

Trust, Walls, and the Internet

A number of authors point out that organizations with high trust are much more effective and profitable. Yet, we are having problems with technology that was built on the concepts of trust. History shows that we bounce back and forth between trusting and building walls to protect. Recently, the Internet had problems where people have violated the trust with Cyberattacks and stealing data. We need to build the "walls" for the Internet.

Look at the history of the Italian countryside. It is dotted with farms and manors, some dating back to before the Roman days. However, many of those have spent years abandoned. People left them in order to live in walled cities on the hill

tops. Living up there and building those walls took a lot of time, effort, and energy – energy that could have been better spent. But survival took precedent over profit.

Likewise, when we look at the American Southwest, the native populations spent centuries building up farms throughout the area. The Hohokam irrigation canals were an engineering marvel and allowed them to grow far more crops than simple dry land farming could do. Yet, later on, people are only living in settlements hidden in cracks high up on mountain walls.

Living in a trusting crowd makes for a much better life. When we trust our colleagues, our professional lives are much better, easier to handle, and far more profitable. Dealing with other

companies on a trust basis makes for faster interactions. (Simply removing the lawyers speeds up the process considerably.) Approaching others on a "win-win" basis makes all processes better.

Our Internet was originally designed for a highly trusted population. It was designed first for university professors who are a small crowd. A trusted Internet was much easier to build. Considering the capability of computers at the time when the Internet was first designed, a trusted system was about all that they could do.

We live with an Internet at war. We have opened up the Internet to the whole world which means that there are people who are wanting to use it to harm us. That means that we

need to spend the effort to build the proper walls of protection.

There are technical ways to build the proper walls. The problem is that the Internet exists currently without those ways built in.

The Internet structure is voluntary. Similarly, when the Titanic sank, manning radio rooms was voluntary and their cries for help were not heard. Shortly after that sinking, international treaties put a mandatory structure on radios. Likewise, there has been a multiyear voluntary effort to change the Internet TCP protocol from v4 to v6. Yet, Google reports that only 14% of the people are using v6 as of September 1. In order to get the Internet hardened, we will need to force some people to change.

Our country will need to force an Internet upgrade.

Trust and Defense Are Choices

Late Projects

The project is late and the schedule just hit the fan. It is so tempting to just try to add people or ask people to work harder. But often there is a better solution. In many cases, what is needed is a deeper analysis of the problem so that the correct changes are made.

The problem with simply adding people is that adding people often makes a project later. Every time people are added to a team, the team needs to work out what management changes it needs to properly incorporate those new people. More people on a team means more formal management of communications, task assignments, and internal status reporting. When a team is in crisis mode, the team is not able to make those management changes. And the new people need to be brought up to speed on what the project is and how they will fit in which also can't be done when the team is in crisis.

When a project is running late, it is far better to take the time to evaluate what the problem really is. Is the client constantly changing requirements? Were the initial requirements far more than could be accomplished by the team that was assigned? Could the project be done by splitting it up?

Often, the real need is more management time. This time is needed in helping manage the client, help identify bottlenecks in the project, run interference with the rest of the organization, make sure that the team internal communication structure matches the need, and make sure that the design really matches what the client needs.

When things really go wrong, take time to think before jumping in with a fix.

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Risky World

While data breaches at brick and mortar stores has gotten the headlines, online stores are often just as vulnerable. Many online shopping cart programs have been hacked and are sending stolen credit card information to crooks. Last measurement was over 2% of sites. Most web masters appear not to care and believe that simply using SSL keeps them safe.

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