, Brennan.

Ross D 26:44

What can I do to recover? Is there a sort of way for me to, I was going to say earn, not to earn it back, but to recover the trust that I've lost?

Brennan 26:54

Yeah, yeah, definitely. And I think I'll reach into the marble jar metaphor, you know, and it is one thing that I love about that idea, or you know, sometimes I talk about like petrol tanks and you're putting in a drip of relational fuel.

Brennan 27:08

That's a bit of a strange metaphor. But you know, the reason that I like that is not just because it's true, you know, I think when I've heard Brene Brown talking about the marble jar, I think it's really accurate.

Brennan 27:18

But it's also, thank goodness that trust is like the marble jar or the petrol tank. Because if it was all or nothing, we'd all have things much harder. But because trust can be built by putting maybe tiny marbles into a jar and starting to fill it up, then there's hope that you can rebuild it.

Brennan 27:38

So like the sort of first answer is the way to rebuild trust when it's been broken is by starting to do steps, take actions that are communicating our competence, our commitment, and our character to the person that we're trying to rebuild trust with in really small ways that are respectful to them, acknowledging the perhaps power imbalance.

Brennan 28:03

You know, if we're the one that's, if we're the offender, and they're the person that's been offended, then we need to out of our way to show that we're being thoughtful and aware of what's going on.

Brennan 28:16

And so the first answer is sort of put the marbles back into the jar, do the small steps. But I think actually something that's helpful to work out what those marbles are goes back to another distinction that on the face of it might feel kind of

theoretical, but I think is actually really practical and important.

Brennan 28:30

And it boils down to the different kinds of expectations that are at play in trust. So there's two types of expectations. There's what we could call predictive expectations, and there's normative expectations.

Brennan 28:44

And these are really important for understanding trust, they'll sort of shine a light back on some of the things we've already said, but they're really, really important for understanding broken trust and repairing it.

Brennan 28:53

So predictive expectations are expectations about what you predict someone will do. So predict an expectation about what you think they will do. So maybe the predictive expectation is, hey, we're all going to have this conversation today, we're all going to do this meeting, whatever it is, and we predict that everyone will join the call at the time that it was in the schedule.

Brennan 29:14

That's a predictive expectation. At the same time, the normative expectation is not about what you think someone will do, but what you think they ought to do. And sometimes they converge, and sometimes they diverge.

Brennan 29:25

So if I predict that everyone will start the call at the same time, at the time they should, or the time that's in the schedule, that's my predictive expectation. The normative one is what I think they ought to do, that they ought to join at the time that it was in the schedule for.

Brennan 29:39

Now, if trust is going well, then those things will go together. I trust you both. I predict that you... I think you ought to join the call at the right time, and I think you will, because I think you're competent people, whatever.

Brennan 29:53

But when trust is broken, they diverge. So I might go, oh, I predicted that my secret wouldn't be told. And I also believe in keeping secrets, so I think that it ought not to be told, so normative and predictive going together.

Brennan 30:12

But then when the trust is broken, when the betrayal happens, maybe both those things get violated, or maybe not. Maybe I think, you know what, this person I'm working with has burned me in the past.

Brennan 30:21

I predict they're going to burn me again. Up, look, there they go. They've burned me again. They've done the thing. But what's really caused the damage is not that my predictions were wrong. It's not that I pride myself on knowing the future, and I'm so upset that you did something I didn't see coming.

Brennan 30:36

I'm so upset that you did something that you ought not to have done, because we had an agreement, or because we had a deal, or because that's just not professional, or whatever it is. And so when we think about rebuilding trust, we have to be aware that the thing that we need to work on is not shoring up someone's confidence about how they can predict will behave, but shoring up their confidence that the norms are going to be upheld going forward.

Brennan 31:03

So when you see a brand that's got a scandal going on and the leaders come out and they apologise, usually what they do is they say something like, we're taking steps to ensure this never happens again.

Brennan 31:11

Lots of transparency and stuff. And that's sort of nice, but it doesn't really rebuild the trust. It rebuilds reliance because we think, okay, they've put so many checks and balances, they're just not capable of doing that scandal again.

Brennan 31:23

So I guess I can count on them. But I still, the wound hasn't been healed because they haven't put their hand up and gone,

do you know what, we got it wrong. You were not crazy when you thought we shouldn't have done that.

Brennan 31:36

That is a good norm. And we violated the norm. Until you do that, the sort of burn is still hot, right? I think when we think about putting marbles back in the jar and rebuilding trust after this was broken, some of those early marbles might need to be pretty big ones that are things of going, do you know what, I'm gonna put my hand up, what I did was wrong.

Brennan 31:56

I acknowledge that, I think that the agreement we had was right and I blew it. Now I'm also taking steps to make sure that it doesn't happen again. So we can still do that, but the thing that's really gonna be important is acknowledging and working through the break.

Brennan 32:11

And that's kind of, that's really hard work, it's tricky work, but gosh, when it happens, it can be so beautiful and so rich. And so that's, I think what makes up each marble is gonna be different for people because it also has to be a marble that looks like trustworthiness to, and is really trustworthiness to the other person, right?

Brennan 32:33

So it's, what might communicate my trustworthiness to you both might not communicate my trustworthiness to others, as I was saying before with different teams and stuff, but yeah, so I hope that's helpful enough without being, you know, knowing specific context.

Brennan 32:50

I think we need to think about focusing on the normative expectations perhaps that were violated and then think about am I in a place where I can take responsibility for this? You know, and how do I do that?

Brennan 33:00

How do I communicate it?

Ross D 33:03

Great. Okay, let's wrap up. Ross G, what will you be taking away from this conversation and applying in your life this week?

Ross G 33:09

I think I'll be reflecting on the three characteristics of trust, the competence, commitment, and character, because one of the things I've been thinking about is first, two are often, if you work with professionals, quite easy, particularly in a sales context.

Ross G 33:27

So, you know, lots of salespeople who are, you know, very competent, they're very committed, but I find that the commission structures in particular can have an adverse effect on the character. Most salespeople have some, most commission structures are kind of ambiguous, it's not totally clear who's responsible for what or where reward for certain things gets allocated, and disagreements over that, I think, falls into the character piece.

Ross G 33:56

So I think that's an interesting way of looking at trust. I was kind of rambling, I haven't fully formed my thought there, but that's what I'll be thinking about this week.

Ross D 34:04

Yeah, I think for me, it was what Brian was saying about busyness, and what I'll be doing differently is not necessarily scheduling time in my calendar for building trust with my colleagues, but I think sort of acknowledging that these things are just as important as shipping work and getting things done.

Ross D 34:22

It's also important to carve out that time to understand what's going on in people's lives, and it's equally important.

Ross G 34:29

Ross and I have actually both got a virtual reality table tennis game that we've yet to play and it feels like we need to be carrying a timer. We do keep putting that off. Yeah, we should play that game.

Ross D 34:42

Yeah, definitely. Brennan, what's one idea that you'd like listeners to remember from this conversation?

Brennan 34:48

Yeah, I think it's this idea that we should think about trust, not primarily in terms of scarcity, a sort of protection of how do I hedge my bets, who can I trust so that I don't get burned, but rather thinking of it as the space in which we come together and extend even our abilities.

Brennan 35:09

You know, that idea we were talking about before that I love of, you know, actually if I'm trying to micromanage everyone and not trust, or trust them as far as I worked out the trustworthiness, then I'm limiting possibilities for them, for the relationship, for everything.

Brennan 35:27

But if I go and go, you know, actually, hang on, trust is not this thing that is to be primarily and first and foremost managed, but rather it is about empowerment. I think there's something quite powerful there, and quite positive.

Brennan 35:41

I've seen that in a different angle, I think, from this conversation today. So I'm taking that away, and I think that's that'd be really positive for others to continue pondering as well.

Ross G 35:50

Do you, I would ask a very quick question, I'm just curious about it, because you talk about trust for a living. Do you feel a particular obligation not to remove marbles from people's jars?

Brennan 35:59

That's a good question, and I mean, I think I do, yeah, I do feel an obligation, but I think it's not because of, it's not because I'm trying to help them with trust, but because I just think I'm thinking about it more than the average person, right?

Brennan 36:19

I'm trying to like, we're talking about it, I'm understanding it, trying to work it out, and so it's just more present to mind, I think. And so I'm much more conscious, I guess. I don't know how conscious other people are.

Brennan 36:31

I think I'm probably more conscious, just like, you know, when you get a red car, you start to think that there's so many more red cars on the road. So I'm working on it, so I'm noticing it more. But I think we all probably have some of that obligation, but I just sort of feel it.

Ross D 36:51

Great. So before we go we've just got time for our regular feature, One thing I've learned this week, Ross do you want to get us started?

Ross G 37:02

Sure. I trusted you would ask me first. I was reading about the Great Resignation, the term that you guys would be familiar with if you'd heard this banded about. This term started being used in May 2021, and in fact, I've recorded a podcast on this topic where I tried and completely failed to analyse the data and work out what the heck was going on.

Ross G 37:26

I was on the Office for National Statistics website. I was like, I don't know if this thing exists or what's happening, but brighter minds than mine have now turned to this. There's a piece in the conversation that looks at what's been happening in the UK over the past kind of year or so.

Ross G 37:41

The teaser for the Great Resignation is that during the pandemic, lots of people had an epiphany about their lives and decided to leave the world of work. You had sort of investment bankers were going to leave and go and become carpenters or whatever it might be.

Ross G 37:56

Apparently, according to the data from the Office for National Statistics, that's not true at all. In fact, people tended to leave their job for the exact same job somewhere else. The reason that they left wasn't some epiphany about how they were spending their time.

Ross G 38:09

It was because they were paid better to go and get a job somewhere else. The article also shows that rates of vacancies, resignations, and wage grows have all slowed in the fourth quarter of 2021. If you're listening to this and thinking, oh, time to leave my job and go somewhere else, I think you might be too late.

Ross G 38:25

This is the final life in the article. If you weren't part of the Great Resignation, you may already be too late, so sorry. You're stuck in the job you're already in. Ross, what have you learned this week?

Ross D 38:40

Well, on the topic of trust as well, I tend to, if I'm looking to think about watching a new film that I haven't really heard much about before or read any reviews of, had recommendations from friends, the first place I will go is usually IMDB and Rotten Tomatoes.

Ross D 38:57

Place my trust in these aggregate scores of movies. I have a sort of arbitrary cut off for seven on IMDB and at least above like 70-ish percent on Rotten Tomatoes, probably more like 80% on Tomatoes.

Ross D 39:11

And I read this article recently against Rotten Tomatoes by Matt Stroll. I actually first heard about this on the Ezra Klein show, one of my favourite podcasts, which is basically arguing that what Rotten Tomatoes does is it's a sort of lowest common denominator, like basically was the review fresh or was it rotten?

Ross D 39:32

And so what you get rising to the top are films that are pretty unobjectionable, kind of palatable things that conform to people's expectations of what a film in that genre should be and what it should look like.

Ross D 39:45

And the great art is often more divisive than that. So the fact that a hundred percent of critics agree on something is not necessarily reflective of the fact that the film is groundbreaking or sort of defying genre conventions.

Ross D 39:59

It's probably going to be entertaining, probably going to be a good way to spend some time, but it might not be sort of changing cinema or moving cinema forward. And so I think what I've learned is that I possibly place a bit too much trust in these score aggregators.

Ross D 40:14

I should dip my toes in into films to get the 6 .5. I think if something's getting like a really low rating probably is a pretty good sign that it is just a terrible film. But there's also a place for those as well.

Ross D 40:26

So yeah, maybe think about where I placed my trust in before I decide to watch. Yeah. Awesome. Uh, Brennan what about you?

Brennan 40:34

Well do you know what one thing that that what you just shared Ross made me think of that I can't quite say is something I've learned this week because I haven't delved into it enough to say whether or not it's really true so and I'd feel bad saying I've learned something because I think knowledge has a special relationship with certainty right?

Brennan 40:56

But something that I heard recently that's similar to your sort of reviews and stats and stuff and putting trust in it is that you know when it says on the weather that there's a 75% chance of rain or you know 100% chance of snow or whatever that apparently those percentages mean that 75% of the weather professionals asked will it you know who was who were asked will it rain today 75% of them said yes it will rain at this hour or this time

Brennan 41:32

Which is different, I think, to me. I used to always think, or at least, maybe, unless this has proved to be right, I still think it means there's a 75% chance of it raining, meaning that there's a certain amount of humidity in the air, right?

Brennan 41:48

There's sort of 75% more this day than on a day where there's a zero chance of it raining or something. But that seems very different from saying, no, actually, it's about 75% of the people who were asked, if they're not professionals, meteorologists think that it will rain.

Brennan 42:02

So we're sort of saying something more about what professionals think than what's going on in the atmosphere, which is hopefully what they think is based on what's in the atmosphere. But that was sort of interesting.

Brennan 42:12

So again, I can't say that I learned that because I don't know if it's true, but that's sort of relevant to what you're saying as well about how we trust the stats. Yeah.

Ross D 42:23

I recently read Nate Silver's book, *The Signal and the Noise*. Ross says, like, I'm going on about this book all the time. But he has also an example about weather in that book, and he talks about how commercial weather channels, I think mostly in the US, like weather.com, tend to have, purposely in their models, a sort of bias towards pessimistic forecasts, because people would rather go out thinking it's going to rain, and then it doesn't rain than be told it's going to be sunny, and they go out and they get absolutely drenched, because it erodes that trust in the weather providers.

Ross D 42:59

So their models are purposely inaccurate or less accurate than they could be, because they would rather people come back to them and trust their forecast in the future.

Brennan 43:08

Yeah. Well, but I've just, I've got to, I know we're just about out of time. I've got to jump in on that, though, because that isn't that interesting. Like, I can totally see why they would do that. But then once the cat's out of the bag, it actually really, I think, hurts our trust of them because they're like, well, these people are playing me.

Brennan 43:24

You know, I want to I want to just tell me what you think is going to happen for real. And I'll I'll decide if I'm going to be disappointed. You know, I mean, it's probably it's true that if, you know, I'm sure the sort of behavioural economists would say, no, Brennan, it's true.

Brennan 43:37

You'll be more disappointed if if you expected it to be sunny and then it rained. And, you know, that's that I've definitely been there. But I feel like we're talking about trusting them. Now I've got to sort of go, is this a day where they've had changed their results or not?

Brennan 43:52

I don't know. You know, yeah.

Ross G 43:55

Depends if you're trusting that intention or trusting the accuracy of what they're saying. Like you could trust that they have your best interests at heart. And for that reason, they're lying to you.

Brennan 44:04

Right, yeah. Right. I think that we sort of, I don't know, we kind of want people just to tell us how it is, you know. Not these days.

Ross G 44:14

Not these days. Sugar-coat it for me, please.

Brennan 44:17

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, yeah, fair enough. And maybe that brings us back to that point of, you know, it's all very context sensitive and actually being, showing our trustworthiness sometimes is, you know, it may be appropriate to sugarcoat things because of the intentions involved in doing that.

Brennan 44:34

I don't know. But there's a lot, there's a lot to it.

Ross G 44:37

There's another 40-minute podcast in this. Yeah. Yeah.

Ross D 44:40

I think so. Before we go, Brennan, do you want to mention anything?

Brennan 44:43

Sure yeah I mean if people are I guess interested more in in some of the thinking that I've shared then you know as you both mentioned before I've done a lot of work on trust and primarily used to work with businesses on trust.

Brennan 44:59

These days I'm running philosophy at work which is all about teaching the thinking skills that are needed and I still include trust in that because we know that we don't think our best unless we feel safe so a lot of times we start off working on trust and then we get into the the thinking skills so we can do that best but but there's a lot of a lot of resources and all these things over at philosophyatwork.co.uk that's philosophy at work spelled out not the sort of at sign philosophyatwork.co.uk

Ross D 45:27

Okay, we will put a link in the show notes. Cool. Thanks. And that's it. You've listened to the Future Talent Learning podcast with me, Ross Dickey and Ross Garner. Our guest this week is Dr. Brennan Jacoby.

Ross D 45:39

Until next time. Bye for now.