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Under NDA

# An Analysis of Trust in Immersive and Utilitarian Experiences

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## Executive Summary

This study was conducted between September 13<sup>th</sup> and October 5<sup>th</sup> 2015 for a popular business magazine. The goals of the study included gaining an understanding of the client's potential users and current users extrapolated from their "Ambitious Learner" market segment from previous research. The study focused on understanding how people develop a relationship with a source that they trust, and how an immersive experience differs from a utilitarian one. Expanding the Ambitious Learner segment will give the client the opportunity to gain further stakeholder investment, as well as to help the company to understand their users' behaviors. These personas were also expanded upon to explain why a person might be dedicated to a resource, and why they might rely on it through and after transitional periods in their careers.

The initial personas that were developed in this study did not accurately reflect the resulting personas created by the study's close. The interviews with five young professional participants focused on their ideas of trust and how they use resources in their career path. Further analysis also revealed trends about the participants' behaviors related to trust, loyalty, bias, and exploration styles. Trust comes in many varieties and people trust in a wide variety of things, from their bank, family, favorite football coach, shotgun, or themselves. While some people valued gaining absolute truths from their trusted figures, others looked for reliability or comfort. This wide range from a small demographic revealed some of the inaccuracies of the current market segment that is established at the company, with suggestions on how to improve and expand upon the current idea of what an Ambitious Learner's behaviors are.

Many conclusions were drawn based on these five participants, but this needs to be combined with further similar research in order to be validated. More persona research should be completed to find more concise patterns within the "Ambitious Learner" segment to hone in on the "Fast Tasker" and "Wanderer" personas that have emerged from this study. Also a continuation of research should inquire about more information on a person's immediate motivation to access a resource (such as the client); for example, what question do they want answered by the time they have completed reading this article? The following research allows the client to dive deeper into their potential user base and to elaborate upon their market segments to cater more to the people who can best use the client's resources.

## Research Goals

The research goals for this study were influenced by the client's presentation on September 13<sup>th</sup>. While expanding the "Ambitious Learner" segment for increased stakeholder buy-in was at the forefront of the study, the presentation also mentioned that the client was trying to understand how Ambitious Learners develop a relationship with the client's website as a source they trust. By focusing on this as well as how this segment goes through "immersive experiences" versus "utilitarian" ones, the personas were able to be further developed with stories and quotes that can enlighten the client team for further research and development.

**What are the attitudes and behaviors of "Ambitious Learners," and what are the subdivisions of that market segment?** [[General Persona Development]]

**When people go through a career transition, why do they keep some resources (mentors, journals, etc.) that they use while abandoning others?** [[Loyalty]]

What makes people trust something? [[Trust]]

Why do people develop an ongoing relationship with a resource? [[Loyalty]]

How do young professionals absorb work-related content? [[Exploration]]

## Initial Personas

These pre-study personas were extrapolated from the market segment of "Ambitious Learners" provided by the client. These initial personas, although a good starting point of discussion for the discussion guide, were drastically changed by the end of the study. While these personas were highly focused on people's career choices, the updated personas focused on which resources they put trust into as well as their exploration styles.

### **KNOWLEDGE DISTRIBUTOR**

They stay informed on the latest happenings, both entertaining and informational

Prefers immersive experiences to planned ones

Enjoy sharing knowledge with friends and coworkers rather than solely for personal gain

They have tendencies towards more sporadic activities than routine ones

### **CAREER ADVANCEMENT**

Spends personal time to develop work-related skills

Depends on reliable resources and mentorship to progress in their field, misleading information might put their livelihood at stake

Looking for career advancement and personal victories

They go places with goals but keep their options open upon reaching their goals

## **PROFESSIONAL LEARNER**

Graduate student who leads a busy life mostly focused on schoolwork, possibly working part time

Looks for advice, mentorship, and resources to help with schoolwork

Looks for answers regarding their future, what it will bring and how they can prepare themselves

Attaining their goals quickly and efficiently is important. If something doesn't align with their goals they will be quick to dismiss it

## Schedule

The schedule was organized to begin on the date of the client presentation, and end on October 5<sup>th</sup> when the full report would be handed in. Deliverables were assigned to be completed at specific intervals before the end of the study to keep the research on track.

Activity	Duration	Start Date	End Date	Deliverables
Initial Kickoff & Alignment				
Presentation & Project Kickoff	1 day	9/13/2015	9/13/2015	
Develop Research Schedule & Budget				Goals doc Schedule & Budget spreadsheet
Outline Project Goals & Method				
Rationale	2 days	9/18/2015	9/19/2015	
Recruitment and Discussion Planning				
Create Recruiting Screener	1 day	9/21/2015	9/21/2015	
Recruit Participants & Facility Search	2 days	9/22/2015	9/23/2015	
Create discussion guide v1	2 days	9/24/2015	9/25/2015	
				Discussion Guide doc
Iterate, create discussion guide v2	1 day	9/26/2015	9/26/2015	
Conduct Study				
At-Facility Interview Walkthrough	1 day	9/27/2015	9/27/2015	
Conduct Interviews	3 days	9/28/2015	9/30/2015	
Begin first section of final report	1 day	10/1/2015	10/1/2015	
Analysis & Synthesis				
Review Documentation				
Establish Framework	1 day	10/2/2015	10/2/2015	
Insert data into framework				
Audio and Video edits	1 day	10/3/2015	10/3/2015	
Delivery				
Create & Revise Final Report	1 day	10/4/2015	10/4/2015	
Present Final Deliverable	1 day	10/5/2015	10/5/2015	Full Report

## Budget

For this research project I was able to stay beneath the budget limit of \$25,000. My daily rate was calculated at \$45 an hour. The daily rate for a practitioner with two to four years of experience (which I presume I would have if I was conducting a study for this particular client) is \$70k per year. The northeast USA has a higher rate of pay, adding a \$5 – 10k increase in yearly salary. This puts my yearly salary at \$90,000 a year, or approximately \$45 per hour. I have also added \$1,800 in professional services to put towards company growth while staying under the proposed budget.

Description	Amount
Professional Fees	\$8,200.00
Expenses	\$14,845.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$23,045.00</b>

### *Budget Breakdown*

Description	Quantity	Rate	Amount
Daily Rate	17	\$360.00	\$6,120.00
Professional Services	1	\$1,800.00	\$1,800.00
Facilities	4	\$2,500.00	\$10,000.00
Audio/Video Equipment	1	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00
Participant Recruitment	5	\$300.00	\$1,500.00
Participant Incentives	5	\$100.00	\$500.00
Supplies for Session	5	\$10.00	\$50.00
Session Food & Bev	5	\$15.00	\$75.00
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$23,045.00</b>

## Project Rationale

### Quadrant

**Exploratory** - The result is definitely known; the web is their primary medium for their current goals, but they want to know more about the people who can use the website. Therefore, with “Unknown People” and a “Known Result,” this research lands inside of the Exploratory quadrant

### Who will be researched?

Personas extrapolated from the client’s “Ambitious Learner” market segment. The shared aspects between the research participants will be that they are seeking advancement in their careers and they are in a young-professional age demographic. The participants will be researched on how they seek information, how informational media fits into their life, and their behaviors regarding loyalty to a resource.

## What behaviors will you study?

### Trust

- Trust is a confidence in depending on something, that its state will be maintained even if the person changes, the thing being trusted will maintain its integrity
- What things are trustworthy to a person, whether they are close to them or not. What makes something appear that it can be trusted? What words and attitudes do people associate with trust?

### Exploration

- How a person interprets new objects, resources, or places. Do they search deeply until they find something good, or leave the experience after a flash judgement?
- Look at parallel interactions, how do they explore a new place or learn about a new object?

### Loyalty

- Why a person returns to something for rational (a news source) or relative (favorite sports team) reasons
- Discover what things people hold onto over the years, especially how they remain loyal through life transition periods.
- Asking about simple things like a favorite pizza place can give an indication to underlying attitudes on what someone needs from a resource to be loyal to it.

## Interaction Style

**Individual** - I don't want collective feelings towards something but rather more specific examples and stories of their loyalty and trust. Questions of loyalty and trust may be very personal and relative, and possibly susceptible to groupthink.

## Location

**Off-site** - Trust and loyalty aren't short-term behaviors that would be observable within their context. The cost of doing on-site interviews outweighs the benefits in this study.

## Mode of Communication

**Activity** - Have the person collect a list of things they trust before the session and explain them in person.

**Verbal** - To extract stories over longer periods of time from their past. Get stories of their mentors, career, and transitions.

**Visual** - Card-sorting game mid-session to break up verbal interview and extract attitudes about trust and loyalty.

## Discussion/Activity Guide

This discussion guide was made to be used for five participant interviews in to address the aforementioned research goals. The participants were contacted before the session and prompted to complete a pre-session activity: to think of five things that they trust and bring them into the session as a list. This brought significant interest and discussion to the session.

The session was also divided into two parts; it was split by a card sorting activity in order to maintain interest in the interview and to take advantage of participants who were better at engaging visually. The last section ends the conversation with light discussion abstract exploration behaviors that can relate to their behaviors towards immersive experiences versus utilitarian ones.

### **PRE-TEST ACTIVITY**

Think of five things that you trust, they can be people, objects, places, sounds, a business, words, tools, food, drawings, books, anything. Feel free to get creative with it. Bring those five things to the session with you as a list and we will discuss them when you arrive for the session.

Were those instructions clear or can I clarify anything for you? Feel free to contact me with any further questions at...

### **INTRODUCTION**

Hello, thank you so much for coming today. Before we get started could you just sign this consent form, as we will be recording this session with both audio and video. We will disassociate your name with this data before handing it to our client who will use it only internally.

*Give participant consent form, let them read and sign it.*

Also you can ask a question, take a break, or stop at any time during the session, just feel free to ask.

### **VISUAL**

What makes people trust something?

Let's start with the five things you trust that I assigned you to complete before the session. (Loosen up conversation, get participant thinking creatively)

Could you take me through the process of how you went about this activity? From start to finish.

- Which ones were easy to select?
- Which did you struggle with?

What was the reason that you chose [item]? (Go through each item)

- When did you realize that you trusted x? (Only if appropriate)

What was the most difficult part about this activity for you?



## **VERBAL Pt. 1: Trust & Loyalty**

When people go through a career transition, why do they keep some resources (mentors, journals, etc.) that they use while abandoning others?

Why do people develop an ongoing relationship with a resource?

Thank you for bringing in those images, that was really helpful. Now I'd like to talk a bit more about you.

What is your current occupation? [[Learn about career background, persona dev]]

- What kind of activities do you do there?
- What's the story of how you got into this position? What background did you need, how did you find this job, etc. (What resources did they use)
  - o Have you had similar jobs in the past that prepared you for this position?
  - o Did your schooling contribute significantly or did you learn your skills outside of the classroom?
  - o What did you depend on most to get started at this position? (Mentors, friends, your boss, or any other resources you may have used)
    - Do you use any websites regularly for work for reference? (get point of reference for using web resources, but don't dwell too long)
    - Was there a time when a web resource was really helpful to you that you remember? (possible valuable story)
- Are you planning on seeking a promotion in the near future? (Learn about how they deal with transitions)
  - o How do you plan to go towards this career advancement?
  - o Where do you see yourself professionally in 5 years from now?

Where did you go to college? (Transition into loyalty)

- What year did you graduate?
- Do you plan on going to any alumni events? [Loyalty to something they've stuck with for 4 years]
- If you planned to get a master's degree would you think about pursuing it there?  
(transition to more casual questions)
- Did your college have a large sports presence?
- How was the "school spirit" there? Was it easily noticed?
- Can you tell me about a typical week in college life for you? Sort of general things you did, places you may have gone, things you were into, etc.?
  - o Do you still do [habit/tendency]? Why did you (abandon/continue)?

- Tell me about some places that you frequent now: A hiking spot, a pizza place, bar, club, city, etc. (if they can't think of one, name one from their childhood or college days) (Exploration and Loyalty)
  - o What do you do when you're there? (Give me a play-by-play)
  - o In what circumstances would you go there?
  - o What makes you keep going to that place?
  - o Why is that place better than other places like it?

### **ACTIVITY: Sorting**

What makes people trust something?

How do young professionals absorb work-related content?

Which 7 of these are you most familiar with? Put the others to the side.

*Present Cards*

*(Each index card has the name of a popular source on it. The sources presented to select from were as follows: New York Times, CNN, BuzzFeed, Forbes, Fortune, Bloomberg, Reddit, Quartz, USA Today, Medium, TED Talks, The Huffington Post, Quora, The Guardian, BBC, and Daily Mail)*

Sort these in order of how much you trust them. (What is trust? And what is trust on a less abstract level in relation to media resources?) Also while you're sorting them, try to think aloud to explain your thought process while you're sorting.

- Can you explain to me why you chose to rank them this way?
- Which of these do you go on regularly?
- Why do you trust [[ranked]] more than [[ranked]]?

Now reorder these cards in order of how much you enjoy browsing these websites rather than how much you trust them. (Segue into exploration style)

- When you go onto [ranked 1], what do you typically do? Do you open it regularly or happen to get there from another source?
- How about [ranked 2]?
- What about [ranked 7]? Why is that at the bottom of this list?

### **VERBAL Pt. 2: Exploration**

How do young professionals absorb work-related content? (Exploration)

What products do Ambitious Learners use for immersive experiences? What products do Ambitious Learners use for utilitarian experiences? Why? How do they use them differently?

We're going to switch gears for a minute and talk about some experiences you've had

When was the last time you went to a bookstore that you remember? (If not, how about a library?)

- What did you go there for? (School, work, entertainment)
- Could you describe to me how that experience was? (exploratory vs. pointed)
- How long do you think you spent there?
- Did you accomplish your objective by the end?
- How do you usually go about buying/borrowing a book?

When was the last time you picked up a newspaper? Even just at random?

- How many times do you think you have you picked up a newspaper in the past month?
- Can you tell me how you go about reading a newspaper after you pick it up? (eg. Do you read page for page, go to a specific section that you know of, or look in the table of contents for something interesting?)

(Back into trust & mentors)

You were mentioning your mentors earlier, have you had any mentors that were able to guide you through transitions in your personal life? (eg. Starting/ leaving college, or moving to a new place)

- What transition periods have they guided you through?
- At what points do you ask them for advice?
- For how long have you considered them a mentor?

How was [transition] for you?

- Have you continued to do the things you typically did before [transition] or did you consider it a fresh start?
- What routines (or hobbies) have you continued doing since [transition] that you started before [transition]?
  - o What made you stick to these routines?
  - o Are there any routines/activities that you have abandoned? Why is that?

## **CLOSE**

Thank you so much for coming and contributing to our research, you have been extremely helpful. Do you have any last questions or comments about the session?

## Analysis

The five interviews ranged from 30 minutes to over an hour. All of the participants were extremely cooperative and engaged in the discussion, giving valuable insights into what trust meant to them. One-on-one conversations were valuable when talking about trust due to some of the private stories they wanted to share about their lives without judgement from peers. The participants had a lot to say about trust, and many struggled with thinking of five things they trust before the interview, which led to very interesting discussion about what trust meant to them. Discussions about resources were variatous depending on the persona, while bias naturally came up in conversation many times (regarding resources as well as trust), making it an integral part of this analysis.

### Trust

Over the course of the 5 interviews, patterns in types of trust began to emerge. Some things are trusted because they will be consistent, whether or not they take risks or reciprocate an action (eg. pets). People trust some things because they will always respond with the truth, whether or not the person agrees with that truth (eg. Parents or NFL Football coach). A third kind of trust has to do with not reciprocation or truth, but their value in friendship or love (eg. Friends or some family).

A series of factors contribute to trust, including (but not limited to): comfort, consistency, lack of bias, mass opinion, proximity, wisdom, respect, past positive experience, lack of ulterior motives, not afraid to give true feedback, intuition, and reciprocation.

When asked to choose 5 things that they trust, 5/5 Participants said a family member, 3/5 said their significant other (5/5 had a significant other), 2/5 said policemen, and 1/5 said themselves (1 participant mentioned that they *don't* trust themselves). Some of the interesting objects chosen included their shotgun, Bill Belichick (Patriots Football Coach), their bank, and the "Harry Potter" series.

P1 - *"Something that I gained from them where I **didn't** have to necessarily make myself **double check** or think about it or think it through to make sure it was right, I was just able to accept it seemed like it was naturally correct and there was no refuting it."*

P1 – *"Whose wisdom I value... **If I value their wisdom and their opinion then I trust them**"*

P2 - *"I have **comfort** when I enter my home because I know it's going to be a certain way, and I trust that it's always going to give me that feeling."*

P3 - *"[I trust] things that are pretty constant, have **reliability**, and also things that I [feel] most comfortable with"*

### Resources

All of the participants mentioned *people* as being reliable resources for upward mobility in their careers, often by asking questions or giving career guidance. The participants often mentioned that if they could avoid asking a simple question to co-workers or superiors in the workplace, they would do so and try to find the answer elsewhere before asking. All of the participants valued on-the-job learning over their coursework as being valuable to their career. One participant (P3) mentioned reading articles in order to learn about on-the-job skills (employee

management in this case). Two of the participants were dedicated to a few online resources (teamtreehouse.com and stackoverflow.com)

P3 (Fast Tasker) – *“I use Stack Overflow every single day. I wouldn’t be where I am without that website... **You have really good developers teaching you essentially by example.**”*

P4 (Fast Tasker) – *“School is useless, the job is everything... I learned nothing in school. **I learned everything in my jobs and by teaching myself.**”*

When their goals are to understand or solve a work-related problem, Fast Taskers will look for the answer quickly, and completing their search upon finding the most relevant information (and possibly secondary information to give context).

## Bias

Biased articles are acceptable by Wanderers, but they are disregarded by Fast Taskers. One way to mitigate this problem for Fast Taskers is to aim towards crowdsourced opinions with a robust commentary feature. Fast Taskers believe that biased articles will be self-corrected by users calling out opinions and bad findings in an article. Wanderers value their sources having an opinion, as long as they are aware of the bias.

P1 (Wanderer) - *“I never questioned whether or not he had **ulterior motives** or something like that.”*

P4 (Fast Tasker, in sorting study: Source you trust the most on top, least on bottom) – *“I put the sites with the comments from users towards the top because **they can call out bullshit easier**, and the sites that are just trying to make money off their articles towards the end”*

## Upward Mobility

Resources are used to achieve upward mobility but are usually abandoned after a career transition if they are not able to keep up with the person’s level of expertise. Many resources (such as professors or the “for dummies” series books) are used frequently for a short period of time until a person goes onto a higher level of expertise. The resources they continue to rely on will provide reliable information through this transition. For Fast Taskers, examples of how other people solve their work problems are a common resource, and these types of examples are still abundant from beginner to expert level professionals. Participant 5 was at a workplace with clear benchmarks for upward mobility in their company.

P5 - *“It’s a very linear job in that everyone goes through the same exact roles, like one promotion path, so everyone above you has already done your job.”*

## Immersion

Contrary to the market segment definition, young professionals don’t all seek information in the same way, but in a variety of ways depending on their behavior. Their style of exploring information vary depending on the individual’s behavior, not due to the fact that they fall into the young professional demographic.

I hypothesize that people seek career-relevant information based on their goals when seeking that information. With Fast Taskers, often times they are seeking fast information to “debug” a

program, making their experience utilitarian. Other times they may be looking for more broad information (eg. Management skills) and don't know exactly what they're looking for, leading to a more immersive experience.

## **Loyalty**

Loyalty to a resource depends on convenience, consistency, comfort, and being above its competition. Loyalty depends on many of the same factors as trust.

## Recommendations

### **Personas**

Use the persona information below to enhance the client's current market research in combination with additional interviews and feedback. These personas can be used to embark upon any further design tasks within the company.

### **Behaviors**

I would suggest further research on what factors drive people to the website's content; not just what website they were sent from (Facebook, LinkedIn etc.), but instead what answers they are looking for in the article after clicking on its headline.

### **Further Research**

In order to obtain further conclusions, this data should be expanded upon with more similar interviews to obtain a larger sample size.

Further studies should also stay within the scope fields that benefit from soft skills that can be taught through articles on websites like the client's. Fast Taskers are able to learn most of their skills online, but many fields don't have this luxury (as P4 said, *"you can't learn to be a surgeon by just watching surgeons, but you can probably learn how to code by just trying and breaking things."*).

Further studies should also focus on what kind of information a person is expecting to find upon clicking a headline. This may determine whether that experience is going to be immersive or exploratory, depending on whether they need to find a quick solution to a problem, or if they are trying to learn something new that they don't fully understand.

## Revised Personas

Quickly upon starting the interviews, it was clear that the personas would have to dramatically change to focus more on behaviors than the market segment they were based on. All of the participants fell into the "Career Advancement" initial persona, which was the persona that aligned the most with the "Ambitious Learner" segment. The "Knowledge Distributor" persona

focused on social media attitudes which aren't directly relevant to this study, and the "Professional Learner" persona was based off of a graduate student, which none of the participants were.

Two personas were created based on the interviews with the first four participants, and the fifth participant did not fit into these two personas.

### **WANDERERS (P1 & P2)**

P2 – *"I think of things that wouldn't lie to me... something that I knew I would get the same answer every time I asked a question to it... I know what I'm going to get out of it. It doesn't always necessary have to be the truth, but knowing whether or not it is the truth is important."*

Look to non-person resources first, then coworkers for solutions to problems

Comfort is important for them to trust something

Looks for truth, but understands and values opinions from sources

Slow-paced wandering attitude

Mentorship is a part of looking for upward mobility

Puts trust in intuition

### **FAST TASKERS (P3 & P4)**

*"I usually skim over the question, scroll down to the bottom to read the answer, then go back to the question if I need to get more of a contextual clue."*

*"Trusting one person is stupid. One person can be bought or manipulated."*

*"I've always enjoyed [my routines], I know what I like so I don't need to do new things."*

Trust in the masses because crowdsourced opinions will be unbiased due to their self-regulating nature

Their trust lies in things that are reliable

When they look to complete a task, they look to do it quickly and efficiently by finding the answer, then quickly terminating their search

When looking for quick answers, they look immediately to digital sources first

Coworkers may be unable to answer questions or not available to respond

When looking for long term education, they look towards the examples of others

Their tendencies lean towards routine, but fast-paced

Look to hard work for upward mobility

**P5 (Non-persona, P5)**

*"I'm asking [the senior roles on my team] 20 questions a day, just even little things like 'oh how do you do this' or 'what is this.'"*

Lower on corporate ladder in their field

To solve problems, asks other people before referencing other materials

Not looking for content, but headlines and major topics to be aware of

Fulfilling qualifications and protocols pushes you the corporate ladder

Follows the crowd, watches what their peers are doing



Appendix A.  
Additional Quotes

P4 – “I didn’t meet anyone in college that was at a superior level of programming to me... no one actually had any technical knowledge that could do anything. Anyone I paired up with on a programming level was someone I was helping as opposed to someone who was helping me.”

P4 - “I’ve learned less from my coworkers at previous positions than my current position because I’m a higher level employee than most of my co-workers.”

P5 - “I browse CNN kind of like I browse BuzzFeed, like what are their headlines, what are their thoughts, what do they think.” (looking for validation)