

# Exploring Design Specific Factors For Building Longer Term Industry Relationships

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## Abstract

When design works with industry it tries to sell two things, first, selling design as an agent of transformation, and second, selling design as a skill. Whilst historically design has been successful in the latter, it is the former that is more challenging, making it a necessity for design to work in non-design contexts in order to build trust and credibility. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate the ways in which design interacts with industry, and how these interactions enable design to establish longer term relationships.

This investigation set out to answer the question, what design specific characteristics are applied to establish successful longer-term relationships between design and industry? The paper aims to illustrate the intrinsic factors that enable design to get access, and designers to get authority to play a significant role in organisations. Five well-established relationships between design and industry have been used to analyse to find correlations.

The investigation identifies three stages of collaboration between design and industry, namely, involvement, collaboration and partnerships, contrary to Cahill's (1965) theoretical model, which claimed four stages to long lasting partnerships. Also, the case studies confirm three stages of trust and credibility as factors that help in strengthening a relationship between design and industry. Finally, several intrinsic factors that are unique to design have been identified, which are seen to have helped design in building high levels of trust and credibility.

*Key words: Credibility, Trust, Design and Industry Relationship, Partnership, Collaboration*

Design has two particular ways to pitch its value to industry partners, one, selling design as an agent for change; two, the 'product-sell' i.e. selling design through a designer for a particular skill. This paper concerns with the former, which is more challenging for design, as it requires design to work in non-design contexts. This investigation aims at identifying design specific characteristics that play a part in establishing longer term relationship between design and industry. Whilst relationship management falls under business and management research, its implications are felt by the likes of design practitioners and design consultancies that are constantly trying to establish new relationships with industry. The complexity increases when its design and the designers who are looking for collaborators, and this is largely due to underestimated value of design in business and varied standards in the design outputs and the skill of a designer.

This study investigates 5 case studies with long and well-established relationships. The findings articulate the stages of trust that are created when design works towards establishing a lasting relationship with an industrial partner. A link between trust and credibility in the relationship building process is illustrated. The paper then reveals the most important intrinsic factors that support creating trust and credibility in the first place.

## **Literature Review**

### **Value of Design in Business**

Junginger (2006), Burns et al. (2005) and Junginger and Sangiorgi (2009) have evidenced design's role in organisational transformations, where various contexts (including social innovation) has given design the opportunity to act as a facilitator or an agent for change. Designing of social interactions, such as the principles with which two actors should interact and create the environment conducive for innovation to flourish is undergoing a facelift. Design has had a big role to play in shifting the centrism of relationship management from its original systems led approach into a more human centric one (Juninger, 2006, Leidka & Ogilvie, 2011 and Aftab & Young, 2016). Consequently, we have an altered understanding of the role that trust and credibility played in building these social interactions.

### **The Value Of Trust In Building Relationships**

Social interactions between two actors working towards innovation might begin with the initial meetings, where both parties might question: why do you want to talk more with me? Why should I want to talk more with you? These questions could help identify a common purpose for the actors, and begin the next stage of the relationship, before progressing to a more collaborative one. One or both parties might give signals to have conversations about what they should give and take for the next stage (Gee, 2015). This process, where both parties commit time, and work together in a particular project, might promote trust that will facilitate the next stages of the relationship.

Whilst building trust is closely linked in having and maintaining good relationships, both personal and professional. Hacker et al. (1999), Kadefors (2004) and Hooghe et al. (2012) agree that trust has manifolds of applications for design consultancies. Stone (2010) states that exceeding industry partner's expectation results in higher level of trust, and consequently leads to longer relationships. Also, Best (2006) states that trust could build confidence amongst the consultancies and their industry partners. However, lack of trust might cause more damage, where the collaborators feel cynicism, doubt and anxiety.

### **Dimensions Of Trust**

Lewicki and Bunker (1995) identify three different stages of trust; stage one as calculus-based trust (CBT); stage two as knowledge-based trust (KBT); and stage three as identification-based trust (IBT). CBT begins with a low investment from both sides. The relationship might be defined by a contract, which clearly articulates costs and benefits; a transactional relationship. This stage is monitored through constant reporting between the parties, and there is a level of tolerance between parties. KBT begins as soon as both the parties have gained a good understanding of each other through working together over a

period of time. In this stage both parties can predict each other's behaviour, however a conflict at this stage might reduce the willingness to trust. The third and the hardest stage to reach is the IBT where both parties not just understand each other, but also endorse each other, and could act on behalf of each other in an interpersonal transaction. During this stage the parties are seen to have a high level of empathy for each other. Whilst these stages might feel as though they follow a linear progression, in reality they are highly dynamic, as the levels of trust in each stage fluctuates with the increasing length of a relationship. Additionally, there are multiple factors that influence each of the stages and the progression of a relationship into the next stage.

Studies conducted by Saporito, P. & Sapienza, H. (2002) and McAllister et al. (2006) support Lewicki and Bunker's theory. They suggest that the longevity of the relationship might be one of the factors that are of utmost influence. However, in terms of industry relationship, previous studies suggest that trust is a conceptual model and it is built through the development of capability, commitment and consistency between the parties involved.

### Factors Influencing Trust

Pavlidis (2011) identifies extrinsic and intrinsic trust factors that have an impact on both engaged-parties in the context of a consultant/industry partner relationship. The extrinsic factors play an important role when the 'company' gathers all the knowledge about the 'designer' without any direct experience (e.g. knowledge of the reputation/past credibility) and vice versa. Meanwhile, the intrinsic factors would cover all of information gathered during the experience of relationship building when both parties interact. Furthermore, several studies consider the intrinsic trust factors that might influence trust building. Those factors are more like trust antecedents and help us calculate how much of trust a party would give to another party in a particular relationship. Mayer et al. (1995) and research conducted by Hacker et al. (1999), Kadefors (2004) proposes those factors to be; ability, benevolence and integrity. They confirm that the interrelationship amongst those three factors impacts the achievable levels of trust. The higher each factor is indicated, the higher level of trust the industry partner is seen to give to a designer (Mayer et al., 1995).

Pavlidis (2011) concludes that during the initial stages of the relationship; the extrinsic factors have a stronger impact on the decision making by both the parties. On the other hand, in later stages, Roxburgh (2003) states that the intrinsic factors are more influential. Whilst most see trust as a critical element in building a successful industry partner relationship, there are many other factors that need to be briefly mentioned here. These other factors contribute towards the relationship process, such as teamwork, resources, time and the project itself. For Sheddy (1997, cited in Du Plessis, 2005) in terms of marketing, trust also has an important role to play in managing the quality of interactions and the industry partner's commitment to the relationship. In this context, the relationship would be closely related to project management, where the designer should set a strategy to deliver qualified works in order to increase the level of trust. Best (2010) suggest that delivering a successful design is aligned with punctuality, budget and profit; hinting at a combination of the 'creative competence' and 'managerial competence' for project success.

Lewicki and Bunker (1995) believe that a lasting industry relationship might also depend

on how a relationship is managed i.e. where each collaborator is influencing one another and delivering benefits for each other. According to Boyle (2003), the relationship between a designer and its industry partner also requires effective and frequent communication and good design process that is based on clear roles and responsibilities (Best, 2006). Also, Kadefors (2004) work concluded that a higher level of trust could increase the standard of the design project. However, for Hacker et al. (1999), every interaction between the designer and industry partner would build trust over time. In this case, both parties should be willing to involve in a particular project, by giving their time, resources and effort. Nevertheless, a study by Mayer et al. (1995) shows that trust might not be needed for collaboration. So, if trust is not needed for collaboration then what is the next important factor that makes two parties collaborate?

Du Plessis (2005) believes that credibility could be the answer. Credibility could be added to the establishment of long-term relationship and the existence of trust. Also, whilst lack of trust would damage a relationship, lack of credibility might have a negative impact on the trust building process itself. However the case, it could be a combination of both the creative and management competencies that influences trust. In this context, trust, credibility and long-term relationship might be universals and should be applied to all collaborations. Regarding the trust-building process, several authors point out that credibility might overlap trust. So, what is the role of credibility in terms of trust and long-term relationship building process?

### Value of Credibility In Building Relationships

Trust and credibility are competencies and characteristics (Covey & Merrill, 2006). Credibility simply means the quality of being trusted and believed in (Du Plessis, 2005). Essentially, credibility should be established by a combination of several elements and building of trust should follow good credibility. The presence of credibility is essential and it is what makes up the ‘elevator pitch’ on the websites of most design consultancies. Reflecting on design’s perspective on credibility, Du Plessis (2005) considers that credibility covers three dimensions as follows;

- expertise (competency, innovativeness and being market leader),
- trustworthiness (being dependable and meeting customers’ needs), and
- likeability (being fun, interesting).

Ferguson (1999, cited in Du Plessis, 2005) also agrees to trustworthiness and expertise as being the two essential elements for building credibility. Additionally, Covey & Merrill (2006) explores that there are four main elements that could build credibility; integrity, intent, capability and results. McCorey (2005) added four stages for establishing credibility; rapport, trust, influence and persuasion. Firstly, *rapport* that could help a designer set the base of the relationship. Secondly, *trust* should exist that might accelerate the time to achieve the result faster. Thirdly, *influence* should cover the ability of leading the hearts and minds of people that has been built from the previous stages of rapport and trust. Lastly, *persuading* the industry partner to take action based on the designer’s recommendations. These four stages should measure the effectiveness of the relationship by capturing the benefits and tracking down the number of projects (McCorey, 2005).

Barr (2015) states that building trust and credibility are activities of day-to-day processes and also an essential tool to maintain the industry partner relationship. Trust might be a primary factor in how people collaborate in a particular work and build an industry partner relationship (cited in Saporito, 2002). Additionally, Du Plessis (2005) believes that credibility also has a role in driving the relationships.

On the other hand, a study by Simons (2002, cited in Du Plessis, 2005) argues that credibility may not be part of trust at all. He suggests credibility to be considered as a behavioural integrity. However, Devlin & Devlin (2010) illustrate the need for establishing credibility in order to increase the level of trust. His framework suggests that trust and credibility might be created by three essential factors; knowledge and expertise, openness and honesty, concern and care (Peters, Covello and McCallum, 1997). This study revealed that the concept of trust and credibility depends on the context of application. For instance, there would be different levels of trust and credibility amongst industry, government, citizen and as well as society.

Whilst literature illustrates that trust and credibility are important and have a role in building successful industry partner relationship, the interrelationship between trust and credibility is still very subjective. There are studies that both agree and disagree with the similarity between these two concepts. However, understanding the concepts and the interrelationship between them might help in relating how they influence the relationship between a design and its industry partners.

### Trust, Credibility and Lasting Relationship

From design field's point of view, industry relationships would be closely related to project management and communication, to deliver quality work in order to increase the level of trust. However, an important question here is, how you build trust when working with a profession (design) that embraces failure as a necessary aspect of securing success?

Increasing level of trust and credibility should influence the development of a relationship. According to a study by Cahill (1996), relationships are established in four distinct stages (Figure 1), partnership being the one that a long-term bond should aim towards. She suggests

that a relationship would commence when people who participate get involved in a particular project or piece of work. She believes that when people begin to collaborate, it results in greater involvement towards the next stage of the relationship, which is a true partnership (shown in figure 1).

INVOLVEMENT —> COLLABORATION —> PARTICIPATION —> PARTNERSHIP

Figure 1. A Continuum of Involvement Model by Cahill (1996)

The paragraphs below have tried to ascertain if Cahill's model applied to any of the partnerships between design/designer and the industry.

### Research Context and Process

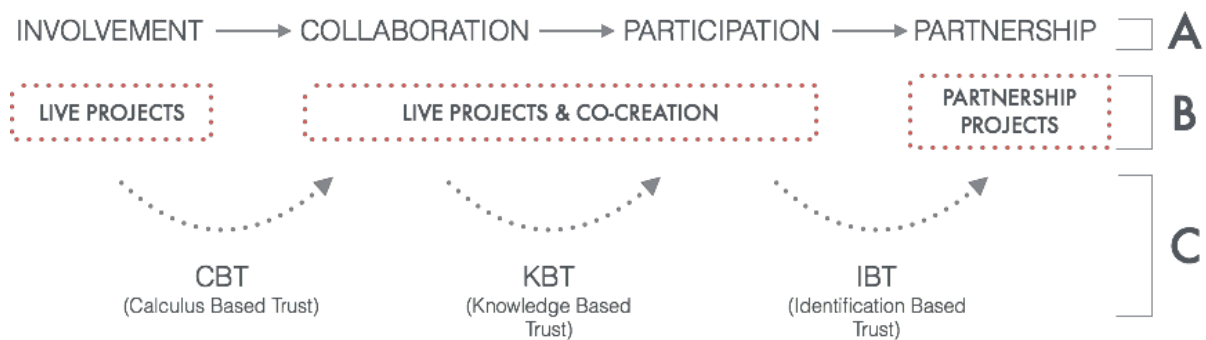
Post reflection of projects undertaken between a UK based University and a global FMCG brand based in The Netherlands since 2006 until 2016 was conducted. Projects were grouped together and placed on a timeline based on the level of partnership, anticipated value and impact, and then mapped onto Cahill’s (1965) theory. A framework was created which illustrated the trajectory of the evolving partnership between the two parties. The framework was then mapped onto Lewicki and Bunker’s (2010) four levels of trust, and McCCorey’s (2005) four stages for establishing credibility to illustrate the role of trust and credibility in building longer-term relationship with design. This revealed interesting but subtle differences in the way design projects and designers form new and strong industry partnerships.

Additionally, four design consultancies that have successful long-term contracts with large industry partners were engaged in unstructured interviews to explore the social factors that affect the process of building such successful industry partner relationships. The reasoning behind engaging with consultancies was due to their ability to gain access to industry projects on a longer term, and the authors are convinced that this was an opportunity to learn from their achievements. A summary of each case study is given in Appendix 1 (Table 1).

## Findings and Conclusions

### 1, Framework for Long Term Partnerships

Cahill’s (1996) theory was taken as a baseline and then compared with the 10-year relationship in case study 5, to create a framework. The project type, outcomes and impact of the projects conducted during the 10 years relationship was plotted on to Cahill’s framework (Figure 2).



A. A Continuum on Involvement Model by Cahill (1996)

B. Project level of engagements between Design School and Company-A by Bailey *et al.* (2015)

C. The Shifting up level of Trust by Lewicki and Bunker (1996)

Figure 2. The Shifting up of Trust Level Model

The findings from this stage indicated that there was a correlation between the nature of the projects and the stages of the relationship, and design led relationship building had three stages of working together. For example, the initial stage (called involvement stage) had short (around 3 weeks) live projects involving a student cohort, with clear benefits to the students learning, and explicit outcome in form of ideas to the industry partner. These projects elaborated the skill of a designer and did not concern with the impact and value of

design within the business. In fact these short student led projects built enough trust between the two parties that both were able to progress in creating projects more suitable for the next stage.

Stage two combined collaboration and participation into projects of a kind, which were discretely based on co-creative activities between the students, academic staff, innovators in residence (a quasi-consultancy offering a bridge between academics' research and the partner's project requirements) and the industrial partners. Projects conducted in this stage were longer, and involved more stakeholders. The academic staff involved in increasing the understanding of the value of design within the partner organisation. These projects elaborated on the overall value of design on business skills instead of just developing a design skill. However, the projects had an end time and whilst co-creation did seem to increase the capacity of design within the partner organisation, the overall impact of running such learning and teaching based co-creative projects was still unknown.

Further, stage three is seen the hardest to achieve even after 10 years of collaboration. However, due to the increase in the capacity of design within the partner organisation, a partnership project was established between the two institutions, which is on going. This partnership was formalised to develop an understanding of the breadth of the role that design could play within the organisation and exploit its capabilities for the mutual benefit of the organisation, academia and the students.

### Illustrating the Four Levels of Trust on the Partnership Framework

Lewicki and Bunker's (2010) four levels of trust were then superimposed on to the framework. This confirmed that the project outcome and its impact on the collaborating company played a role in the progress of the relationship into the subsequent stages (figure 2). For example, the educational institute had enough credibility to kick-start projects from a calculus-based trust. Hence, the initial student-driven projects. As a result, this led to a rise in trust between the institute and industry partner, consequently allowing design to get better access of the internal decision making process of the organisation through co-creative projects.

These co-creative projects were seen to build capacity for design within the organisation, hence a culture of mutual understanding flourished. The most obvious insight gained from this stage was an increase in the credibility of design as a concept and its impact on innovation.

### Illustrating the Construct of Trust and Credibility in Building Partnerships

The combination of Lewicki and Bunker's (1996) three stages of trust and McCorey's (2005) four stages for establishing credibility illustrated the importance of trust and credibility for a long lasting relationship. However, the theoretical construct of trust and credibility provided by Du Plessis (2005) suggested that credibility might be independent of trust. Hence, a theoretical analysis was conducted to ascertain if this was applicable in the case for design. The finding illuminated that trust in design and the credibility of a designer have to grow incrementally and simultaneously in order for a relationship to progress from the first level of mere involvement of the industry partner into the stage of a partnership (Figure 3). Whilst progress towards partnership required the designers to show

their abilities (credibility) in handling advanced projects, the partnering company also needed to advance in its belief (trust) for design as an agent for change. In this case study the former was easily achieved but the latter was more difficult.

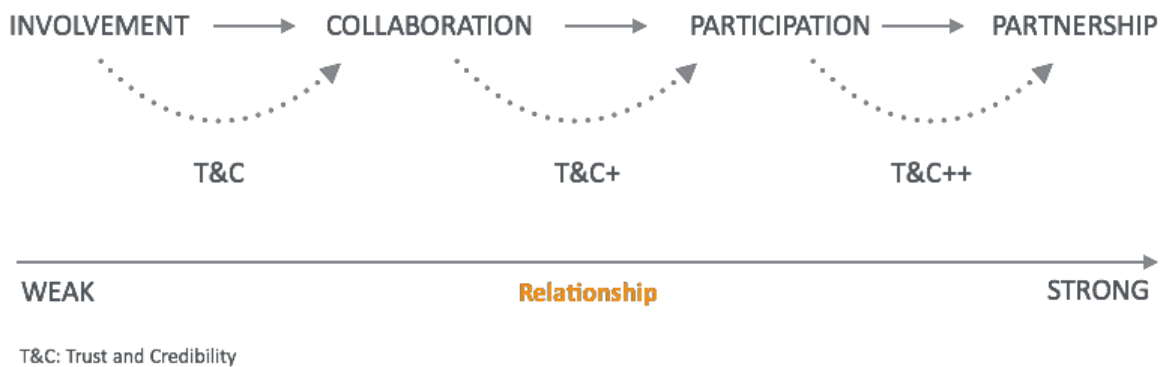


Figure 3. Adapted continuum of involvement model mix with the trust-building process (Cahill, 1996)

### Confirming the use of trust, influence and persuasion in later stages of relationship building

Mapping McCorey’s (2005) four stages of credibility on to the framework (Figure 4) led to conflicting results. It illustrated that whilst live projects did help in building a good rapport and vice versa, it was the confluence of all the other stages of credibility (i.e. trust, influence and persuasion) that enabled design to have a bigger role in the organisations internal decision-making process. In fact, the initial project meetings evidenced strong persuasion from design to convince the industry about new opportunities for collaboration.

Therefore this confirmed that the four stages of credibility were, in effect, four important elements that a designer must apply, in order to pursue a lasting relationship.



A. Project level of engagements between Design School and Company-A by Bailey *et al.* (2015)  
 B. The four stages of Credibility by McCorey (2005)

Figure 4. The Stage of Establishing Credibility Model

## 5. Trust Model Creation

Finally, the analysis of the first 4 case studies led to the construction of a trust model (Figure 5). The model articulated several intrinsic factors that were deemed important to establish trust and credibility.

Elements like ability/capability, benevolence and integrity were pre added as they were supposedly considered key to building credibility by the literature. Later, the 4



consultancies also confirmed their significance and added that these elements represented the qualities that were needed in the individuals work within the consultancy; used specifically when a designer is trying to sell a particular skill.

Also, more elements, such as, adaptive approach, passion, multidisciplinary teams perspective, face-to-face meeting, empathy, flexibility, and less negotiation were added to the model. These elements represented the principles which design used in its interaction with their client whilst selling design as a concept and not just a skill. The trust model also confirmed that ‘time’ is not a factor in building long relationship.

The existing factors from the Case Study Formula (Design School and Company-A)		Design Consultancy-A	Design Consultancy-B	Design Consultancy-C	Design Consultancy-D
Ability (A)	Skills	◆◆	◆◆	◆◆	◆◆
	Experience	◆	◆	◆◆	◆◆
	Project Review Regularly	◆	◇	◆◆	◆
	Selecting Project Creatively	◆	◇	◆◆	◆◆
Benevolence (B)	Friendliness	◆◆	◆◆	◆	◆◆
	Keep client involves	◆	◇	◆	◆◆
Integrity (I)	Honesty	◆◆	▲	◆◆	◆◆
	Consistency	◆	◆◆	◆◆	◆◆
	Personal approach	◆◆	◆◆	◇	◆
Additional factors		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Transparent (I)</li> <li>- Multi-disciplinary team</li> <li>- Passionate (A)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Flexibility (B)</li> <li>- Empathy (B)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Effectiveness (A)</li> <li>- Do not need negotiation (A)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Face to face meeting (B)</li> <li>- Adaptive (B)</li> <li>- Do a little negotiation (A)</li> <li>- Multi-disciplinary team</li> <li>- Passionate (A)</li> </ul>
Period of existence		(2013-now)	(2011-2014)	(2009-now)	(2008-now)
Period of time to reach the last stage of relationship		~	~	6	5

◆◆ Strongly evident  
 ◆ Evident  
 ◇ Not evident

Figure 5: The trust model creation and validation

Finally, the investigation and validation of the trust model led to the identification of four key intrinsic factors that were important in establishing trust and credibility, and were seen particular (but not exclusive) to all design led partnerships. These are,

1. clear *passion* for design by the industry partner

Whilst Stone (2010) suggests that being passionate about ones design could boost credibility, it is the passion for design by the industry partner, which was seen as a clear factor in creating an initial appetite for design’s inclusion in organisational practice. This allows industry to involve design and a solution provider to pitch design’s abilities.

2. design *leadership*

Projects through industry partnership are one of the ways in which design's capability as a leader for transformational change are demonstrated. Consequently, this has led to a better understanding of what design could achieve if given the opportunity to participate in non- design contexts, such as organisational culture change, transformation, innovation, thereby adding to design's credibility.

### 3. *empathic* interactions

Often a design project starts with a friendly meeting, but this is never enough to establish and maintain a lasting relationship. Frequent face-to-face meetings and honest and transparent communication, where the designer could claim the industrial partner to be wrong, are seen as essential for building trust. Add to this the element of empathy (Michlewski, 2008) and a new form of relationship building principle emerges. Currently, many have evidenced the use of empathy in creating social interactions, and the authors see its application within the relationship building process as well.

Although the trust model (figure 2) identified negotiation as a frustrating aspect for industry partners, it is a necessary step for the designer when managing expectations. The case studies evidenced that negotiations are essential to balance the time, budget and quality constraints for projects. Here, the role of empathy as suggested by case study 3 is shown to be of great value in leading short but effective negotiations.

### 4. *agile* process

Time management is crucial in all design related projects, but it gets challenged when design is made to work under strict budget constraints. Hence, a process that allows the solution providers to adapt is a must.

The development of long lasting industry partner relationship with equal mutual benefit is largely influenced by trust and credibility. However, trust and credibility is built by other intrinsic factors, which are not easy to apply within a project space. Nevertheless, once the combination of these factors is established a greater and longer relationship can be nurtured. In terms of building a good industry partner relationship, trust and credibility might work collaboratively, but both should also work independently.

The paper confirmed the need to nurture trust and credibility together, throughout the four stages leading up to partnership, in order to ensure progression into a longer-term relationship. Also, it stressed importance of using a number of intrinsic factors that were found important for any design led relationship building endeavour; passion for design by the client, showcasing design leadership, empathic interactions, and agile processes.

## **Implications and Future Research**

This research has greater implications for early career/start-up designers. Whilst the sample size for this research involved designers at various stages of their career, the findings might be of interest to design practitioners who are hoping to start their own venture. The implementations of this study should motivate them to build the trust and credibility not only to achieve their goal, but also to establish their industry partner relationship.

The exploratory nature of this investigation could be considered as purely subjective. However, the mere scope of the study challenges us to explore the research from different perspectives. Moreover, there is limited literature discussing the importance of credibility and trust in design field, and further research needs to be done to investigate the role of trust and credibility from the perspective of industry partners. Industry partners might consider outcome, impact and profit as more beneficial, which will give a completely different context for what has been discovered. An important question to ask would be, what are the downsides of long-term relationships?

Additionally, another interesting aspect to be explored should be the role of a leader, in building trust and credibility with the industry partners. A leader should be able to inspire trust. At this end, a designer that has a trustworthy leader could accelerate growth, improve collaboration, and strengthen partnerships.

From the previous findings, design project management and communication were emphasised as the important aspects in achieving design success; whereas this research explored and related those aspects to the concept of trust and credibility. The elements of trust should build the quality of being trusted, which leads to the establishment of credibility. Like trust, credibility also has a value in the relationship.

Lastly, through trust and credibility design might be able to nurture and maintain lasting relationships with industry partners and thereby sustain livelihoods. Nevertheless, if the real purpose of the partnership is for design to position itself as an important resource for industry, and be given easy access to work in non-design contexts, this will only happen when design has demonstrated credibility by working in such contexts and gained the trust of industry. This is such a paradox, and the only way out of this is through the application of the intrinsic factors in all industry partnership meetings i.e. constant persuasion, communication, and (design) leadership.

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**Appendix 1:**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Story</b>	<b>Client Relationship</b>	<b>Trust Building Process</b>	<b>Communication and Management</b>
Case 1	Consultancy got projects off the ground in 2013. Two individuals, one with business and one with design background.	Creativity in selection of the project is what they believe one of the primary criteria for a successful collaboration.	They encountered challenges during their start-up phase. These challenges were around forming long-term relationships with clients. It was good communication and transparency with their clients that helped them. Whilst they agree that understanding the client's need at the start of the project is crucial, it was the management of the client's trust, passion and skills that were decisive if the relationship would last longer.	They have a clear process that their client's engage in, 1) Research, 2) Selection, 3) Brief, 4) Trust, 5) Freedom, 6) Communication They work with several constraints like time and budget. However, managing client's expectation is one of the biggest constraints they prioritise from the start of a project.

Case 2	<p>Consultancy began in 2011. Small team with two designers. The office is used as a co-creative space where they meet clients. The team works away from home on the projects.</p>	<p>They engage with the clients in an office space only. This they feel is one of the key initiatives to gain the clients trust early on in the process. They keep the client involved in constant feedback loop throughout the project process.</p>	<p>They have managed to build a long lasting relationship through consistent use of empathy. They also encourage employing personal time and space to build a relationship with their client on a deeper level. They believe that design can become an integral part of their clients business, especially if the design consultancies are not too selective of the kind of projects they conduct.</p>	<p>They do not have a clear process, as they believe each project has a unique approach. However, they confirm that they begin with research, and then follow it up with design work. The projects always have rigorous quality control before client feedback sessions. They worked with budget restraint only, and focused on helping the client in their business, whilst collaborating in projects.</p>
Case 3	<p>Since 2009. Small team with 3 design consultants.</p>	<p>Through long-term collaboration, they have been able to develop an assessment tool that categorises clients into three sets. Where the first two sets are the ones that have the potential to become long-term relationship and the third set recognises clients who will never go beyond a project-based relationship. They build capacity to work with the clients based on the assessment. They believe that the reputation of their creative lead enabled them to</p>	<p>They build capacity and capability with each client based on the assessment tool. If the client is in the first 2 sets, then the consultancy puts in more resources and time in the initial interactions. They confirm that the initial interactions are the most challenging, as both, the client and the consultant do not know much about each other. And it's the little extra time that they spend together that builds the relationship stronger for later. Additionally, they</p>	<p>They are keen on working with clients who have small ambitions. They take on short projects with small goals that have better chance of success. They do not see their process to be very different from other consultancies, but they believe that through rigorous internal evaluation of projects, they have been able to improve their process for subsequent projects. Hence, building credibility and trust with their client. They put regular and</p>

		<p>have good credibility from the start; this helped them gain a number of clients. This, and a combination of internal reviews have helped them keep long-term relationships with their clients.</p>	<p>stressed on project management, time management and budget management as the three key aspects that support the process of gaining trust. They know that whilst design has the ability to deliver solutions, it is the designers who create the capacity for longer-term relationships as well.</p>	<p>transparent communication at the heart of relationship building.</p>
Case 4	<p>Since 2008. Multidisciplinary team for social innovation, social enterprise and environmental challenges.</p>	<p>They started with clients as mere project partners. Successful projects enabled clients to move towards long term partnership. They believe it takes approximately 5 years to move a project-based alliance into a collaborative one.</p>	<p>They insist on making design capabilities more explicit through portfolios, as they build a foundation for trust. They put quality of work as another important ingredient in the relationship building process.</p>	<p>They accept projects with big budgets and big ambitions. They value project management and work with constraint such as time, resource and budget. They confirm that honest communication throughout the process of the project is a necessity and helps in developing better relationships.</p>

Table 1: Summary of the case studies

## Author Biography

### Meidirasari Putri

Dira undertook a visual and communication design BA degree in Indonesia. To gain further knowledge in management and business start-up, she chose to study the MA Design Management at Northumbria University? Newcastle, UK. Her concern is that good design reveals itself when designers see not only the aesthetic but also the real needs of human beings. She focuses on creating tangible experiences.

### **Mersha Aftab**

Currently senior lecturer in Innovation at the Department of Design, Mersha Aftab started working with Northumbria University, in June 2012. She has a Masters in Design Management and a doctorate in Design from Northumbria University. Mersha joined Philips Design as an intern in 2010 under a collaborative scholarship scheme between Philips and Northumbria University. In 2013 she was awarded her doctorate in the topic 'design as a functional leader: a case study to investigate the role of design as a potential leading discipline in multinationals'. Mersha's work has led her to collaborate with Nokia, Daimler, Sony Ericsson, Lego, Google and Samsung. Mersha's interest lies in exploring the role of design in triggering a change in the culture of organisations.

### **Mark Bailey**

He leads the Faculty of Arts, Design and Social Sciences' design-led innovation activities at Innovate and the focus of his work is design-led Responsible Innovation Practice. He also leads the University's partnership with Unilever along with a number of other business partnerships and is Northumbria's Principle Investigator for the £3m, AHRC funded collaborative research programme Creative FUSE North East through which the five North East universities are seeking to drive economic growth in the Creative, Digital and IT sector. He teaches BA(Hons) Design for Industry and MA/MSc Multidisciplinary Innovation. Mark has worked in Higher Education for the past 20 years having previously spent ten years leading design and development projects in the Aerospace industry where he worked on advanced passenger and business jet concepts as well as designing bespoke private jet interiors. He has also led a small design consultancy business. A highlight of his early consultancy career was designing the best-selling 'Little Professor' for Texas Instruments!

### **Nicholas Spencer**

Nicholas is Programme Leader for the MA/MSc Multidisciplinary Innovation programme. In this role Nicholas helps to develop international educational partnerships that develop new forms of innovation for external commercial and third sector organizations through novel academic, student and community co-creation. Nicholas' first degree is in industrial design and his Doctorate focused on expert designers' experience of practice. Teaching design research into the Design Department's Postgraduate provision and supervising Doctoral Research programmes supports and is supported by the personal research focus of developing new understandings of networked design intelligence.