

## Three Things Every Brand Should Be Doing to Boost Authenticity

**Authenticity.** As a marketer, you'll have seen a whole lot of this word circulating around the sector over the last couple of years. But now is by no means the time to let it become diluted amongst the sea of marketing trends that come and go so regularly. Take our word for it: Honesty will never age.

Because in a world that has become so saturated with sponsored posts, paid ads, and celebrity endorsements – the consumer eye for authentic, real content is clearer than ever. We're able to spot an honest and genuine post from a perfectly packaged one. From the good, the bad, and the plain ugly (**remember Subway's Tiger Pig Dance? Yikes**) – we've pretty much seen it all.

**It's time to get real.**

We're now looking for brands that make us feel good about where and who we choose to buy from. **Authenticity** defines this positive experience – which is why it's crucial to be open about your values, transparent about your policies and connect with your audiences in a truly authentic way.

After a global pandemic that led to significantly more time spent on our phones, users are now spending an average of 4.8 hours a day scrolling through apps – with TikTok usage alone soaring by 90% from 2020 to 2021. Consumers behaviours have shifted from simply 'taking your word for it', to needing transparent messaging delivered with genuine purpose in order to really invest in a brand.

**In fact, recent studies show that two thirds (67%) believe that the world has become less authentic.**

So, to form that crucial connection with their audiences, brands need to constantly consider how their messages are being perceived on the ever-evolving world of social media.

**A survey conducted by Spark that questioned what audiences look for in brands showed that authenticity came out as the strongest requirement from Gen-Z, millennials and Gen-X.** That being said, with Gen-Z being the most active demographic on social media, it's also super important to keep in mind that purpose, personality, transparency and diversity were also at the top of their agenda – all of which fall under the authenticity umbrella of 'trust'.

The Google E-A-T (Expertise, Authoritativeness and Trustworthiness) characteristic is a perfect example of how it loves authority just as much as we do. An integral part of Google's Search Quality Evaluator Guidelines, E-A-T is a way for the search engine to judge content on its value to readers. Then, it'll decide where to rank it. According to its guidelines, Google great content should help users, be created by an expert on an authoritative site that is updated regularly. Essentially, Google wants people to be able to access high quality, useful information at the tap of a button – so 'trustworthy' content instantly gets a better ranking than articles lacking in purpose.

Trust leads to loyalty, and loyalty leads to a strong customer base who keep coming back for more... Even if there are alternative options available. With that in mind, let's break down three of the things every brand should be doing to boost their authenticity and connect with your audience using the power of digital marketing.

## **Align your mission with your messaging**

You might be walking the walk, but can you talk the talk? Aligning your brand messaging with how you portray yourself on social media is crucial for ensuring your customers' experience meets their expectations. A positive reputation is golden when it comes to attracting new potential audiences. People want to put their money in to brands that truly care about their customers, so demonstrating integrity by being honest about your values and reflecting that in everything you do (mission, values and policies) is the first step to being seen as a truly authentic brand.

**Brand inspo:** A great example of this would be ASOS, which claims to be a “Judgement free zone where we encourage everyone to be whoever they want to be – no questions asked.” Its brand image certainly reflects this inspiration for young people to embrace diversity by hiring a range of models from different backgrounds, sexual orientations and body shapes for their ad campaigns and social channels. Given the fact Gen-zers prefer to see ‘real people’ as opposed to filtered versions in branded content, it’s no wonder ASOS is so successful at connecting with its target audience.



## Communication (and customer) is King

This probably won't come as much of a surprise to you – but when it comes to buying into brands, customers love to feel like they're talking to real people... Not robots. Groundbreaking, right? But here's the thing: Gaining insights into what your audience is saying and engaging them in conversations is key for brand authenticity.

You need to be there to listen, ask questions, welcome feedback and value their opinions. Keep that communication going by actively replying to messages and setting aside time to read reviews. Go ahead and thank your customers for the positive comments but be equally as forthcoming with the negatives – and address them quickly. By showing that you're taking full responsibility for your brand, you're also demonstrating that vital 'human' aspect which audiences respect and ultimately connect with. Holding yourself accountable. Being real. *That's* authenticity.

**Brand inspo:** Not just great for middle aisle bargains (waffle maker? Why not!), Aldi is owning the consumer listening. Look on its Twitter and you'll see tongue in cheek comments back to their followers and quoted tweets from those who match their distinctive wittiness, as well as all complaints being addressed promptly and

gracefully. The result? An engaged audience, who want to be in on the bargain banter.



## Be faithful to your brand

So, you have your brand mission and consumer listening covered. Great! But with so many different ways to communicate with audiences (blogs, website, e-shots, multiple social platform), are you keeping consistent with your brand tone of voice and key messaging? The process of seeing initial ideas into final concepts can present a certain challenge for brands as it's far too easy to become inconsistent in how your messages are being conveyed.

This can be a risk for when it comes to how your consumers see you, because any contradictions or clashes in your tone of voice can immediately lead to lose trust in your brand. The solution? Focus on developing robust brand guidelines that everyone in your team can be confident in referring to. Set out clear do's and don'ts, outline your mission and define how you want to speak to your audiences. That way, you're all on the same page (literally). This will also apply to the way you speak to your customers across all social media channels, ensuring your brand 'personality' is consistently uniform. If you're confident in your brand and back up everything you stand for across all digital content – then your audiences can be, too.

**Brand inspo:** Innocent Drinks is nailing brand consistency. From the quirky descriptions on its products to the genius social posts you have no doubt reshared on your LinkedIn, to the personable customer interactions that have people chuckling on the tube – you can instantly spot an Innocent tweet or graphic. And that's because the know who they are and they stick to it, no matter the format of communication. Simple.

Here's your yearly reminder that the clocks are going forward tomorrow.



**Keen to learn more about how you can reach your target audience in a truly authentic way? Feel free to in touch: [loveus@lucre.co.uk](mailto:loveus@lucre.co.uk).**