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# Trust Happens: A Multi-Route Model of Trust Formation in Virtual Teams

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## TRUST HAPPENS: A MULTI-ROUTE MODEL OF TRUST FORMATION IN VIRTUAL TEAMS

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### Abstract

For over a decade, the dominant theoretical model of trust formation in virtual teams has been a rational assessment of team members' ability, integrity and benevolence. Building on the traditional dual process theories of cognition and newer theories of unconscious cognition, we argue that although this model is appropriate in some cases, there are other ways of forming trust in virtual teams. In this paper, we examine how two distinctly different forms of cognition — planned, rational cognition and unconscious, automatic cognition — are both used to form trust and the situational factors that lead team members to engage in one or the other. Because these forms of cognition are separate and distinct, we develop a process model to explain how and why the different forms of cognition are invoked. Within each part of the process model, we develop a separate variance model that examines the factors that would affect trust formed by that process.

**Keywords:** Trust, Swift Trust, Cognitive Trust, Knowledge-Based Trust, Automatic Trust, Habitual Trust, Virtual Teams, Automatic Cognition, Unconscious Cognition, ELM, HSM

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