

Social media strategies beyond content plans: Improve the trust equation

 By [Mike Saunders](#)

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Social media is the first internet-based platform that has facilitated a people-to-people connection. It provided a structure to build a personal presence online that could be used to build personal relationships, broadcast to our entire network and, importantly, it helped us build that network. Over time social media and the internet has begun to replicate many of the human interactions that we do offline.



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All of these advances in social media have made it easier to build relationships online. Brands are able to go beyond content distribution and towards relationship building. In building a brand persona on social platforms we are able to leverage these platforms and their technology to build a relationship with our customers. At the very least, we can build the impression of a good relationship by leveraging social media.

The currency of relationships is trust

At the heart of building relationship lies the currency of relationships – trust. Relationships are built on trust and destroyed when trust is broken. So, our role as a brand on social media is to build trust with our audience, which in turn leads to relationship building, brand love and advocacy.



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There is a simple formula for trust, developed by Charles H. Green, which I have tested and applied to a number of consumer brand and B2B environments. Each time it helps to highlight the gaps in a social media strategy and what we need to focus on to build more trust.

$$\text{Trust} = \frac{\text{Credibility} + \text{Reliability} + \text{Intimacy}}{\text{Self-orientation}}$$

The four variables

Credibility has to do with the words we speak. In a sentence, we might say, “I can trust what she says about intellectual property; she’s very credible on the subject.”

Reliability has to do with actions. We might say, “If he says he’ll deliver the product tomorrow, I trust him, because he’s dependable.”

Intimacy refers to the safety or security that we feel when entrusting someone with something. We might say, “I can trust her with that information, she’s never violated my confidentiality before, and she would never embarrass me.”



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Self-orientation refers to the person’s focus. In particular, whether the person’s focus is primarily on him or herself, or on the other person. We might say, “I can’t trust him on this deal — I don’t think he cares enough about me, he’s focused on what he gets out of it.” Or more commonly, “I don’t trust him — I think he’s too concerned about how he’s appearing, so he’s not really paying attention.”

To apply this formula in a simple way, score your brand, or ask our customers to, on a scale of 1-10 on each of the four variables, then calculate your score. Identify the areas you can improve on and develop tactics to improve your score.

ABOUT MIKE SAUNDERS

Mike Saunders, CEO of Digitlab, is a renowned Digital Business and CRM Consulting expert acclaimed for his unique ability to blend technological expertise with insightful business strategy. His leadership in digital consulting, combined with his roles as an international keynote speaker and author, has solidified his reputation as a visionary in the digital realm.

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