



# 7 HIDDEN TRUTHS OF TRUSTED BRANDS

What It Takes to Build a Trusted Brand

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What It Takes to Build a Trusted Brand

BRANDTRUST

A brand isn't a logo, tagline, or ad campaign. It's a mental model, or heuristic, that lives in the consumer's mind. Trust brings this heuristic to life. With each new positive experience, brand trust grows and hardens, becoming deeply embedded, remarkably durable... and surprisingly human.

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*"Earn trust, earn trust, earn trust. Then you can worry about the rest."  
—Seth Godin*

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The best brands are like human partners. Competence, caring, commitment, and compatibility of values are what customers want and expect—just as they would in any human relationship.

Among the world's most trusted brands, these seven truths inform nearly every business decision, from sales and service models to marketing campaigns to customer experience design. Once you embrace these truths and make them part of your brand culture and DNA, you'll become the (human) partner consumers crave.

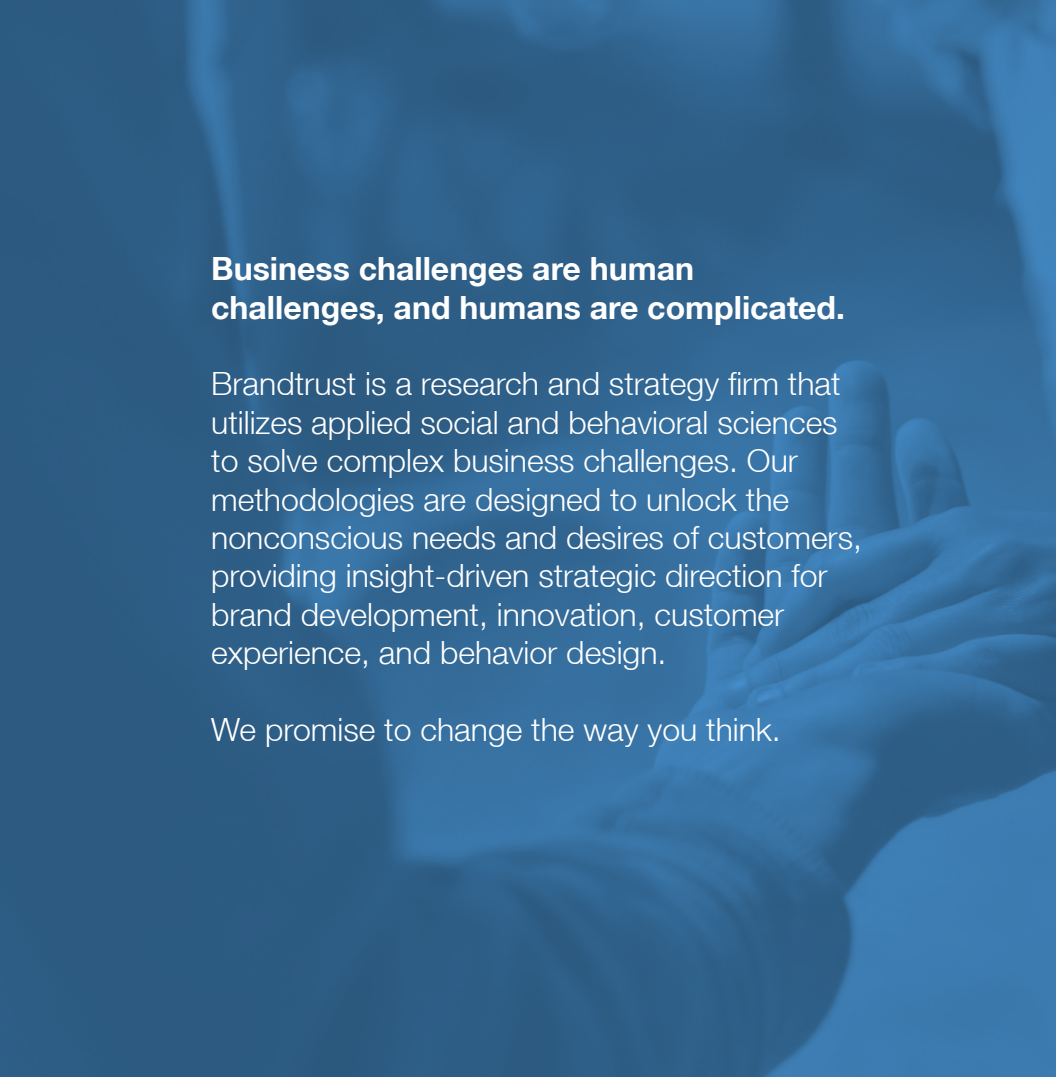
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## BRAND TRUST: 7 Essential Truths

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- 01. Vulnerability Opens the Door for Trust.** A brand must take risks to show customers it has a stake in the relationship. For example, by owning up to its flaws, "flawsome" brands demonstrate empathy, humility, and personality—the very human traits that endear it to consumers.
- 02. Trust Must Be Earned.** Consumers don't trust freely. They need to see competence and willingness in action. Brands must take every opportunity to show what they're made of (strengths), what they're committed to (values), what they can do (capabilities), and what they will do (follow through).
- 03. Brands Must "Have My Back".** Consumers prefer a caring, reliable brand that shows a selfless concern for its customers (by way of a lifetime hassle-free guarantee, for instance) and that clearly has their best interests at heart.
- 04. Promises Must Be Realistic and Consistently Kept.** When a brand consistently fulfills its promises, it makes the brand-consumer relationship seem effortless. Competitors fall by the wayside as the trusted brand becomes the go-to brand, and choosing it becomes a no-brainer.
- 05. Integrity and Accountability Are Essential.** Sharing a set of values satisfies the human need for belonging. When a brand adheres to its principles and beliefs—especially when difficult or risky—it proves its authenticity and worth.
- 06. Trust Requires Reciprocity.** Trust is a necessary emotional exchange for both the brand and the consumer. Their mutual participation creates a sense of equality and partnership.
- 07. Honesty & Transparency Are Key.** A brand's trustworthiness is born, and subsequently nurtured, on the nonconscious level. Transparency is a proactive measure brands can take to ensure consumers feel confident in their choice. Trust cannot be faked.

To learn more about our original research into trusted brands, please contact us at [info@brandtrust.com](mailto:info@brandtrust.com).



**Business challenges are human challenges, and humans are complicated.**

Brandtrust is a research and strategy firm that utilizes applied social and behavioral sciences to solve complex business challenges. Our methodologies are designed to unlock the nonconscious needs and desires of customers, providing insight-driven strategic direction for brand development, innovation, customer experience, and behavior design.

We promise to change the way you think.

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