



(Re) Building Trust in Tech

Report from Convenings
held Nov & Dec 2024

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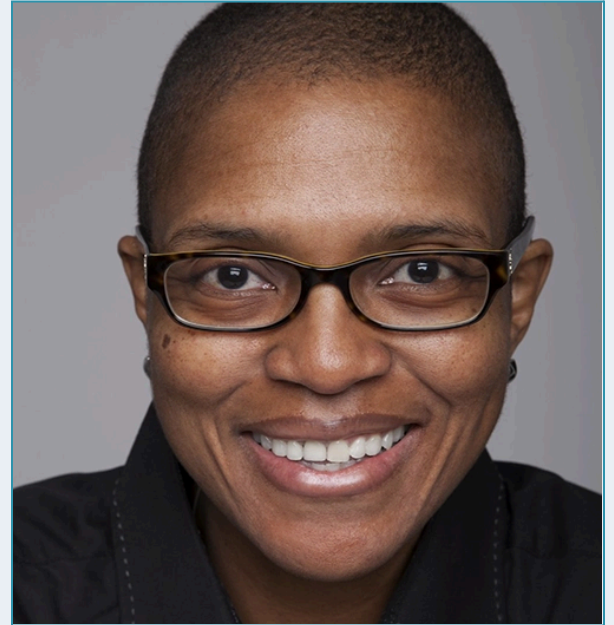
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Executive Summary

[Sarell](#) is a research + advocacy organization focused on (re)building trust in tech through active listening, transparency and collaborative design with users. This report captures:

- a review of the “why” behind Sarell’s mission;
- the methodology and experience of its convenings;
- the insights and outcomes of these convenings that inform its strategy; and
- an investigation on the value of convenings for Sarell’s future investment.



At Sarell, we believe the erosion of trust is exacerbated by insufficient transparency and feedback mechanisms that fail to capture and address customers’ concerns related to their well-being. Sarell aims to address this issue by embedding actionable well-being measures into [feedback mechanisms](#) used by tech companies and normalizing collaborative design methodologies across the industry. We engage with three core strategies to support this work.

Research and policy

Sarell seeks to illuminate cutting-edge findings that identify, preserve, and amplify positive effects of social platforms on users’ well-being, to build technologies, public action, relationships, and public policy that guides the increase of trust and well-being.

Speaking & Advising

With decades of experience in the tech industry, Sarell's leadership inspires global digital and physical audiences with practical steps and techniques to regain and nurture customer trust and attraction.

Convening Spaces

Sarell aims to build tightly-curated, open, diverse spaces to discuss the complicated issues of tech & trust in today’s world. These spaces are intended to ensure all voices are represented, people feel comfortable to dialogue without reaching a conclusion, and become invigorated to remain involved to support how tech can be more trustworthy and restorative.



“As I travel and talk to people in different places and from various cultures, backgrounds, and ways of living about tech, the one common element I hear comes back to **trust.**”

- Tammarrian Rogers

Our curated convening methods were tested and iterated upon in the 4th business quarter of 2024 (Q4) through two different events, where nearly 50 attendees from a wide range of backgrounds, professions, and ages came together virtually to discuss trust, tech and well-being.

We discussed the following questions:

- [What is promising about social platforms?](#)
- [What is challenging about social platforms?](#)
- [What are some ways the challenges could be addressed?](#)

As a collaborative advocacy organization centered on building trust in tech, we used this convening - building a trust-centered collaborative space - to immerse and obtain the convener’s perspectives on the very strategy we’re aiming to build.

We presented this approach for attendees to consider:

IF


we build a standard framework for tech companies to **center human well-being** BY:

LISTENING to customers’ holistic* tech experiences,
EXERCISING TRANSPARENCY on crowd feedback,
CO-DESIGNING** product experiences, and
DELIVERING PRODUCTS that reflect changes customers want,

THEN

We believe **trust will be increased** in tech platforms, companies, and leadership.

* usability + impact on trust and well-being
** co-design = collaborative design



We then asked them to share their reactions to this approach and offer ideas on what outcomes they would like to see come from the convening itself. Here's what we asked:

- [What do you think Sarell should keep or change about this approach? Why?](#)
- [What outcomes would you want to see from the convening?](#)

The Q4 2024 Sarell convenings offered various ideas, critiques, and experiences that informed how trust in tech can be addressed writ large. No convener agreed on any single solution to many of the problems. The collective discussed how technology affects trust, culture, communities and power. One thing the community could agree on, however, is **how important it is to debate the issue of trust in technology with people from different professions, backgrounds, and ages.**

To continue this work, Sarell intends to do the following:

- Host further convenings;
- Further research feedback models;
- Partner with organizations; and
- Explore synergistic social movements.

We will host further convenings to practice a feedback and collaborative design methodology we believe will facilitate our aim to rebuild trust in tech. We seek to understand current incentives and existing well-being-monitoring models that we may leverage. Partnering with for-profit and non-profit organizations to test and tune Sarell's proposed approach will be a valuable learning experience and help define next steps. And finally, exploring grassroots efforts that align with Sarell's mission is a worthwhile investment of our time in 2025.

[Want to stay involved in Sarell's updates? Click here!](#)



Introduction: Sarell's Why

“There's still a lack of awareness around how [social platforms are] impacting social media users' presence in reality...the amount you spend giving attention to what's on your device, [there's] less time engaging with what's in front of you.”

- Attendee, Sarell Convening

Intro, Summarized:

We landscape the state of tech, trust, and well-being, through these chapters:

1. [What Sarell believes about how tech can address well-being;](#)
2. [What does trusting technology mean in today's age; and](#)
3. [What issues affect trust in tech institutions.](#)

Because there are many great benefits to tech that Sarell aims to harness and perpetuate, we have a tremendous opportunity to leverage tech as a tool to heal and amplify the good parts of our humanity. Currently, however, it's hard to trust tech in our society for many reasons detailed below. Across [business](#), [mental health](#), [political infrastructure](#) and more, tech platforms have become increasingly disconnected to the holistic needs of users and communities. What's more, Sarell believes average citizens feel disconnected from tech infrastructure - and thus, cannot restore broken relationships in isolation.

[Trust is a confident relationship with the unknown](#). Issues such as digital surveillance, data manipulation, degradation of tech worker agency and platform capabilities, social media mental health effects, and loss of trust in tech leadership collectively erode trust. Trust in tech is complicated, diverse, and changing in our living world.

Sarell believes social platforms hold the potential to be overwhelmingly beneficial. However, many platforms lack transparent feedback mechanisms that incorporate well-being and collaborative design between users and tech platforms. Building these are key to responsible innovation that realigns our relationships and serves our individual and collective well-being. With this, trust can be increasingly rebuilt.

[Interested in further exploring Sarell's research?](#)



What does Sarell believe about tech and well-being?

At Sarell, we believe that trust in tech and well-being are related and that tech can be a catalyst to our collective healing and well-being. We also believe trust in tech is eroding and is exacerbated by **insufficient transparency and feedback mechanisms** that fail to capture and address customers' concerns related to their well-being. Without disrupting this cycle, mistrust grows and weakens the relationship between tech companies and their customers, ultimately slowing innovation, reducing customer loyalty, and decreasing product value and profit. In short - technological acceleration and entrenchment in our society makes many of us feel both **trapped - and excited**.

Our relationships with technology allow us to do a myriad of things people couldn't do a century, a decade, even a year ago. It lets us individually accomplish amazing things, but also affects the world in large, uncontrollable, and unpredictable ways. What's more, Sarell believes the people in charge of designing our technologies are becoming increasingly more isolated from the populace who consume - and are affected by - the platforms they build.

These separations mean these technological platforms are unaccountable to the consequences - both good and bad - of the world they're shaping. Tech isn't only affecting our economic, and digital worlds, but our social, cognitive, and emotional worlds as well. Our well-being is being progressively integrated with the decisions of tech platforms, companies, and leadership. The next sections will cover the research and policy advocacy capacity of Sarell: by sharing some of the background, opinions, strategies in the 'trust in tech' knowledge space. The rest of the report offers detail into Sarell's most recent strategic endeavor to address 'trust in tech':

The Sarell Convening Space

The curated method + principles Sarell uses to build open, productive dialogue.

Growing Insights on Trust in Tech

The learnings from the Q4 2024 convening, on Trust and Well-Being in Tech.

Potential Next Steps

Suggested Strategies for moving forward to increase trust in social platforms.

Sarell is currently focused on addressing contributors to local and global division, conflict, and the diminishment of personal wellness. More specifically, we asked community members about how those contributors are housed within tech tools we use to connect, learn and share information - **social platforms**.



Do we trust tech with our well-being?

In today's technological landscape, many people are losing trust in new technologies and tech leaders. The lack of understanding how emerging technologies work and the ongoing concern about data privacy and potential psychological harms all contribute to the decline in trust among customers.

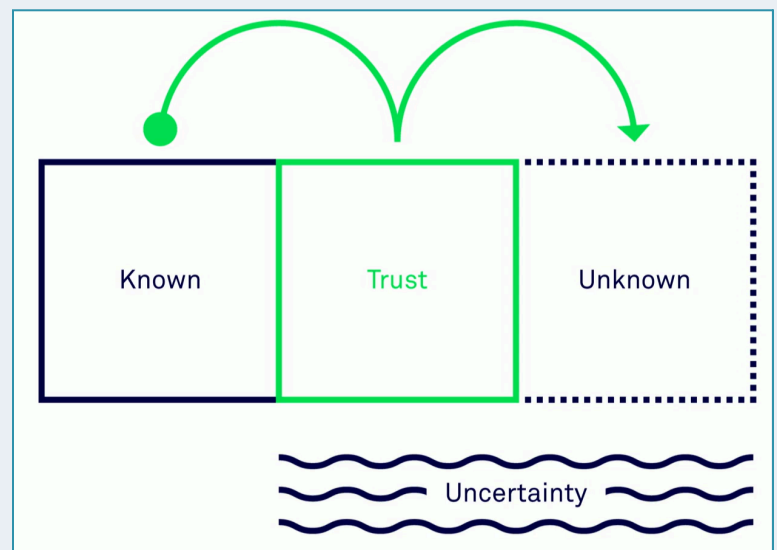
To learn more about how to address this problem, we must consider what caused it in the first place. **Let's get started.**

What does trusting technology mean, in today's age?

There are dozens of practical definitions of trust. Trust expert, Dr. Rachel Botsman explains in her book, [Who can You Trust?](#) that "there are more academic papers on its definition than on any other sociological concept." Many definitions broach topics of risk assessment, competence, integrity, vulnerability, and more; to offer a starting point, [Dr. Botsman offers a working definition](#) below¹:

Trust is a confident relationship with the unknown.

- Rachel Botsman



This definition helps us understand why relationships with the things around us - technology, other people, new ideas, economic systems - are increasingly essential to help us thrive. It's also essential to personal growth and development. From the day we're born, we learn to live in a world wrapped in an inescapable dependency on others and their ability to help us survive and thrive in our community.

¹ [A different definition of trust was used for the convenings](#), as this one had not yet been found. That definition is still available in the methodology section, to ensure the convening's fidelity is maintained.



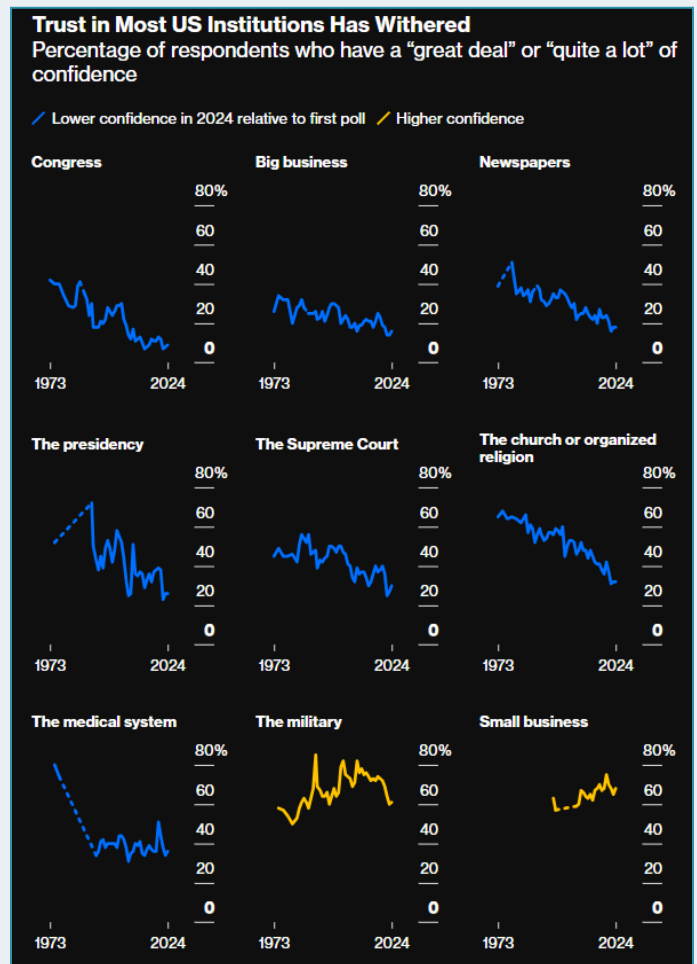
However, trust isn't easily measurable or categorizable. It's a concept that changes based on who's being trusted, who's doing the trusting, and what they're doing. As mentioned by Bloomberg's editorial series ['Republic of Distrust'](#), "...trust is slippery in that respect — there are no hard numbers to grab onto as we might when tracking, say, GDP or unemployment. Instead, we're left with sentiment. And as any good pollster will tell you, theirs is an imperfect science."

At the same time, tech designers are building platforms where - for the first time - users must trust experimental ideas, novel algorithms, and strangers - at the same time - to operate in everyday life. (Remember when you learned about [Uber](#), [Instagram](#) or [Blockchain](#) for the first time?)

Technological companies, platforms, and leadership serve as a source, and a conduit, to unknown possibilities. When those outcomes materialize, however, into specific, unique consequences, it affects users' well-being in a myriad of ways: positively, through community development or transformational skill-building, or harmfully through spread of disinformation or engagement with toxic actors. Well-being, similarly, is slippery - but clearly tied to which tech platforms users feel they can trust.

...trust is slippery in that respect — there are no hard numbers to grab onto as we might when tracking, say, GDP or unemployment. Instead, we're left with sentiment.

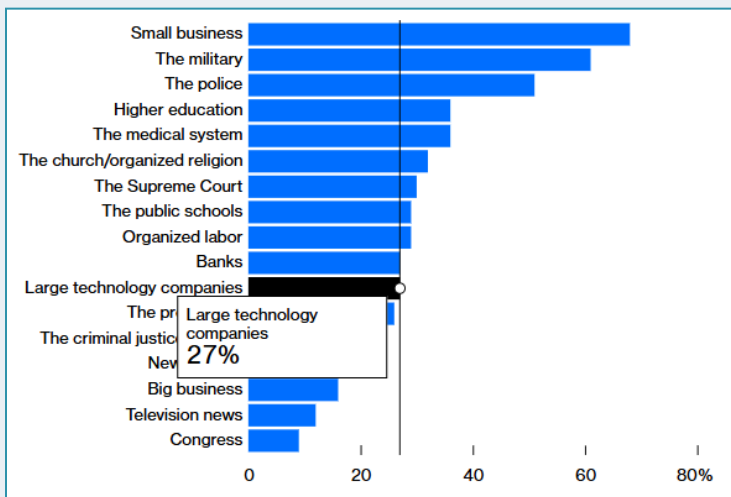
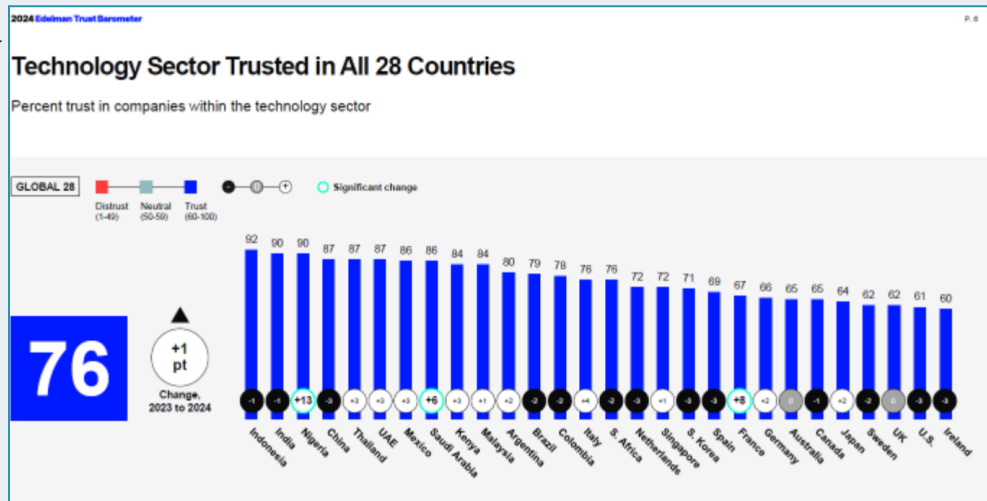
- [Kristen Bellstrom, Republic of Distrust](#)



[Trust in Most US Institutions Has Withered.](#)



Additionally, trust as a global concept is also breaking down - and rebuilding into new forms. According to a 2024 Gallup poll hosted by the Republic of Distrust report, [trust has decreased in many American cultural institutions](#): Congress, Big Business, the Medical System, and many more. Technological trust, however, is precariously steady in different countries. In the [Edelman 2024 Trust Barometer](#), people in all 28 countries surveyed remained trusting of tech businesses to 'do what is right'.



However, [a recent Gallup poll in the US offers a conflicting perspective](#): only 27% of Americans in 2024 express a 'great deal or 'quite a lot' of confidence in institutions.

What issues affect trust in tech institutions?

In 2024, Tammarrrian hosted a few insightful conversations with people she met during her nomadic travels. She met amazing people from young students to education professionals, service managers to tour guides, professional DJs, investment bankers to healthcare advisors, and many more. Intrigued by their unique life stories and their relationships with tech inspired her to launch a podcast series, [Travels with Tee](#), to capture their lived experiences through their voices.



In the [Appendix](#), you'll find the questions and some of the answers they offered. People discussed the effect on students, the economy, entertainment industry, and the future of work. They also shared different reactions; from inspiration and anticipation about what it can unlock, to worry and frustration about what it might cause. What's clear, however, is that our changing relationships with tech affects ALL of us, in unique and different ways, and many feel unable to control how it's changing and growing.

[Listen to "Travels with Tee" where technology connects humanity.](#)

Although many of these new ideas are being trusted for their profit-building opportunities, cognitive problem-solving, and their novelty, tech institutions have caused - or been affected by - cross-industry issues that hamper the public trust in their function and consequences. We offer some examples below.

Digital surveillance

["Society has been gradually darkened by the scheme"](#) under which everyone is under surveillance all the time..."

Disinformation campaigns

["Evidence of organized social media manipulation campaigns"](#) which have taken place in 70 countries, up from 48 countries in 2018 and 28 countries in 2017."



Platform Degradation, e.g. ‘Enshittification’

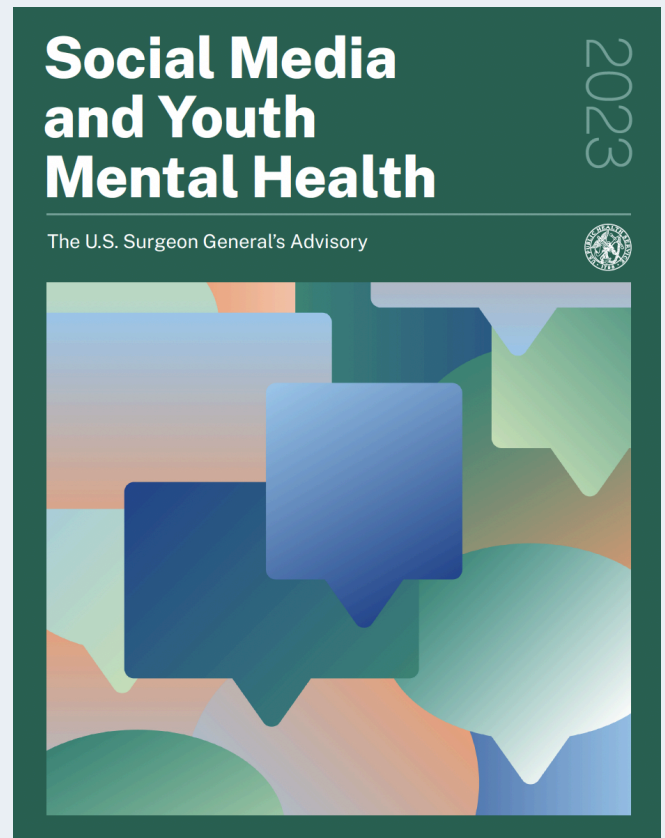
“Facebook broke its promise not to spy on users, created a massive commercial surveillance system, and sold cheap, reliable targeting to advertisers. [Google broke its promise](#) not to pollute its search engine with ads and offered great deals to advertisers. Amazon offered below-cost shipping and returns to platform sellers and later shifted the cost onto those sellers.”

Social Comparison and Body image

“[Children and adolescents who spend more than 3 hours a day on social media](#) face double the risk of mental health problems, including experiencing symptoms of depression and anxiety.”

Limited trust of CEOs to make ethical + responsible AI

“Around 65% of US consumers say [they don’t trust the CEOs of companies that develop AI models to build their products responsibly and ethically](#) — and they have even less faith in Congress to regulate those companies.... Lawmakers had the survey’s worst result on the question of regulating AI.”



Many conveners mentioned how each of these topics are complex issues currently limited by many factors: lack of ethical bodies, comprehensive legislation, vague definitions, among others. Although details about the problems, consequences, and interventions of each topic are valuable, detailing these issues is unfortunately beyond the scope of this report. In our world today, tech is both inescapable - and uniquely democratizing as a resource across the world. A case can be made that many technological solutions are morally and productively impossible to stop - those debates should be had on which ones, and how.

[Want to work with Sarell? Click here.](#)



Convening Method: How We Gather

“Very good conversations all around. [Felt] alive to see the different [angles] and many levers.”

- Attendee, Sarell Convening

Method, Summarized:

To build a convening where people feel open, welcomed, curious and ready to share, this is how we organize:

1. [How we start our conversations;](#)
2. [How we convene our attendees; and](#)
3. [What comes next after the convening.](#)

The convening space we built requires inviting a diverse collection of experts - each with something to contribute, building a space of open, authentic, efficient, productive dialogue, and remaining accountable to the progress agreed upon during the conversation.

In our convening spaces we:

- Define a clear purpose and plan;
- Engage with consistent and personalized communication
- Open opportunities for candid conversations and guided by professional facilitation design; and
- Capture rich insights through a space to record, at conveners' pace and agency.

To test this method, we created Sarell's first convenings on Trust and Well-Being in Tech. Across two convenings, technologists, public policy entrepreneurs, youth representatives, academics and others from four continents participated.

[Want to attend a Sarell convening?](#)



We take conversation[s] seriously

There are many things that are unclear about the state of tech + trust in our constantly evolving world. What is clear, however, is how important the topic is - how we find space that can envision and guide what trust-based changemaking looks like.

That's what guided Sarell on this path, to determine what strategies, technologies, communities, and policies can help direct the work to repair the relationships between tech institutions, and the people who engage with them. Alongside the applied research on & with tech companies & industry trends, and the speeches sounding the bell on rebuilding trust in tech across the world, Sarell realized one of the most important tasks to guide these conversations - are ACTUAL conversations. We center the art of building trustworthy, imaginatively prolific, and community-centered spaces.

Here's how we do it...

Step 1: How we Start

To rebuild trust in tech, [Sarell is committed to a journey](#). On this journey, we hold a vision where tech actively rebuilds trust in its platforms, leadership, and business models with the communities that use them. But what will the journey look like?

What milestones will we reach? What bridges do we need to build?

To prepare the right tools, best snacks, and essential map for the journey, we use our collective intelligence, individuals and communities that represent our diverse perspectives and experiences. That's what makes our convenings different.

How do we create our convenings? **It requires these core elements.**

Center the Purpose + Plan.

Personally Invite a Representative Community.

Clarify Terms and Definitions.

Create Open Communication.



Center the Purpose + Plan

We can't solve all tech problems overnight. ([Though, if you'd like to partner, we'd love to try with you!](#)) We have to know how much we're aiming to accomplish for the first event. To start, we decided to focus on two core qualities:

- (1) overall trust in social technology platforms; and
- (2) feedback on Sarell's proposed approach to increase trust in tech.

A snippet from the email invitation conveners received:

“I would like to invite you to a virtual, highly collaborative convening in November or December 2024 to talk about trust in tech (specifically social platforms) and its impact on our well-being.

One of Sarell's current explorations is how to [ensure social platforms \(e.g. TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, etc.\) weave user well-being signals into their listening channels](#) that are transparent and actionable.

- Tammarrian, Sarell

The virtual event was held twice to ensure the participants could attend at least one timeslot. It was 2.5 hours long, with one break.

By starting here, we would build interest + opportunities for unique, detailed, and in-depth convenings across the entire topic area for future convenings.



Personally Invite a Representative Community

Next, we had to ask: who would we like to invite? Here are some of the introductions from the people who joined:

“Hi my name is _____. I am in transition year in secondary school and I play hockey as my hobby!”

“My PhD is in mechanical engineering with an emphasis in thermal-fluids and I've been in tech for the last 10+ yrs. Prior to that I worked mostly in renewable energy startups. I hope to find hobbies once again when my boys are older but for now we spend our family time playing games and all kinds of sports and looking for bugs and insects around our neighborhood.”

“Hi! I'm _____. I am a trauma expert (with a master's and PhD in social work) who has studied human well-being for almost two decades. I am also an expert mixed-methods researcher focusing on youth social media use and its impact on mental and behavioral health. I co-own a company called [Trauma-Informed Technology](#). With my partner, _____, we help tech companies become more trauma-informed. So happy to be here! :)”

“I'm _____ live in Berlin 🇩🇪 with _____ (👶) and _____ (❤️), advise VCs 💰 and startups 🚀 doing tech due diligence work for them and have built a bunch of hardware, AI and software over the past 15ish years. Raised between The Netherlands 🇳🇱 for the early days and Suriname 🇸🇷 (south-am, caribbean) for the formative years.”

“I am _____, a student at _____ High School. I have played sports for multiple years and really enjoy doing it. I am from California.”

Forty-two (42) people attended both convenings, from four continents, from ages 16 to 80. Sarell invited various experts to participate: technologists, social scientists, public policy entrepreneurs, psychologists, academics, and youth. Critically important, the mix reflected a wide array of perspectives: those that are pessimistic about the well-being challenges of tech in our society, those who remain hopeful about its potential, and those undecided or neutral. In order to maximise equity and safety, we invited convenors to contact us if they needed any additional support to participate fully. By inviting these community members and respecting each attendee's opinion and experience, the convenings may become a space deemed *safe enough* for an **equitable exchange** between each other: when people come here, the core value is everyone has the opportunity to learn and speak from one's *lived* experience, together.

[You can find the full list of participant introductions here.](#)



Clarify Terms and Definitions

With the conveners readily chosen, it was important to ensure we were all speaking the same language. Conversation is hard if we're not all on the same page (or, at least, close to it) to start our conversations. In the opening presentation, we included terms and definitions to help anchor us. Here are some of the definitions used **during the convening**. NOTE: We anticipate definitions will be adapted and evolve with focused research in future work.

Co-Design

A methodology where product makers and users collaboratively design and test products and services together.

Customer \longleftrightarrow User

The person who engages or uses the product or service.

Holistic

Considering product *usability* and its impact on users' *well-being*.

Social Platforms \longleftrightarrow Social Media

A digital place to share and retrieve information and connect with others around the world.

Trust

"...[the willingness to rely on another party based on expectations of competence, integrity, and benevolence.](#)"

Well-being²

Healthy psychological, emotional and mental state.

[Have any definitions that should be added - or replaced? Let us know!](#)

² "Well-being has evolved over the past several decades as research has continued to reveal its multidimensional, dynamic, person-specific and culture-specific nature." Learn more about the breadth and history of the definition - through a socioecological context - [through this article.](#)



Create Open Communication

If you're holding a party, you need to make sure everyone is invited. Seems obvious, right?

But to make sure everyone feels truly welcome, we aimed to make sure each engagement with our attendees made them feel welcomed and included. **This required detailed, trustworthy, user-centered communication.**

That meant meeting everyone where they were: possibly on Email, but also on Whatsapp, Text, phone call; carrier pigeon if they needed it.

This also meant being transparent about the details of the event,

What's the background they need to know?

What should they expect from the experience?

Who's [broadly] invited?

Why is this convening important?

What's in it for them?

When and where will it happen?

and making sure they knew what they needed to prepare.



Step 2: How we Convene

So, we've offered the phrasing - the resources, the relationships, and the scenarios to make sure people know what conversations they're having.

However, now that the stage is set, we aimed to make sure we were holding the conversations in the right way.

How do we hold our convenings? **It requires these core qualities:**

- Make free and open conversations the priority;
- Design the timing of different tasks as well as possible;
- Answer questions authentically + respectfully - and expect everyone else to do the same;
- Offer clear, distinct, open productive questions about the topic; and
- Give them a space to record - at their pace.

Let's show you the details of each.



Make free and open conversations the priority

Great conveners recognize this truth: they never hold all the power over a space they've created. Therefore, Sarell **always expects the unexpected** in our events. People show up late, people don't always listen to instructions, people ask questions you don't expect - and that's the way it should be! What you can do, instead, is *guide* the attendee's attention so their freedom and openness is respected - and still supporting the needs of the collective.

To do so, we aim to help attendees feel comfortable discussing new topics, and have space to speak their truth based on personal experience - where dialogue, not outcomes, are the priority. This required:

- finding a qualified facilitator whose technical expertise and human-centered approach ensured attendees felt humanized in a virtual space;
- building open and clear conversations using inspiration, instead of critique; and
- embodying Sarell's values.

We believe this helps ensure there's always something to learn together.

Design the timing of different tasks as well as possible

Great convenings all have the same critique: **'We didn't have enough time!'**

On its face, this sounds like a problem. For advanced facilitators, it means we got in a community flow state, and this is rare! I don't want to leave, there's more to be done in the community. Sometimes, however, convenings ACTUALLY don't have enough time, because they're poorly designed. It's important to practically budget appropriately for every task we're completing: introductions, platform instructions, conversations, scenarios, survey answering, and more. This came from our facilitator's decades of expertise holding community-centered, knowledge-building conversations across a variety of topics, to answer the question:

How must this convening flow?

It means this meeting couldn't include participants that were too tardy. It means we had to test, practice, and critique the run of the show until the presentation - through physical or digital screen - proceeds without a hitch. All to make sure the event uses time as perfectly as possible.



Answer questions authentically + respectfully - and expect everyone else to do the same

How often are you honest about a topic?

How often are you considerate of other people's experiences and feelings?

Now, **how often are you doing both?**

It's okay to not have the right answers in these spaces. Many people are coming with their own expertise, but the conversation goes across many different topics, contexts, issues, and struggles. By openly discussing the concepts we couldn't know by ourselves, we get the chance to come up with better solutions together. To do so, we must build a space where people can both be themselves, and craft bonds of mutual respect in the process.

We do this by offering a few simple, powerful 'invitations' to guide how the conversations should be held. For example:

- **"Chatham House" Rule**: you can talk elsewhere about what you have heard here but you must not attribute it to any participant;
- Share your name each time you speak;
- You may have different opinions: respect everyone's right to contribute; and
- Listen with attention and curiosity.



Offer clear, distinct, open productive questions about the topic

What are we talking about? Many socially-minded organizations extol the importance of community. We should learn more about each other! We should get together! It's going to save our society!

Unfortunately, many community evangelists forget the most important task: **to know why your community is convening.**

Your people aren't only here to meet and fireside-chat with great minds and wonderful experiences. They're here for a purpose. As is discussed in the Art of Gathering:

“When we don't examine the deeper assumptions behind why we gather, we end up skipping too quickly to replicating old, staid formats of gathering. And we forgo the possibility of creating something memorable, even transformative.”

- [Priya Parker, the Art of Gathering](#)

In our convenings, we're looking to discuss detailed ways to understand - and address - Trust Erosion in Tech. The facilitator used the [Focused Conversation](#) methodological approach to 'build shared awareness' by asking detailed questions designed to elicit attendee's natural stories and break down the essential components of the topic. For example:

- How do you feel about the effect of social media on well-being?
- What is promising, challenging, and malleable about social platforms?
- What outcomes would you like to see from this convening?
- Do you have any resources you'd like to share?

Build purpose into the plan - and the community will follow.



Give them a space to record - at their pace

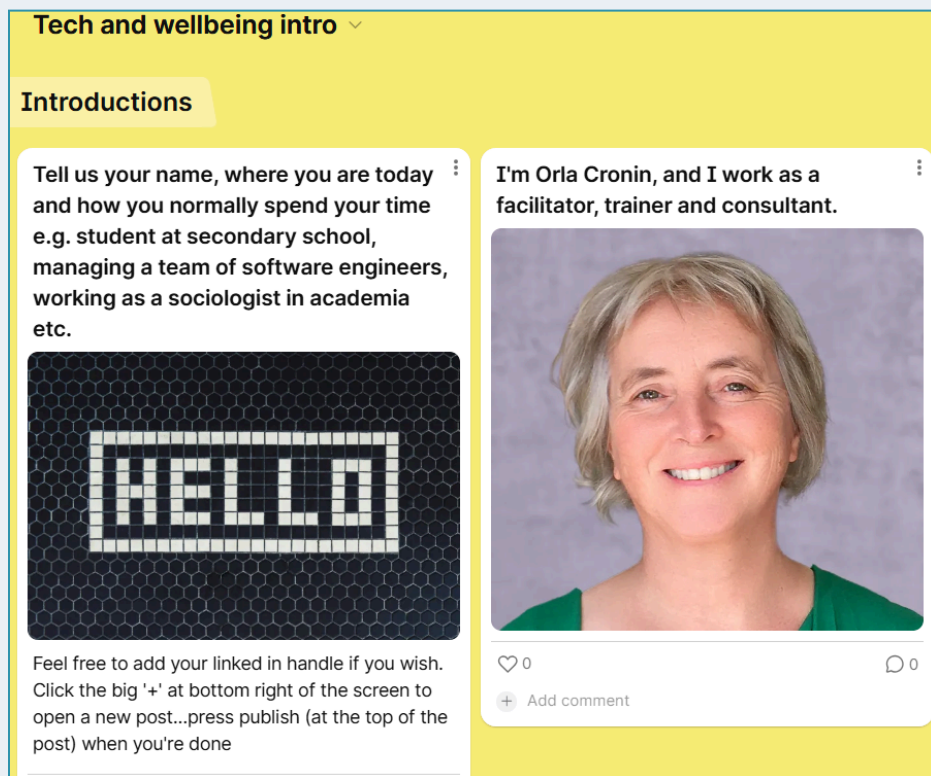
As professional tech leaders and researchers, we recognize: the data is a goldmine! If Sarell does its job right, these conversations will build rich insights, debates, stories, and learning opportunities from the data we collected.

However, these convenings are not cold sites of data extraction. The conversation is king, and the data must be their humble servant - one that collected their collected, processed, collective, yet raw thoughts.

That means we decided AGAINST using and distributing AI dictators and analysis resources, and FOR simple collaborative data platforms like Padlet, **so everyone could consent - and process - the thoughts they want to share.**

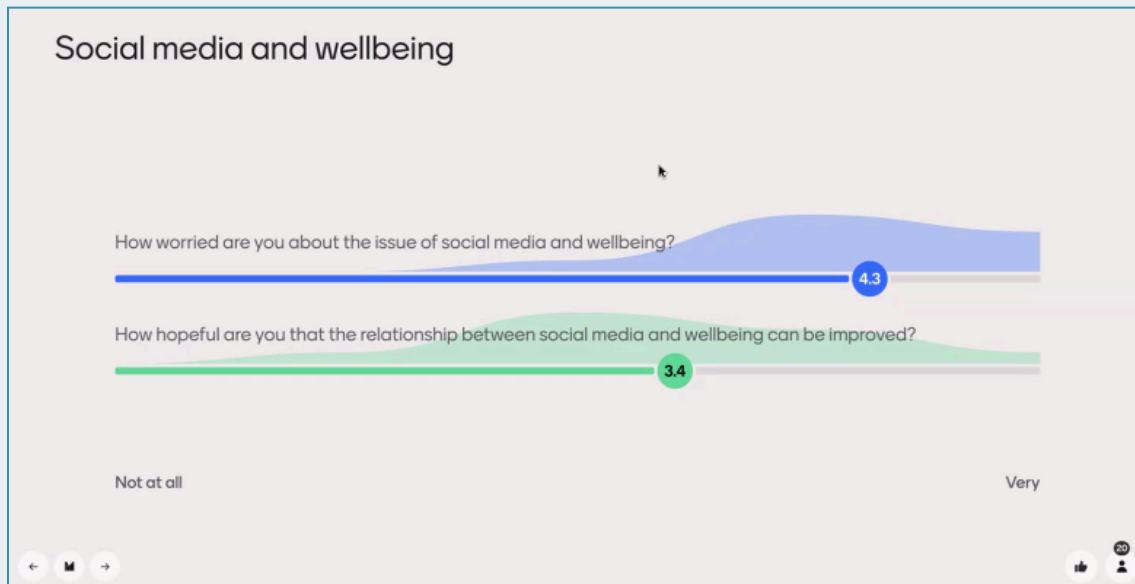
We quickly offer digital materials to offer feedback that community members can use to comment, discuss, and share with others in the convening. When they're ready to share, they offer it.

It's how we collect data that ensures our conveners are foaming at the mouth to share - and to learn - their answers to some of the stickiest questions.



- A Padlet screenshot where conveners record + collaborate on responses.





- A Mentimeter screenshot where attendees recorded quantitative responses.

Step 3: After the Convening

What were the outcomes of the convening? Was it a success? Yes, we believe it was a success.

By prioritizing the principles outlined above, we built a space that generated exciting and honest conversations about techno-social issues affecting the global populace. But the only outcomes weren't only about how people felt about trust and well-being in Tech; many folks had a lot to say about how we did the convening in the first place. Here's what the attendees appreciated.

Variety of attendees

What do the young people have to say? What have the researchers learned? How can the activists speak truth to power? What have the tech workers seen about what's possible? With multiple people from various backgrounds comes conversations beyond our daily circles of friends, colleagues, and communities.

Lack of hierarchy

Does everyone feel open to contribute? Can people disagree - openly, and honestly? A young student said, "I didn't feel the hierarchy here." Many conveners deeply appreciate this simple element of the convening: if someone had something to say, they could say it - and others would listen.



Different perspectives

Some seasoned professionals have spent years researching and discussing the large-scale problems and consequences of our current digital age. The young people, however, are steeped in the culture, where the speed and nature of the conversation's hard for older generations. Many exchanges went beyond what was expected yet were valued and enjoyed.

Of course, we received constructive feedback.

More time needed

The sign of a good event? People wanted to stay longer and most (>95%) stayed for the entire 2.5 hours, voluntarily. Should we budget more time to help reach consensus or leverage the time to help keep us focused. We're not sure and will explore further.

Vague topics and proposed approach

Should social platforms include VR? AR? Platforms with specific algorithms? So many algorithms offer the ability to text, voice chat, and talk together, it's hard to say which parts of these platforms we appreciate - and want to critique. Similarly, regarding the proposed approach: if the definition of well-being is broad, it's hard to know where the conversation should start.

Ready for action

More than once, the attendees conveyed the sentiment during the event: **I can't wait to see what comes next!** In these discursive spaces, some conveners longed to break into action planning to tackle specific problems. How can we create space for the on-going conversation and tangible actions?

This report is our attempt at building that space. To practice and develop Sarell's feedback strategy, we underwent multiple feedback cycles of this very report. We delivered data and draft reports to conveners so their insights, background research, and feelings about the content were appropriately represented. This way, our collective intelligence contributed to the best end product possible - weeks after the convenings were held. We also aim to build simple infrastructure to keep attendees involved: by keeping them updated for Sarell events + talks, creating Sarell community infrastructure, and keeping them updated on Sarell research + advocacy actions.

[Want to attend a Sarell convening?](#)



Insights: What We Learned

“What if there was a...universal framework that we could use to measure impact on social well-being? What if this framework could be applied to any product, business, or industry? What if this framework was accessible to anyone, anytime?”

- Tammarrian, Sarell

Insights, Summarized:

In this chapter, we asked our conveners these questions:

1. [What is promising about social platforms?](#)
2. [What is challenging about social platforms?](#)
3. [How can the challenges be addressed?](#)

To test our theories on the intersection of trust in tech and well-being - and to learn about what we don't know - we convened with people from different backgrounds, professions, ages and locations. The insights from those conversations are detailed below.

They offered answers, centered on:

- Communities and knowledge dissemination benefits;
- Cognitive, emotional, and relational harms on local levels, and manipulation, exploitation, and harm acceleration on systemic levels; and
- Methods to redesign feedback, education, tech platform + business mechanisms, community plans, and tech-government relationships.

These insights offer clear direction for applied research, compelling collaborations, and productive action on these topics: how tech affects our evolving world, and what we can best leverage it.

[Want to add to our insights?](#)



In every good conversation, you'll likely learn something new.

You might learn a new fact about the world from an expert. You might learn a story about how an experience changed a new friends' life. Sometimes, you might learn something about yourself - what you agree or disagree with, and what that means about how you live your life.

We aim to build spaces where good conversations happen, learning is fostered, perspectives are broadened and new connections are made.

We take transparency seriously

We wanted to make sure the insights from the conversation were available to guide, bolster - and be critiqued - by the burgeoning Sarell convener community.

So, what did we learn?

We asked the conveners to discuss three core topics that span current issues and opportunities with trust, social media and well being. They were guided by these open-ended questions:

- What is promising about social platforms - in particular, for the next generation?
- What is challenging about social platforms - in particular, for the next generation?
- What are some ways in which the challenges could be addressed?

[You can find the full list of insights available here.](#)

Here's what we heard.



What is promising about social platforms - in particular, for the next generation?

Builds community.

In a world where we can find out about more information than any other time in history, people feel increasingly isolated. Conveners mentioned communities of various types (mental health, old friends, neighborhoods, LGBTQAI+ spaces, and more). Many social platforms' core functionality is to connect and engage social relationships, to support people in any endeavor.

Offers opportunities to educate others.

Information is everywhere - and our conveners value its presence and transformational capacity. They mentioned niche content, learning verified information, learning in new and different ways, and learning about people's cultures and perspectives. People can both learn -and teach others - on these platforms in a vast collection of ways; solving problems across the world, and supporting issues in their local communities.

Helps build empathy for other people and situations.

Because people are increasingly isolated in our society, we lose the ability to understand other people's perspectives. Conveners mentioned increased understanding across gender and age gaps, or even becoming an ally of specific communities. Empathy allows people to change their perspectives about global and community issues, and potentially act to benefit those who live different lives.

Builds vulnerability with strangers.

On the other side of the coin, community members feel more comfortable to be open with others. When finding community, engaging anonymously, or feeling the distance between a virtual community, people feel more ready to be unguarded with their identity, beliefs, issues, aspirations, and more. One convener mentioned how reduced inhibition in social media might improve diagnosis and therapy.



Offers capacity-building with tech tools, platforms, and cultures.

This insight feels a bit tautological: using social media helps you learn how to use technology. That's not a bad thing, however: exposure to communities with principles and goals of free digital use incentivizes community members to learn the machinations of how they work. Many Millennials fondly remember how they learned the basics of code by [engaging with early Myspace platforms](#), and many game influencer followers experience [video game hackathons](#) by following their favorite community streamers.

Social media has been spread worldwide for many reasons. Global platforms that connect and engage worldwide communities offer opportunities, among others, to learn, share, connect, and to skill-up people willing to participate in these endeavors. Through these knowledge developments, people are forever changed.

However, that's not the whole story. Clearly, if social media creates sparks of community, we need to grapple with the downsides.



What is challenging about social platforms - in particular, for the next generation?

Here are their answers.

Can be addictive and affect anxiety and mental health.

Many successful Social Media platforms incite user experiences that incentivize [‘endless loops of seeking’](#). Conveners mentioned how issues like bullying, social comparison, and keeping up with trends affects the health of many. Research finds that [deactivating a social media platform for four weeks might improve subjective well-being](#) by about 25–40% as much as standard psychological interventions: self-help therapy, group training, or individual therapy, for example.

Hold harmful consequences for underage users.

What can the next generation learn that we currently lack? Attendees mention how they need to be critical of the content they’re imbibing, and that Artificial Intelligence might decrease - or ramp up - its addictive nature. [The Surgeon General’s 2023 Advisory](#) isolates this issue, naming the issues of excessive and problematic use, issues of content exposure to marginalized users, and harms like sleep deprivation, online harassment, poor body image, low self-esteem, and higher depressive symptom scores’ for girls.

Lack education on creating - or engaging with - social platforms responsibly.

What does “responsible use” look like? The conveners mentioned how limited resources are available to help users manage these platforms effectively for themselves; they’re not treated with the potential danger they might amass. When we arrive in an unfamiliar city or hang with a collection of strangers; we must be responsible for our own, personal well-being. Why don’t we treat new digital spaces the same way? not with social media?



Inundate users with information that affects how they engage with the outside world by accepting toxic content and engagement, creating untrustworthy information, and concealing proper context.

When information spreads so easily on social platforms, sensationalist, toxic, and harmful content spreads as well. Conveners discussed many issues: AI algorithms that might be increasingly distanced from human intervention, cultural tools - like humor - that might make toxicity more palatable, and published online content that might hold legitimacy in public discussions, regardless of accuracy. Because content creators are separated from the consequences of their posts, the information can spread broadly and unchallenged.

Lower users' ability to think critically and creatively.

There's so much content, there's so many creators, there's so many insightful, harmful, and provocative takes. Conveners worry our ability to process social media decreases. They mention we only have so much brain capacity - of which most of it is given to social platforms. It takes time away from "productivity, personal relationships, education, and exercise..." and it lowers your critical thinking and creativity abilities.

Build increasingly siloed echo chambers and false replacements for physical community.

Who DON'T you listen to on social media? The conveners mention populations are separated by platform (older people on Facebook, younger on Tiktok, certain countries on their own local platforms), that the algorithms are skewed to find like-minded posts and posters, and that content consumption and creation is replacing - in minds and practice - sustainable community change.

Run on resource and human exploitation to maintain its growth mandates.

What does a social platform's growth mandate require? To continue data, processing, and technological infrastructure needs, the conveners mention ghost workers, like "International dynamic of exploitation of people in 'Global South' for the products and well-being of 'Global North' e.g. content moderation practices." They also mentioned a business model of 'engagement' that



incentivizes infinite spread and ‘infinite engagement’, and how some platforms trying to be better don’t sustain; “like [BeReal, for example...](#)³”

Manipulate decisions of populations and critical organizations across a litany of issues.

If social media is the new public square, what conversations does it allow and deny? Conveners discussed the prevalence of government lobbying by tech platforms, and machinations which support political decisions in support of increased profits, instead of well-being. What’s more, the next generation especially feels compelled to be a part of the conversation, even at their personal expense.

Accelerate harms of a platform with minimal consequences.

This might be obvious, but Social Media affects the rest of the world. Conveners expressed concerns about its ability to be used as a weapon. As a largely unmonitored space that accelerates competition, normalizes harmful relationship behaviors, incentivizes radicalization, aggrandizes body image issues, exposes online hate, conveners called out many ways that small, motivated collectives can accelerate harm.

The consequences are far-reaching, both on the individual and collective levels. Conveners had a lot to say about the changes whether they worked on tech products for decades or were young power users living in a world where using social platforms wasn’t a decision but a cultural mandate. Among the issues, one of the most worrisome was how it feels to pull ourselves from the fire - it’s too entrenched in how our world operates and grows.

However, our conveners are hopeful that these issues can be addressed. While thinking about the problems, and the power, of these tools today, they tackled the next question.

³ Note: Conveners mentioned that BeReal also does the same: they are [currently involved in a class-action lawsuit](#), where it allegedly “unlawfully captured, stored and used Illinois residents’ biometric data, including facial geometry, without consent.”



What are some ways in which the challenges could be addressed?

Here are their answers.

Incorporate population controls and digital literacy training.

[Australia recently passed the under-16 social media ban](#) - a powerful, or extreme, version of this intervention. In essence, these are required user interventions. Conveners offered this - and other options, e.g. building licenses to operate social media, mandatory digital literacy, limited timing of social media, and others. Who should instill the interventions? What should they require of platforms and the populations that use them? What interventions would feel like opportunities instead of punishments?

Build resources and access to fact-check sources.

The primary resource of any social media platform is the information it creates and shares. Therefore, the conveners see resources to check the information - verifying information, context markers, fact checking algorithms and institutions - as important tools to advocate for fact-checking mechanisms.

Involve trauma-informed, human rights, environmentalist, and/or design justice methodologies to design social platforms.

Is a focus on trust and well-being enough? Conveners mentioned a focus on additional principled methodologies: trauma-informed design, environmental design, design justice, human rights frameworks, and more. These methods offer different ways to center well-being - of users, and the planet.

Co-design with marginalized communities.

If willing users helped build technologies, what would they create? Conveners mentioned how people outside of the traditional design silos - those who see the harmful effects up close - can better integrate safety, accountability, and creative development.



Engage with, and be revitalized by, healthy, communal, physical spaces.

What do safe and healthy engagements with our physical spaces look like? What might other virtual spaces offer our population of users? Conveners mentioned how we need to invest in safer communities, when corrupt virtual spaces feel like the only alternative to many. They offered the ideas of mission-driven spaces, increasing social spaces, addressing the housing population, mission-driven social platforms, and using real world interaction to support digital citizenship. When digital worlds feel all-encompassing, it's important to remind users it isn't.

Require or incentivize identity verification.

What happens when people don't represent their true selves online? Conveners thought anonymity might invite nastiness. It might be worth connecting people to which they're close, to support users' protections.

Communicate the negative incentives behind social platform algorithms.

What more do we need to know? Conveners are intrigued about how social media, akin to Shock Media + News, seems to amplify historically low quality content. What draws people to the drama? What draws platforms to incentivize sensationalist content? What else do we need to know?



Require and/or incentivize regulation for social platforms.

Some conveners suggested the stick, instead of the carrot. Some noted that senior technologies should be legally liable for technological consequences. In lieu of some companies being ‘too big to fail’, others suggested ensuring companies are ‘small enough’ to be held to account. Still others mentioned how regulation works poorly when they have global leakages; how pockets of changes don't help companies get better. Also, regulation doesn't have to only be reflected on national levels, the option exists through public and community tactics, instead of only through sovereign nations.

Mandate separation between government and for-profit tech companies.

In the same vein, conveners also discussed the separation between government entities and tech companies, leadership, and platforms. To attendees, the government is slow to change, and high-tech developers are building relationships that don't have ‘the goals of regulation, privacy, and protection in mind.’ Separating the decision-making process, the financial and social benefits, and the enmeshed relationships of the two powerful stakeholders is worth investigating.

Reimagine business incentives.

What makes a social media business successful? Conveners suggested different incentive structures than relying fully on ad revenue; such as learning from value-based and community-based platforms. They also suggested learning from other sectors who created safer services, like ‘financial services, motor vehicles, and/or air travel.’ The incentives that require these businesses to survive don't have to wrestle out the benefits of existing society.

Reimagine ownership and decision-making of leading stakeholders.

What could a cooperative - or accountable - leadership look like? Who makes the decisions in these companies, what do they hold a share or stake in the company? Case studies like [OpenAI's organizational restructuring](#) center the reality that no matter the capabilities of these revolutionary businesses and their infrastructure, its people are charged with making decisions that create these aforementioned consequences. And people should be held accountable - to the users of their platforms.



No single person agreed with every single 'solution' offered here; many people believe many of these solutions aren't possible. However, it's critical that people felt comfortable enough to imagine together - what change might look like.
Because we all agreed - this problem begs to be solved.

[Want to join the conversation? Add to our insights by clicking here!](#)



Actions: A Strategy Proposed and Critiqued

“I'd like to see a summary of what was deemed promising, a challenge, and possible solution - focusing on the realistic possible solutions, that define value to the people in power.”

- Convener, Sarell Convening

Actions, Summarized:

Sarell offered two mechanisms for actionable feedback for next steps:

1. [Feedback on Sarell's Proposal](#); and
2. [Proposed Next Steps by Conveners](#).

First, we defined Sarell's evolving, multi-scope, multisector strategy for addressing the tech + trust troubles:

IF we support tech company's ability to center human well-being by increasing their ability to listen, facilitate transparency, support co-design, and deliver accountable change on feedback,

THEN We believe trust will be increased in tech platforms, companies, and leadership.

To test this assertion, **the conveners offered feedback:** on clarifying definitions; the consequences on tech businesses, users, and other critical stakeholders; by learning from other critical topics of design justice and trauma-informed design - or industry trends like environmental-social governance; and diversity, equity & inclusion.

They also offered ideas for practical next steps: from testing the strategy with willing companies; building more community relationships to advocate for change; to spreading the idea worldwide; and to continue its planned activities: research, convening, and strategic communication.

[Want to partner with Sarell?](#)



We take **outcomes** seriously

When many people convene, they impulsively offer this opinion:

We need to act. What must we do next?

If people come into a conversation fixated on one problem, they likely won't listen to experiences and debates that complicate that problem's perspectives. It's why we prioritize spaces where people listen and learn from each other. It also means, however, that Sarell has a special opportunity: **to act on the insights we've learned from our convenings.**

In fact, half of the convening was built to ensure every attendee could help us with Sarell's home-grown strategy: **Why not use these convenings to run it past our diverse collective of experts?** If we wanted to build a framework that integrates productive empathy towards well-being in every tech platform across the world, we wanted to make sure we anticipated as many obstacles as possible.

So, we asked:

IF

we build a standard framework for tech companies to **center human well-being** BY:

LISTENING to customers' holistic* tech experiences,
EXERCISING TRANSPARENCY on crowd feedback,
CO-DESIGNING product experiences, and
DELIVERING PRODUCTS that reflect changes customers want,

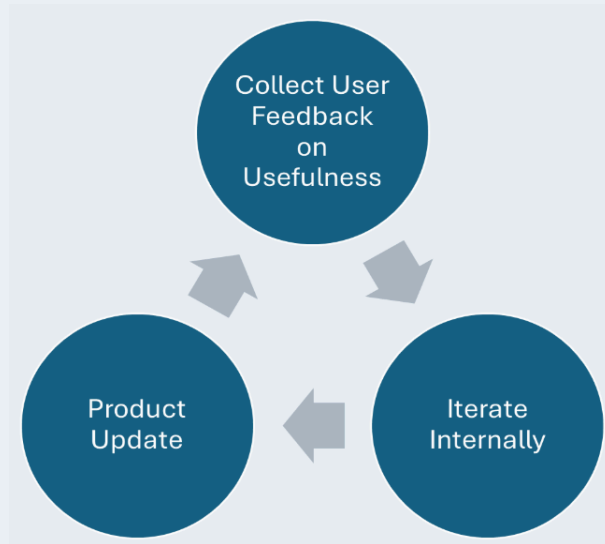
THEN

We believe **trust will be increased** in tech platforms, companies, and leadership.

Let's clarify what we mean by this strategy.

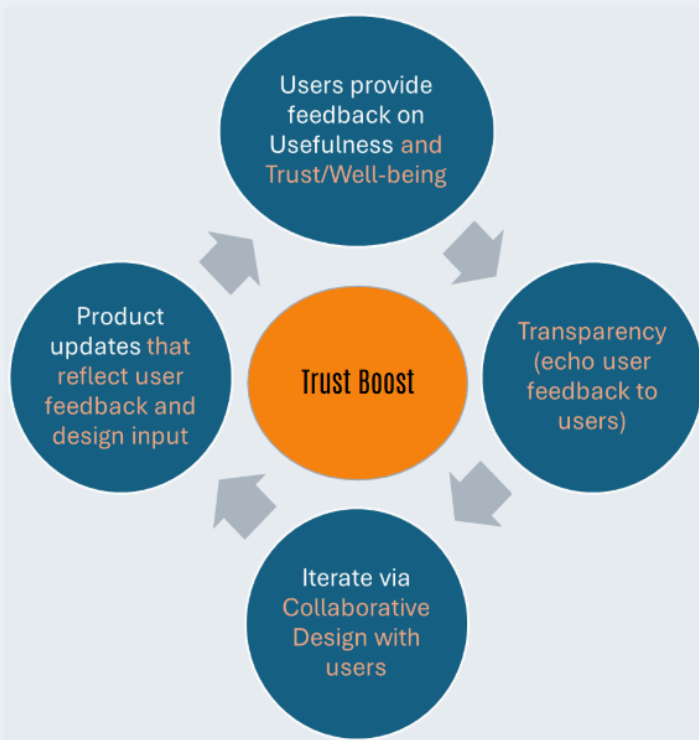


Traditionally, product feedback loops look roughly like the pattern to the right. Product teams release a feature, solicit feedback on the usefulness of the feature, iterate internally to improve the user experience, release feature updates and the cycle repeats. Traditionally, this feedback loop centers on the user's experience.



However, we're suggesting a more holistic approach to listening and responding to feedback during the product development lifecycle, like the figure below. What if leaders also took users' well-being into account as an important metric of success? Could this additional lens impact users' trust in the product or its leaders?

Here, at least four design principles are included to do so properly:



In addition to feature usefulness, users provide feedback related to their emotional, psychological, and cognitive well-being impacted by the feature.

User feedback is then coalesced and echoed back to users so users can acknowledge how accurate it is and also, hopefully, feel heard and seen.

Users can consent to collaboratively build the next iteration of the feature together with the feature team, and, finally

Product updates reflect the integration of feedback and collaboration with users.



Instead of prioritizing a seamless, productive, valuable user experience while engaging with customers, the priority here is ensuring that customers are part of the process to rebuild the platform's fidelity - and therefore, are stewards in rebuilding trust and healing their own well-being. It assumes that social platform companies - new and old, building and repairing their trust with their consumers - have an opportunity to show a new path: involve them, open the space of new ideas, and build things together - so the outcomes support the users' psychological, mental, and emotional needs, and trust is rebuilt in the company.

Sarell believes in our strategy so much, *we used our strategy to test our strategy*. What does this mean? We used two tactics: we presented a proposal to our attendees to see what holes they could poke in the strategy writ-large, and we drafted this report using the same feedback mechanisms to determine if the insights, methodology outcomes and overall structure of the report reflected the value of the strategy. Here's what they offered as feedback on the proposed approach to address issues with trust in tech:

Feedback on Sarell's Proposal

[The full list of feedback insights are available here.](#)

Here's what the conveners had to say'

Clarify terms and scope.

When we say we want to 'trust' companies, do we mean the same thing? Expand on the definitions, e.g. 'holistic', 'social', 'well-being', etc.? Conveners discussed how these changes worked best when the precise issues being addressed and approach was clearly defined. Before diving into the breakout discussion, conveners asked a few clarifying questions, e.g. "do we include Augmented and Virtual reality in this conversation", "what does well-being mean", "what does crowd feedback transparency look like", etc.?

Each core principle in Sarell's proposal - listening, transparency, co-design, and/or outcomes - has its challenges.

Sarell's strategy isn't simple. In its current form, it assumes each aspect is inseparable from the others. But what parts are truly necessary to rebuild trust? Conveners mentioned the difficulties - [and some offered solutions](#) - to integrate diverse feedback from "a lot [of] different extremes.." Will companies will be comfortable or willing to make algorithms and business models transparent, and will they actually reveal 'negative well-being' reports? What does it look like to actively implement one of these concepts, separate or together?



Companies don't have professional social-centered experts to guide them on the journey.

Companies promising to change your tactics - and actually doing them well - are very different tasks. Conveners mentioned how many tech companies have committed to a moral stance - only to rarely back up their commitments when the rubber meets the road. If companies don't have well-being experts directly addressing specific topics - be they from social work, political economy analysts, life cycle assessments, human-computer interaction specialists - with plans to support their labor, institutionalize knowledge, and further learn and grow with the work, trust will be lost - instead of regained.

Explain how the company and community benefit?

This concern was voiced by the conveners the most. Some attendees asked if companies will take easier paths to make money - like exploiting and obfuscating its data use, or by leaning on influencers and algorithms that spread misinformation and problematic engagement. Others mentioned that without the incentive to practice trust-building methods, it will turn into best practices - that rarely get practiced. How can trust and well-being be incentives instead of afterthoughts?

Clarify impact for users.

In the convening spaces, we offered a short, succinct example of a 'trust problem' in social platforms - [the visual beauty filter](#). The conveners were clear: take the suggested strategy to its logical conclusion. Who is it affecting? What causes the erosion of trust? Once Sarell works its magic, what's different? And, who should be involved to test this assumption? Making the problem clear, makes it easier to test.

Sarell could show us: how would this work on a platform we all recognize?

Conveners pushed even harder on the need for specificity. What would you change on Tiktok? On Instagram Stories? On X? What companies would actually be interested; early-stage, or smaller companies? While you're making it work, who can sing the praises for your strategy? Current, live examples convince people the ideas hold water; so build stories with which to collaborate.



Consider additional elements (e.g. safety, justice, others...).

Although some conveners might feel it has too many parts, others feel it needs more. Attendees mentioned that start-up tech rarely ever thinks about safety, especially at the outset.

It won't work unless a specific rights-holder is centered.

How do you reach the _____ community? The silent minority? The educators? The Government? Others? People offered a wide collection of potentially interested parties: those with large influence, and those largely affected. If the strategy will work writ large, Sarell must find and make a role for the most important rights-holders.

Sarell could learn from industry trends/strategies to build its future.

We are all subsumed by cultural trends. Today, tech is being plagued by global political restructuring, groundswells of community activism, the pressure to invest in - and protect from - artificial intelligence, and much more. Conveners mentioned how “the environment for adoption in the US is going to be challenging”, and asked how “ESG or DEI” might be tied to the work. In today’s tech space, how can this solution be built - and served - to a platform’s evolving needs?

In such a unique space like a Sarell Convening, the transparency, the dialogue, and the collaborative efforts speaks for itself. By learning about what brings people to this space, what they believe about tech in today’s world, and what can be done about it, we’ve built more than an evolving strategy of engagement - we’ve built a community, earnest to act on the insights they’ve offered for the next generation.



Convener's Proposed Next Steps

Sarell shouldn't be the center of this universe. There are countless different intervention areas, topics of focus, and debates to be had about the next steps. Fortunately, these lists offer the start of suggested next steps: on local, to community, and global levels, how we can start rebuilding trust in tech again.

These insights offer critical ways to think about the rest of the world. So, what do we do next? We asked the conveners:

What three outcomes would you like to see from this convening? Consider quick and easy outcomes, and also ones which might be slow and difficult!

[The full list of suggested next steps are available here.](#)

Here's what the conveners had to say'

Get buy-in and feedback from (at least) one company.

Find a partner! Many conveners mentioned that strategies matter, but evidence of success matters more. Such an opportunity might not only hone the vision of Sarell, but offer an opportunity to increase the standard of technological development for social media programs worldwide.

Refine and test the strategy and its underlying concepts.

Conveners really wanted to see the blueprint improved. They asked: what would a 'mock example' look like? What's different between common product design practice, and your approach? What would focus groups, engaging specific expert reviewers, and doing additional research reveal? What ethical principles are missing? Make it clear, so it can practically address these core problems in the tech industry.

Spread the idea worldwide.

Spread the word! Conveners want to hear the idea spread to others, in order to learn about where this platform might actually be useful. Attendees mentioned from 'young people, elderly... education systems and corporate meetings...' The solution might come from in-house technical machinations - or, it might come from demands: "Making noise about this publicly... demand these things from the platforms - needs to come from the people."



Hold more convenings.

Though we met to discuss trust, tech, and well-being, people obtained so much more. Conveners met insightful and interesting people, deeply appreciated the bright minds in the space, and felt positivity and happiness from the endeavor. These spaces serve one of the core human needs our world fails to deliver: simply, community-building. What's next?

Build a community.

Conveners suggested another alternative: the development of a sustained community centered on Sarell's topics of interest. They were interested in obtaining the stakeholder list, building spaces for the conveners to engage with each other, and connecting with aligned partners. Through this, they could continue the relationship themselves, and including specific partners with unique roles: from "nonprofits working on behalf of vulnerable populations", to "workers who are not protected or empowered within the industry," to "parents, kids, educators, technologists, policy makers, academic and social scientists" to engage and direct the mission.


Research additional topics and data surfaced during this event.

Clearly, there's much more information to collect, analyze, and present on this topic. Conveners offered different digital mechanisms that support trusting relationships: "Reddit's upvotes and downvotes seem to keep the content closer to factual and the discussions more productive. YouTube lacks a repost function so content seems less likely to be promoted beyond those likely interested. LinkedIn tries to restrict multiple and anonymous accounts so users are less likely to post irresponsible content." Platforms, communities, consequences, and outcomes, hold lessons on what reliably builds - and destroys - trust. It should be collected and spread.

Keep people updated on next developments.

Attendees ask: as we proceed, how can we stay involved? They expressly asked to "see a summary of what was deemed promising, a challenge, and possible solution - focusing on the realistic possible solutions, that define value to the people in power," and to know "what Tammarian will do and the company will do in the future." Sarell will also offer dynamic feedback on what comes from the convening: talks, research, collaborations, and more!





One of the great failings of any convenings is how everyone feels the limitations as soon as they leave. The event is a great space to feel and harvest these rich insights, action items, and communal sentiment, but once everyone leaves the event many facilitators fail to follow up with any tangible actions or potential outcomes. That's why it's so much more important that this group, discussing and prioritizing trust-building in tech, continues to build on the work listed here.

In general this community agrees much more can and should be done to rebuild trust in tech platforms. By learning more, connecting together, iterating on the strategy, and spreading the concepts, Sarell aims to build a movement that makes our social platforms the tools that best serve our communities, instead of the prevalent contributors to the erosion of our collective consciousness.

[Want to organize with Sarell, or test + build Sarell's strategy?](#)



Conclusion: Our Key Takeaways

Fundamentally, Sarell believes tech plays a vital role in how we live, work, connect and take care of ourselves and each other. It has the reach and capacity to perpetuate harm and goodness at a rapid pace. It can significantly contribute to our collective well-being across the world.

We also believe to devise long-standing, practical methods to activate this vision requires on-going dialog and collaboration with the communities impacted by and working towards building the solutions. By co-creating solutions through these convenings, we conclude the value of this process on its own merits as well as a method tech companies may leverage to amplify the goodness tech can offer.

In November and December 2024, we held two convenings with ~20 people each. Our goal was to gather insight and perspectives from people of a wide range of ages (16-80), experiences and backgrounds on the intersection of trust in tech and well-being.

We offered attendees an opportunity to:

- actively engage with others intrigued by this topic;
- expand networks;
- [learn and gain additional insight](#);
- share experiences and ideas; and
- help devise [next steps for Sarell](#) and [others who wish to remain involved](#).

Based on our goals and the feedback we've received from attendees, these endeavors were successful. Most conveners walked away ticking most of these boxes, especially expanding their perspective and widening their network. In fact, we heard many attendees leaving this conversation motivated and inspired.

Though the event was a favorable experience, we heard the challenges with the event which included not enough time to go in-depth and in some cases, a longing for tangible next steps.

When ideating, implementing, and reflecting on the experience, we made a few additional observations'



We're hardwired to find connection.

These conversations revealed many ways we try to find ways to build relationships with each other. When one person talked about their struggles learning how to use TikTok, others offered help learning how to use the platform. When young participants were particularly quiet during the conversation, older participants invited them into the conversation and asked questions about how tech affects their lives.

This is the magic of facilitated spaces when someone feels welcome, they build opportunities for others to do the same. It's a microcosm of a virtuous social cycle: warm beginnings beget warm relationships. It's why we'll keep iterating - and sharing - our convening strategy to changemakers supporting trust in tech.

Conveners gladly came face-to-face with their ignorance.

Have you heard of the [Dunning-Krueger Effect](#) ? It's a cognitive bias we've all fallen for one time or another where we overestimate our knowledge or ability in a specific topic. How do we solve this problem? Part of the answer are convenings like these.

We heard attendees literally change their minds in-conversation, when offered new logic and insights in the convening spaces - a feedback mechanism many social network platforms struggle to standardize. We heard senior researchers, who've studied tech social structures for years, learn about which platforms high school students find attractive and obsolete. What's more they welcomed the challenge and overall experience. What else don't we know, and what change will we incite when we learn it? That's why Sarell's collective insights will continue advancing trust in tech.

Safe spaces offer opportunities to dream.

It's hard to characterize what it means to flex our creative muscles. Learning about what matters sometimes requires us to feel safe enough to suggest a different future. Many of us don't live in those spaces: our families or places of work, and friends and communities hold expectations that keep us in a status quo.

With engaged and motivated strangers, we might voice what truly matters to us and possibly, take tiny, essential steps to reach them. That's why offering actionable steps to rebuild Trust in Tech is so essential to our ethos.



Sarell's Next Steps

“What’s Next?” was the most common question we heard from conveners after the events. Based on the insights from the convenings, other collaborations, and the interdisciplinary research on the topic, here’s where we’ll be directing our work.

Host further convenings.

One of the questions posed, especially by young attendees, was “When is the next convening?” Others shared how valuable it was to be among so many people outside of their typical circle and learn different perspectives. Being that this was a valuable experience for both Sarell and the majority of conveners, we will hold future convenings on the topic of trust in tech and our well-being. These convenings will aim to:

- Continue practicing and refining a collaboration model Sarell and attendees largely found valuable;
- Create space to make new connections and debate, share and learn with people from a wide array of ages and experiences; and
- Leverage our collective intelligence to surface new ideas and existing efforts to explore.

[Interested in joining us?](#)

Research existing strategic models.

We’re aiming to build applied research for technological, movement, and policy strategies exploring the following:

- The effectiveness of existing feedback models in tech, and other industries, at building trust and well-being among users or communities.
- Current mechanisms used to monitor and measure well-being⁴ among users.
- Underlying existing and potential incentives for social platform creators that align with Sarell’s mission.

[Interested in researching with us?](#)

Partner with organizations.

We will seize the opportunity to partner with non-profit, for-profit and education institutions to further evaluate, exercise and test [Sarell’s proposed model](#).

⁴ Conveners offered valuable resources, [like this article](#), to compare and analyze well-being tools.



[Would you or your org like to partner with us?](#)

Explore grassroots movements.

What existing grassroots movements are underway that align with Sarell's vision? This is an opportunity to investigate, align, contribute to and/or learn from efforts underway that are committed to amplifying the benefits of social platforms and tech in general, ultimately improving trust and well-being among users around the world.

[Inform us!](#)



Who contributed to the experience?

This report is only possible through the insights and active participation from attendees and the efforts put forth by the convening team.

We want to give special thanks and acknowledge those who contributed.

Note: We have only included those who have given us written consent to include their names in this report.

David Asabina	Leonardo Gerritsen	Jon Pincus
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Tilman Dingler	Lucas Pierce	Jacob Wooliscroft
Zoe Fritsch		
Tammarrian Rogers	Meridian Napoli	Pierce Otlhogile-Gordon
Orla Cronin	Eleanor Webster	Alice Blackwell

[Want to be a part of the community? Sign up here!](#)



We're always committed to new ways to learn, share, and convene better, in search for those ideal conversations. If we connect well, then maybe we'll build the trust so many social platforms might be lacking.

Through those connections,
We build trust.
That's Sarell's commitment.

If you want to share your thoughts or reactions, get involved or follow this work, [click here](#).

Learn more about our work at sarell.tech.

[Reference List](#)

