

# BIG IDEA

## Trust

It's the most important five-letter word in business, yet, in an increasingly transactional world, contracts replace handshakes and words require collateral to bind agreements. This is because the two key components of trust – ability to deliver and faith in the other's intentions – require insight plus relationship. In the business village, trust is like a tree – it takes time to grow, yet can be cut down in an instant. But in a world of strangers doing deals, we have to count our change and read the small print. However, social media is bringing us into the era of e-trust – we can be eBay rated, Twitter shamed and Facebook framed, though the downside of being perpetually exposed is that there is no space for redemption, forgiveness and recovery. Yet, alongside, the golden threads of trust hold together many of our most important working relationships. Handshakes, promises, good faith and fellowship lie at the heart of all our most healthy institutions.

»» Nigel Nicholson is professor of organisational behaviour at LBS. To see his book, *The 'I' of Leadership: Strategies for seeing, being and doing* (Jossey-Bass, £18.99), go to [iofleadership.com](http://iofleadership.com)

