



Four Trust Types That Make or Break AI Projects

Huy & Vuori (2025)

Context

80% of AI projects fail as success depends not just on technology, but on employee trust. This study investigated a 600-employee Scandinavian software firm implementing AI-powered knowledge mapping that tracked digital activities to show who knew what across the organization. Through interviews and usage analysis, they identified four distinct trust configurations: full trust (high cognitive/high emotional), full distrust (low cognitive/low emotional), uncomfortable trust (high cognitive/low emotional), and blind trust (low cognitive/high emotional).

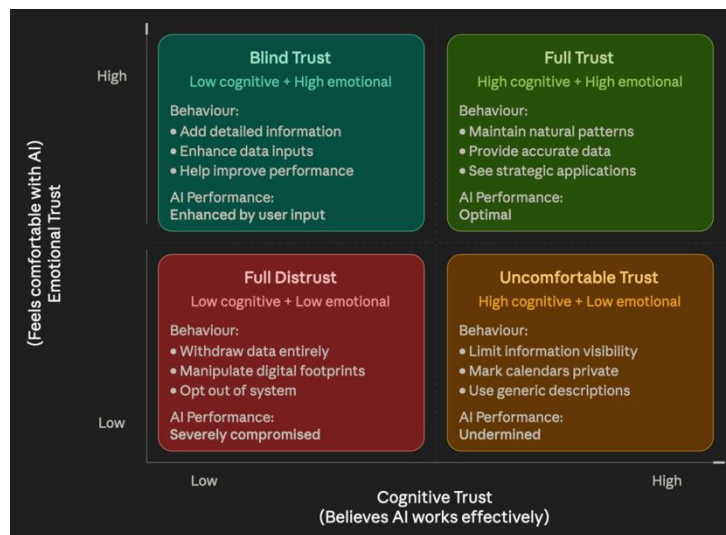
Key Insights

4 trust types drive distinct digital behaviours

- Blind trust prompts compensatory behaviours where users add detailed information to improve AI
- Full trust employees maintain natural digital patterns, providing accurate data for optimal AI output
- Uncomfortable trust leads to defensive actions (marking calendar private, using generic descriptions..)
- Full distrust triggers withdrawal or active manipulation of digital footprints

Employees responses → AI performance

- Negative usage (withdrawing, confining, manipulating data) create biased and unbalanced inputs
- Poor data quality degrades AI performance, which undermines trust & stalls adoption
- Positive behaviours (maintaining natural patterns, adding detail) enhance data quality and system effectiveness
- Trust and AI performance can reinforce each other in virtuous or vicious cycles



Visualised with Claude

FORGOOD application (author's interpretation, not part of the original source)

- **Trust & Fairness Check (Fairness, Respect):** Are all customer segments experiencing similar trust levels with your AI? Are some withdrawing while others over-engage leading to unequal outcomes?
- **Transparency & Purpose Alignment (Openness, Goals, Opinions):** Do customers understand both how the AI works & why it benefits them personally, not just the firm's goals and public messaging?
- **Governance & Choice Architecture (Options, Delegation):** Have you established clear authority for AI decision-making while preserving customer options to engage authentically not defensively?