



## Summary – Episode 2: Trust in a world in crisis?

In the **second** episode of “What the Trust?!” host Lauren Valbert sits down Anita van de Velde (Managing Director DeVelde International) to talk about what Trust means in a world in crisis.

The current situation in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak is shifting trust in institutions in real time – with government responses under constant scrutiny, NGOs overburdened and struggling to communicate, media outlets being depended upon (and also questioned), and companies are being judged and intensely scrutinized on what they’re doing – or *not* doing at this time.

The Edelman Trust barometer has shown, year after year, the connection between how much people trust a brand and how likely they are, therefore, to buy their products and recommend to a friend. In the current situation, people are not hesitating to show their support or name and shame companies that are not doing enough to abate the crisis.

### **At Edelman, we have 4 pieces of advice for companies:**

1. Show up and do your part.
2. Don't act alone.
3. Solve, don't sell.
4. Communicate with emotion, compassion and facts.

In the past month, Edelman has conducted a special research that surveyed people in 12 countries, including those that were hit the hardest by the crisis. 81 percent of the respondents said, “I must be able to trust the brands I purchase to do the right thing”, 62 percent said that their country will not make it through this crisis without brands playing a critical role in addressing the challenges we are facing, and one on three respondents said that they have already punished the brands that have not responded well – acting as an active detractor.

90 percent think that brands have an obligation to protect the wellbeing and financial security of their employees and suppliers, even if that means suffering substantial losses until the pandemic tides over. People are not looking only at governments but also at brands, expecting them to be a reliable news source, educator, emotional connector and a mature communicator.

9 out of 10 said brands – especially in manufacturing – should shift to producing products that can help in this crisis, if they can. 54 percent said they are not even paying attention to products being released in this timeframe if they don't help in pandemic-related issues.

### **Anita van de Velde is invited to share what she has learnt from this new situation:**

- One of the major effects of this crisis has been the breaking down of the silo mentality, she says – compelling them to be more inclusive. This has also made companies respond more quickly and much more holistically. She sincerely hopes this practice stays.
- Marketing is looking at communicating humanely and compassionately. The employer brand has taken front and centre and companies have to defend their reputations long after this crisis is over.
- Trust is critical as digital transformation has happened – like it or not. It is interesting to see how, in the face of adversity, agility becomes critical and companies have been able to innovate quickly.
- Finally, as compassion and humanity is a must now, van de Velde sees companies fostering and promoting a more caring and connected way of working to help employees work from home. This can only profit organizations, she says, and she hopes we can remember this when we come out of the crisis.



In terms of businesses in the aftermath of the crisis, van de Velde says companies must be careful while looking at recruitment, to really consider what can be sustained - short term skill requirements versus long term needs – and recruit accordingly.

Critical roles are still being filled, irrespective of sector, she assures. Some companies have hit the pause button on recruitment, but once the storm is over, many organizations who have weathered this storm will rethink and restructure.

*van de Velde's tips for hiring virtually:*

- Once you know what you're looking for, plan your questions accordingly, don't wing it.
- In a virtual situation, well-planned open questions will help you better understand. If you delve into what the candidate's ambitions and values are, you can better see if they are aligned with yours.
- Mix it up. Take candidates out of their comfort zone - professionally.
- Treat it as more than just an interview; this is a partnership, a value exchange.
- Lastly, nothing beats meeting in person, so if geographically possible – social distancing doesn't mean you cannot meet people personally.

When asked if this crisis will have a permanent effect on the way companies hire and retain employees, van de Velde says she is certain it will, although she is not sure what the new normal will be. Companies' ability to re-train their employees and quickly adjust their businesses and technology will be important. Hence, flexibility, willingness to learn, and learning agility, are skills companies will hire for, and so the ability to adapt, working well with ambiguity and strong collaboration skills. Different leadership roles will thrive in this new role. We are already moving towards 'Competence over Confidence'. Talent is a fundamental business driver, and it will remain so. "We have long been on the road to the realization that employees *are* the business and I think after this crisis, hopefully most will arrive at this destination."