

**Published: Monday May 26, 2015**

## What causes mistrust

T. T. SRINATH

Some thoughts on why it's important to trust others.

In an ageing organisation that I am associated with — ageing both from the view of the length of its existence and from the fact that its board of directors are mostly in their late 50s — there is an ongoing debate about inducting youngsters into the board to bring in freshness. While all are agreed on the need to bring in youngsters, there is a lot of misgiving about who to induct. Names are being offered for consideration, yet with each one proposed, comes an objection.

We have been discussing the merits of an individual, yet, somehow, even as we are examining the possibility of induction, someone brings up the idea of 'hidden agenda.' This is very difficult to counter, for the person who objects starts with the surmise that the one being considered might come in only to feather his or her own nest. What is it that causes such suspicion, mistrust and a divisive way of considering a potential entrant?

The reasons for the deficit are many, yet all those that we advance actually say, in brief, that 'any one we wish to induct is on probation with us.' Strange, yet true, that such a thought arises not from one who is being considered for inclusion but from a person who is in a position to actually welcome the aspirant. What is being debated is not whether the person is competent but 'can he or she earn my trust?' Trust, as Kahlil Gibran says, succinctly in his book *The Prophet*, is — 'A fruit which when ripe does not ask the ground whether she wants her, she merely offers herself'. Likewise, trust is not something that one has to earn, it can be given.

When I give someone my trust, I am in effect saying, 'I respect you, I value you and believe you will not belie my faith in you.' If we take such a stand, it is often very likely that it will be reciprocated. The old adage seems apt here, 'trust begets trust.'

*(The writer is an organisational and behavioural consultant. He can be contacted at [ttsrinath@vsnl.net](mailto:ttsrinath@vsnl.net))*