

# **Employer Perspectives: A Tale of Two Studies**

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# **WatCACE**

- Conducting and facilitating research on co-operative education and other forms of work-integrated learning
- Thought Leadership
- Dissemination & Mobilization of Relevant Findings

# Parameters of a “Good” Professional Experience: Employer Perspective

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# Introduction

- Long-term viability of WIL requires mutual value creation (Fleming & Hickey, 2013)
- Students' perspectives well represented in the current WIL literature (e.g., Drewery et al., 2016; Hurst, Good, & Gardner, 2012)
- Hosts' perspectives more limited – focuses on supervisors' roles (e.g., Fleming, 2015; Winchester-Seeto, Rowe, & Mackaway, 2016)



# Research Gaps

- We know less about hosts' views towards their WIL students (Pretti, Drewery, & Nevison, 2016)
- Recruiters' perspectives essentially overlooked, but may be different from others stakeholders' views (Rowe, 2014; see also Barr & McNeilly, 2002, *Journal of Marketing Education*)

# Guiding Theories

1. **Role theory (Katz & Kahn, 1978)** – individuals have roles (sets of tasks, positions) that they play.
2. **Implicit follower theories (e.g., Sy, 2010)** – individuals have an intuitive perspective regarding what those roles are
3. **Psychological contract theory (Rousseau, 1989)** – fulfilling one's role is critical to others' satisfaction
4. **Expectation disconfirmation theory (Oliver, 1977, 1980)** – people develop expectations for their experiences. Exceeding those expectations = satisfaction.



# Present Investigation

This study examines host organization members' perspectives towards WIL. It is guided by two questions:

**Q1:** What do hosts believe students are in the organization to do?

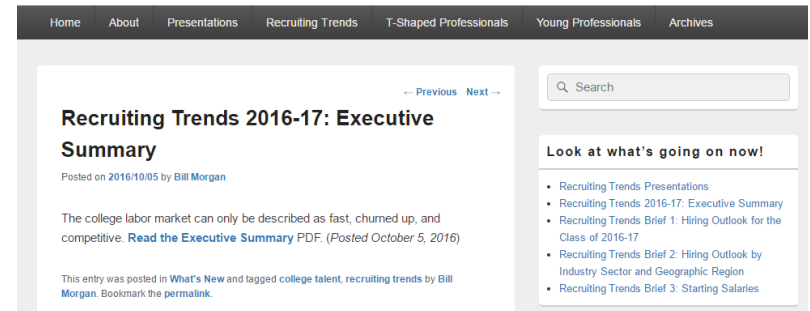
**Q2:** How do hosts define successful work terms?



# Data and Participants

Two online surveys:

1. WatCACE survey of supervisors' perspectives, ( $n = 374$ )
2. CERI recruitment trends survey (sub-sample  $n = 1191$ )





# Measures

- **Students' roles**

- Five statements (e.g., “I see my student as...”) followed by a six-point semantic differential scale (e.g., 1 = *An employee first and a student second* and 6 = *A student first and an employee second*).

- **Definitions of successful work terms**

- 10 statements (e.g., “The student learns from the experience”), participants asked to rank each in terms of importance to creating a successful work term (where 1 = most important and 10 = least important)



# What Are Students in the Organization to Do?

	Supervisors	Recruiters		
Statements	M (SD)	M (SD)	t	p
<b>I see the student as...</b> 1 = <i>An employee first and a student second</i> vs 6 = <i>A student first and an employee second</i>	3.26 (1.55)	3.33 (1.58)	.79	.441
<b>The student is with our organization...</b> 1 = <i>To work</i> vs 6 = <i>To learn</i>	3.71 (1.36)	4.25 (1.27)	12.83	<.001
<b>I expect my co-op student to...</b> 1 = <i>Give the organization as much as they get back</i> vs 6 = <i>Get from the organization more than they give</i>	3.21 (1.36)	4.00 (1.15)	13.61	<.001
<b>Regarding the role of the host...</b> 1 = <i>The student is a resource for the supervisor to use</i> 6 = <i>The supervisor is a resource for the student to use</i>	4.27 (1.15)	4.76 (1.08)	31.75	<.001
<b>For a successful work term, it is more important that...</b> 1 = <i>My organization benefits</i> vs 6 = <i>The student benefits</i>	3.69 (1.22)	4.16 (1.15)	4.61	<.001



# Definitions of Successful Work Terms

Statements	Supervisors	Recruiters	p	Average rank
The student learns from the experience	2.55 (1.88)	2.07 (1.67)	< .001	1
The student is genuinely interested in the work/organization	3.87 (2.39)	2.90 (1.83)	< .001	2
The student sees the experience as meaningful	4.72 (2.53)	4.65 (2.75)	n.s.	3
The student acquires skills and knowledge that will be beneficial in future work	4.48 (2.51)	4.96 (2.37)	< .001	4
The quality of student work is comparable to a full-time employee's output	6.68 (3.05)	6.50 (2.75)	n.s.	5
The student completes work that would otherwise not be completed	6.11 (2.92)	7.59 (2.93)	< .001	6
The student does not need much training	8.01 (2.79)	8.08 (3.25)	n.s.	7
My personal burden of work is lowered	7.76 (3.49)	8.16 (3.88)	n.s.	8
The student creates professional networking connections	9.08 (2.29)	8.55 (2.88)	< .001	9
The company's profit rises due to the student's presence/actions	10.43 (2.22)	11.05 (2.50)	< .001	10



# Discussion: Students' Roles

- Overall, both groups view WIL students in a **dual student-employee role**, and both groups tend to agree that student should derive benefits from their participation
- Compared to supervisors, recruiters placed a great emphasis on students as learners who ought to derive benefit from the arrangement. In line with Social Exchange Theory
- Scores for both groups tend to be neutral or skewed “towards” students



# Discussion: Work-Term Success

- Supervisors and recruiters **differ in some ways across** criteria (e.g., student learning may be *more important* to supervisors than to recruiters).
- Despite these differences there is a **consistent pattern across both groups**, which privileges students' experiences (e.g., learning, interest, meaning, and development) as being the most important aspects of a successful work term



# Conclusion

- Together, these results point to the importance of creating **mutual value**
- The work term seems to turn out best when students and their supervisors work together for the benefit of the other



# Implications for Practice

1. Assisting hosts in **communicating their perspectives** to others may improve alignment and create success for all parties
2. It's in students best interest to be mindful of the perspectives and expectations of their employer, recognizing these will be different from one work experience to the next.
3. Supporting student success throughout the work term is consistent with creating a high-quality experience for hosts, contributes to **mutual value creation**



# Avenues for Future Research

1. Were these findings the result of a recruiter vs. supervisor difference or something else (e.g., co-op vs. intern, Canadian vs. American)?
2. Do personal factors (e.g., history of participation in WIL) and/or organizational factors (e.g., industry) predict how hosts see their students and how they define success?
3. What are the consequences if recruiters and supervisors in the same organization do not have the same perspectives?





# Thank You

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# Developing a framework for sustainable WIL relationships

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# The Three Contexts



## Cooperative Education in Sport and Recreation

Compulsory 350 hours industry placement (part time) over final year of degree.

Mostly unpaid, in not-for profit sector or schools.

150-200 host organizations each year.



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PACE (Professional & Community Engagement) is an Institution-wide WIL program embedded in all Macquarie's undergraduate degrees

87 PACE units, mostly 3rd year, unpaid, with placements from 32 – 140hrs.

Over 2,000 host organizations from community, government and the private sectors



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Co-operative education (co-op) program supports over 18,000 work terms annually across all six academic Faculties

Students alternate between academic and work terms (paid, full-time, 4 months) with 4-6 work terms before graduation

Over 6,700 employer partners across 60 countries

# WIL relationships

- WIL experiences rely heavily on the development of relationships between the university and industry or the community.
- As participation in WIL is increasing, scalability and sustainability become paramount.
- Successful engagement is context dependent and relies on leadership to ensure accessibility and flexibility



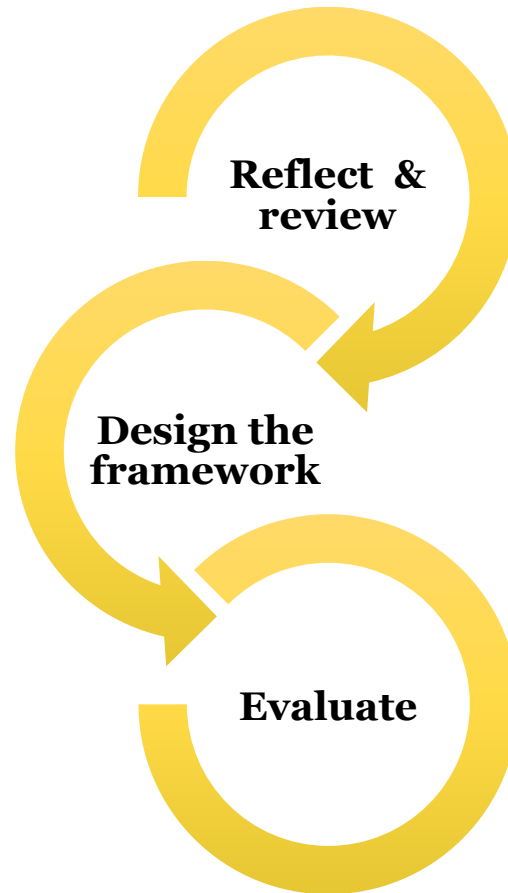
# Project Aim

**To develop a framework for critical success factors for university- industry/community engagement across different WIL sectors**



- Identify critical success factors for industry engagement in WIL across multiple contexts
- Critique existing engagement models/frameworks applicable to WIL
- Examine theoretical models/ frameworks useful for addressing the challenges and complexity of contemporary context of WIL

# Action Research



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# Phase 1: Reflect and Review

## **Document analysis**

Practices and resources currently available

## **Literature review**

Identify good practice models of university-community/industry engagement

## **Discussion Forums**

WIL practitioners in NZ and Australia  
Reflect on what they considered were the critical success factors for WIL relationships



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# Literature Review & Document Analysis

## Community - University engagement

- Garlick & Langworthy, 2008
- McCabe, Keast & Brown, 2006
- Mulvihill et al., 2011
- Arden, McLachlan & Cooper, 2009

## Industry - University partnerships

- Barnes, Pashby & Gibbons, 2006
- Ankrah & Omar, 2015

## Industry- Industry partnerships

- Mohr & Speckmen, 1994
- Monczka, et al., 1998



# Discussion Forums – Key themes

Preparation

Expectations

Commitment

Communication

Recognition

Promotion

Flexibility

Mentoring

Relationship  
management

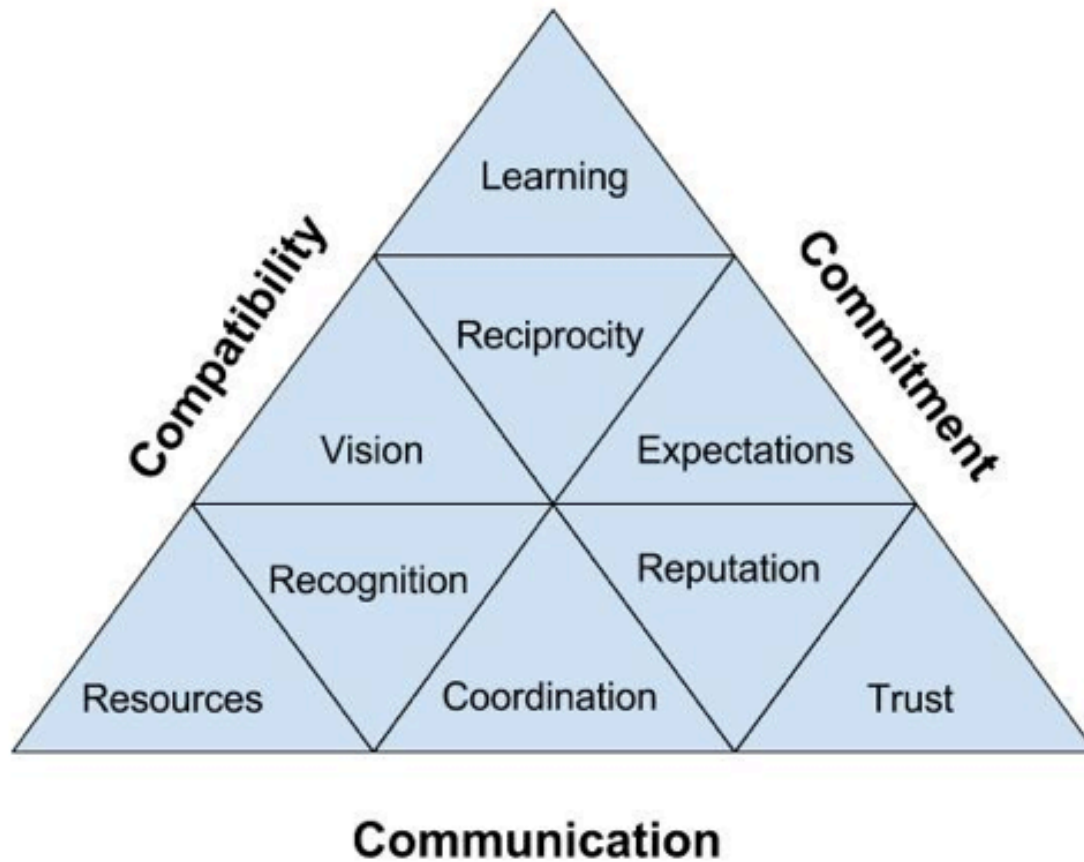


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# Proposed Framework



# Compatibility

- *Reciprocity creates a win-win relationship*
- Variations in purpose, but a shared *vision*
- *Learning* is seen as core of the experience, knowledge is shared
- *Reputation* is acknowledged, developed and protected
- *Expectations* are identified and understood



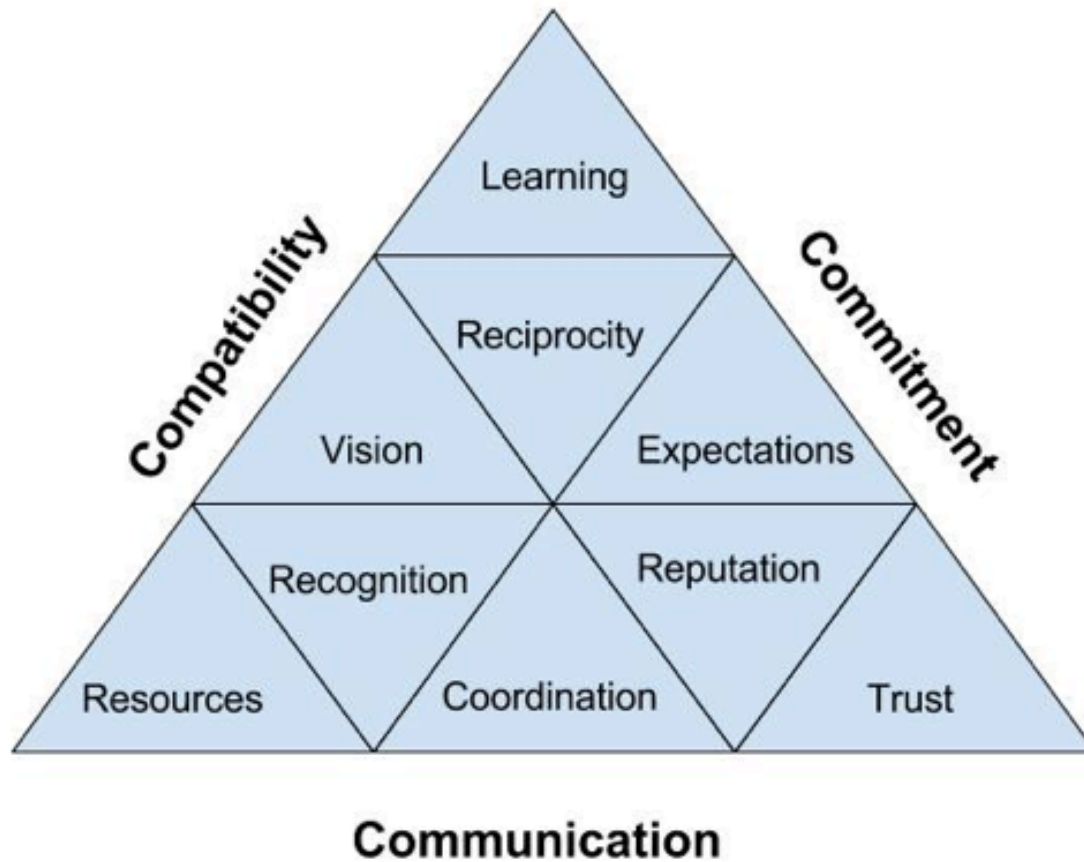
# Commitment

- *Mutual trust is developed*
- Partners establish or build on a *reputation*
- *Recognition* of the value of the partnership and the contributions of each
- Develops through ongoing *coordination*
- Attention to what is *learned* through **continuous improvement process**
- Appropriate *resources* (human and facilities)

# Communication

- Critical as a foundation
- Essential part of *coordination*
- Leads to understanding *expectations*
- Fosters *learning* from each other
- Important in *recognizing* contributions
- Ensures *reciprocity*
- Develops *trust* and understanding

# Proposed Framework



# Phase 3: Evaluate the proposed framework

Framework evaluated using:

- Surveys:
  - Academics @ NZACE
  - Industry hosts/ employers
- Discussion forum @ ACEN



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# Definitions provided to participants

- **Learning:** Learning is seen as the core of the experience where knowledge and information is shared and partners learn from each other at different times and in different ways.
- **Vision:** The vision is shared, values are aligned and there is an agreed purpose for the relationship.
- **Reciprocity:** There are mutual benefits that create a win-win relationship for each partner.
- **Expectations:** Expectations are identified, communicated and understood.
- **Resources:** Appropriate resources (human and facilities) are available, and capacity constraints are considered.
- **Recognition:** There is acknowledgement of the value of the partnership and the contributions of each of the partners.
- **Coordination:** Effective planning, preparation and evaluation occur, responsive to the needs of each partner.
- **Reputation:** The reputation of the institution and the organisation is acknowledged, developed and protected in the relationship.
- **Trust:** Mutual trust among partners is developed and commitment to the relationship is evident



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# Findings from Surveys- Academics

- 17 Academics from NZ and Australia completed the survey
- All considered the 9 factors important (mean score at least 4 out of 5)
- Highest mean score was **Trust (4.7)**
- Lowest mean score was **Resources (4.0)**

*I really like the proposed framework as it captures the essence of successful relationships/partnerships. Consideration should be given to the difference between institutional level partnerships and relationships between individual academics and host supervisors*

# Industry Survey – Participants

- Macquarie (68); AUT (40), Waterloo (298)
- Organizations
  - Commercial (49% of UW)
  - Not for Profit ( 47% AUT; 45% MQ; 9% UW)
  - Government (18-20% of AUT, MQ and UW)
  - Public (18-24% of AUT, MQ and UW)

Education; Sport & Fitness; Finance; Health; Manufacturing;  
Professional; Scientific; Business

Small, Medium, and Large businesses represented in sample



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# Ratings of Importance

Factor	AUT	UW	MQ
1. Importance of learning	4.04	3.76	4.00
2. Importance of having a shared vision	4.12	3.82	4.16
3. Importance of reciprocity	4.19	4.13	4.21
4. Importance of clear expectations	4.31	4.22	4.52
5. Importance of resources	3.88	3.96	3.93
6. Importance of recognition	3.12	2.89	3.17
7. Importance of coordination	4.08	3.97	4.29
8. Importance of reputation	2.88	3.04	3.33
9. Importance of trust	4.54	4.15	4.37
<b>AVERAGE</b>	3.91	3.77	4.00



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# Rankings for each context

Factor	AUT	UW	MQ
1. Importance of learning	6 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>
2. Importance of having a shared vision	4 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>
3. Importance of reciprocity	3 <sup>rd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>
4. Importance of clear expectations	2 <sup>nd</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>
5. Importance of resources	7 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>
6. Importance of recognition	8 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>
7. Importance of coordination	5 <sup>th</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>
8. Importance of reputation	9 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>
9. Importance of trust	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>



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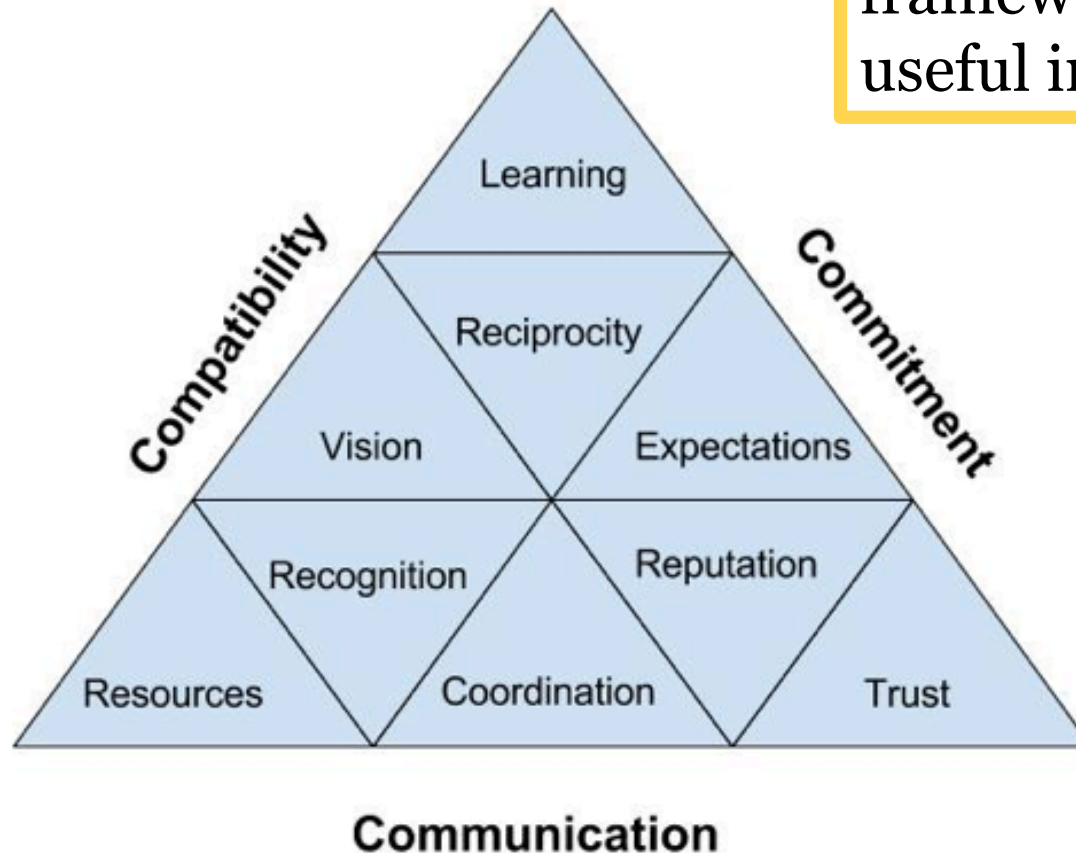
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# Key Points

- All factors considered important from both industry and academic perspective
- ***Clear Expectations*** and ***Trust*** had highest mean scores overall
- ***Reputation*** and ***Recognition*** lowest scores but still considered important
- Industry survey- consistency in level of importance of factors despite the contextual and organizational demographic differences

# Implications For Practice

How might this framework be useful in your role?



# Thank You

