TRUST
By Herman Diaz

We’ll pause from your regular stream of business book content for an award-winning fiction novel called Trust.

Trust by Herman Diaz is an enthralling Pulitzer Prize-winning novel that masterfully blends genres and timelines. Set against the backdrop of New York’s roaring 20s and the Great Depression, it delves into the lives of Benjamin and Helen Raek, a power couple whose complex narrative that challenges readers to discern fact from fiction, exploring themes of wealth, power and deceit.

This literary puzzle captivates with its deep dive into class, capitalism and the influence of power on reality. Both a gripping tale and an intellectual journey, Trust offers a fascinating exploration of personal relationships and societal constructs, making it an exhilarating read.

BIG TECH COMPANY ADMITS IT’S LISTENING TO YOU

We’ve all suspected our devices are listening to us. How else could the clothing company you just told your sister about over brunch show up as a targeted ad on your Instagram feed? The tech community has largely denied listening without our permission. In fact, in 2017, Facebook had to publicly deny that it listens to its users (that’s what they use location services and ad tracking for). But Vox Media Group (CMG), a multibillion-dollar media empire that owns and operates TV and radio stations worldwide, admitted it’s doing just that.

How Are They Doing It?

CMG Media gathered published marketing information from CMG and determined that it uses AI to identify conversations via smart devices – collecting information about our spending habits, interests and how we spend our time – to deliver ads to us. CMG calls it “Active Listening.” Though any mentions of CMG’s Active Listening platform has been removed from their website, the archived information is still accessible.

A document published by CMG’s VP of digital strategy said, “Yes, our phones are listening to us,” and CMG has tech capabilities to use this “business advantage.” For example, it claims to use audio data to create detailed customer profiles, which benefit consumers (fewer irrelevant ads) and businesses (targeted marketing). Still, no one knows exactly how they do it, technically speaking. Would it still adhere to safety restrictions imposed by companies like Apple that prevent other companies from listening to its devices? No one knows.

CMG later published a statement saying, “CMG businesses do not listen to any conversations or access to anything beyond a third-party aggregated, anonymized and fully encrypted data set that can be used for ad placement. We regret any confusion….”

Business insider states, “It’s important to note that it’s not clear whether this technology and marketing is actually happening.” Nevertheless, this incident is an important reminder to refresh your privacy settings and pay attention to the real possibilities of companies listening to us.

Adjust Your Privacy Settings Now

Although tech leaders like Google and Apple have policies around how and when they listen to you, like apps and study companies do not. Any app with access to your microphone could listen to your most private conversations.

Take a moment and really look at the permissions you’ve given your apps. Ask yourself, does this app really need to listen in? It’s not essential, it’s better to revoke that microphone access in your device’s settings. Another smart move is to tweak your settings so that an app can only use the microphone while you’re actively using it. Finally, never download apps unless you know how, when and why they collect data about you, especially voice data.

TURNING DOWN THE VOLUME ON STRESS:

Why Leaders Are Choosing Mindfulness Over Hustle

Meditation and mindfulness practices have been studied in a range of contexts – from college students to hardened marines (who showed faster stress recovery with mindfulness-based mind fitness training). Leaders who meditate think more clearly, stay calm in chaos and make smarter decisions. You don’t need a mountain retreat to channel the Zen meditation apps like Headspace, Calm and Insight Timer provide pocket-sized guided sessions to ease into this practice anywhere, anytime.

Want to meditate without interruptions? Just hit “Do Not Disturb” on your phone. On Android, swipe down and tap “Do Not Disturb.” Apple folks, find it under “Settings” > “Focus” > “Do Not Disturb.” Customize it to keep those calls and notifications quiet. This way, you can meditate peacefully and stay sharp for those big business moves.

INSIDE
THIS ISSUE

Trust Is The New Currency - How Wealthy Are You? P. 1
Get your FREE “Cyber Security Tip of the Week” P. 2

Mike Rowe On The Power Of Authenticity P. 3

WHAT'S NEW


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TRUST IS THE NEW CURRENCY

How Wealthy Are You?

Today, most business transactions – whether buying shampoo or tonight’s dinner – are facilitated. That’s why in our digital world, trust is the new currency. This shift in consumer behavior, sometimes called the "trust economy," is more than the quality of products or services you offer; it’s about constructing a bedrock of reliability and transparency so customers choose you over competitors.

"Trust keeps society running. Even the most trivial interactions rely on small acts of trust," the Economist reported. This isn’t lost on company leaders either. PwC’s 25th Global CEO Survey reported that behind industry conditions, consumer trust is the most important predictor of a company’s past and future financial performance.

However, trust is increasingly difficult to earn. Thanks to the recent emergence of AI, frequent mishandling of personal data by companies and relentless cyber-attacks, customers are more skeptical than ever. As product and service providers, PwC points out that we are constantly evaluated by our customers on whether or not we are “forces for good in society.” Make one slip and that trust is gone, perhaps for good.

How you handle data and use technology to influence your customers’ experience will decide your fate in the trust economy. Prioritize the most important drivers of trust – empathy, reliability and integrity – and grow your customer loyalty this year and in the years to come.

Technology’s Role in Improving Customer Trust

Our dependence on technology is undeniable, yet this very reliance makes us vulnerable. Computer pioneer Willis Ware once said, “The only computer that’s completely secure is a computer no one can use.”

continued on page 2.

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