

Why Customer Trust is Vital to Your Brand

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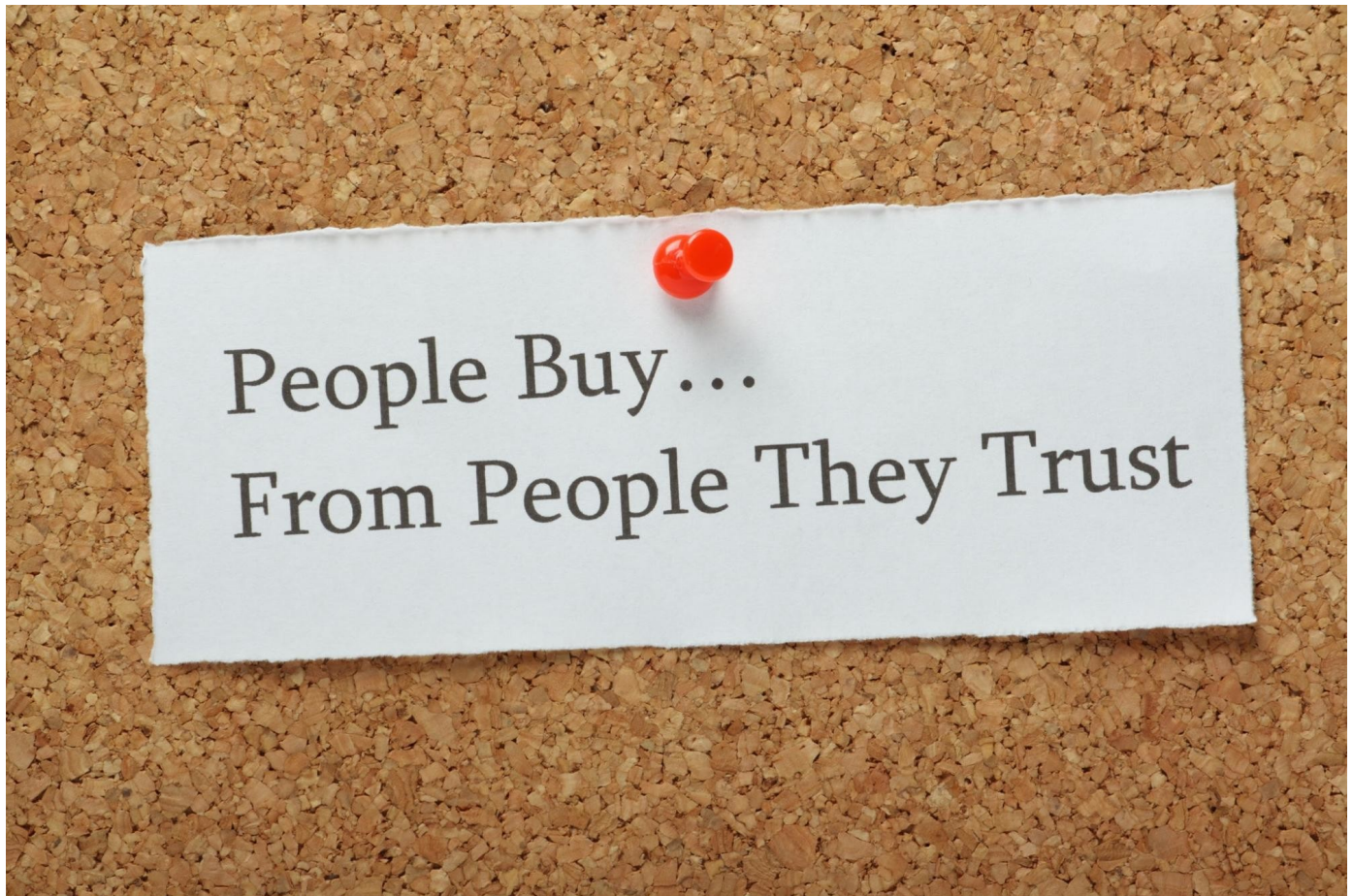
With the increasing access to information on the internet, customer expectations are higher than they've ever been, and the competition is fierce. Customer trust has always been important for a brand's growth and success, but this new environment makes it absolutely vital.

In addition to nurturing lifelong customers that will consistently choose your brand over another, consumer trust also gives your business a little leeway if problems arise in the future. No matter what may happen, earning the trust of your customers ensures your brand can survive.

So, what is customer trust and how is it earned? This isn't a new concept, but it's an area in which many businesses fail. The transparency that leads to trust is about more than including the standard copy about why your brand is better than the rest — you have to truly care about your customers and their problems.

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What Is Customer Trust and Why Is It Important?



Generally, customer trust happens when you have a deep understanding of your customers' needs and have a valid solution to their problems. You provide them with relevant information and products or services that cater to their unique needs, rather than touting the benefits of choosing your brand.

Ultimately, this trust is about putting the customer first in your content and your products or services.

The reason trust is more important now than it's ever been is a direct result of the bombardment of information and options available today. Consumers no longer need to choose between only a few brands. They have virtually limitless options and [access to reviews, testimonials and marketing tricks](#) that can give them an idea of what you have to offer.

Why Customer Trust is Vital to Your Brand

Because of this, marketers need to look beyond the competitive pricing, features and benefits, and direct their attention more toward the history and legacy. Customers have become **empowered and skeptical**, so they're looking for the whole package — one that will not only give them a product or service that's reliable, but also a brand and customer service that they can count on now and in the future. Ideally, your product or service will address their needs at the time, but in the event that it doesn't, they want to know you'll be there to make it right.

How Is Customer Trust Created?



Why Customer Trust is Vital to Your Brand

As we know, the idea of building consumer trust isn't new, but it is difficult to achieve. Just making promises about your brand is no longer enough, since consumers are looking for actions that back up your claims. This has a big influence on loyalty as well, since customers are more likely to return to the brand that gave them the experience they wanted the first time around.

Authenticity is key. Authenticity is the one thing that transcends industries, generations and cultures, since it's the universal thing that all customers are looking for. It's about being transparent and giving the customers what they expect, whether in products or service, and delivering the values of the brand.

Of course, authenticity and transparency are useless for the pure sake of it. You need to be providing content that demonstrates an in-depth understanding of your customers' needs and expectations, so you can provide them with relevant, valuable solutions. Superlatives, false claims, half-truths and other marketing hype that can't be verified instantly reads as false, so focus on positive information of substance and value to your customer.

Also, if you're falling below expectations in some way, it's vital to learn from it and find a way to improve. While it may be difficult to accurately measure the value and performance in terms of customer trust, you can set standards for your brand to ensure that each and every aspect of your business is accountable and staying on track. This not only makes your trust tangible for your audience, but it also keeps your business living up to the image you're putting out into the world.

Why Is Customer Trust Hard to Earn?

There are many reasons trust can be hard to earn, especially for certain brands, but skeptical and savvy customers are the main reason. More and more data breaches and misuse of data are dominating the headlines, so it's becoming more difficult for consumers to immediately trust a brand and be open to new or unproven brands.

Why Customer Trust is Vital to Your Brand

Fortunately, this issue is easy to combat if you're truly putting the customer first. A brand must be clear about its purpose and values, as well as being transparent with policy and procedures. Perception is everything, and a brand that offers the truth is more likely to have good impressions with potential customers.



There's been a shift in power between the business and the consumer. In the past, the brand had the power and customers had to accept what was given. Now, consumers have a broad outlook and understand more about what a company should and should not be, so they're less forgiving of missteps. Customers want a brand that shows its customer loyalty and demonstrates shared values, so an effective strategy would be to align your brand's values with the information you'd gladly offer to the public.

In addition, transparency is often forced upon brands, since consumers can find dirt if they look hard enough. In all likelihood, questionable ethics and practices will leak in other media and be found by consumers, leaving a brand looking disingenuous and sleazy, which

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is worse than having no trust at all.

Handling Breaches of Trust

As hard as it is to earn the trust of your customers in the first place, it's even harder to get back following a breach. That's why having solid trust within your customer base is the only way to bounce back and survive the fallout.

Brands that offer a product or service that meets or exceeds customer expectations and delivers benefits that connect with customers is key, as well as an overall company culture that demonstrates a willingness to learn from mistakes. Gone are the days of media spin, since the best way to approach a mistake in the current climate is by owning up to shortcomings and showing a determination to move forward.

If handled properly, a small mistake or breach of trust can even provide an opportunity for growth. A brand that gracefully addresses a mistake and has an effective plan to recover can gain some positive exposure.

Conclusion

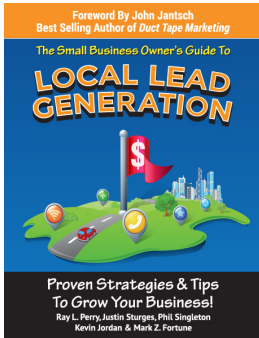
While customer trust may sound like a swift strategy or “silver bullet” for new leads and business growth, it's anything but. That trust is difficult to earn and keep, and is far more than just a marketing strategy.

The authenticity and transparency necessary to garner real customer trust comes from honest communications, solid company culture and treating the customer as you would want to be treated, rather than just lip service.

Though it's clear that consumers *want* trustworthy brands, their general trust isn't high. This can be an area of opportunity for new or developing brands, or brands looking to revamp their image and surge ahead of competitors. Whether we like it or not, the power is with the consumer, so it's more important than ever to put their needs first for business success.

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