

3 tips on how to become a more authentic brand

By Matt Kleinschmit

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Marketers today love to talk about authenticity. From cause marketing programs like Dove's Real Beauty campaign to sassy social media efforts that attempt to [show a brand's personality](#), many companies try to project an image that's [more real and human](#).

Beyond being a buzzword, however, **authenticity is critical in business today**. Thanks to social media and smartphones, customers can easily learn whether a product is truly effective or whether a brand's claim is unsubstantiated. [Today's empowered customers](#) see through deceptive marketing tactics, and they increasingly seek to do business with companies that they perceive are trustworthy – and this is especially true of the emergent [Millennial](#) and Gen Z demographic segments.

As this week's articles show, building authenticity requires a rethinking of traditional marketing practices, rooted in a deep knowledge of customer needs, behaviors and motivations. To project a more authentic brand, consider these three tips.

1. Identify your core values.

In an article for *Entrepreneur*, brand-building expert Denise Lee Yohn examines the role of authenticity in [the staying power of Levi Strauss & Co.](#)

She says the company embraces authenticity by tying its marketing activities closely to its history and values. "Levi's is authentic—and fiercely committed to maintaining and reinforcing that authenticity," Yohn writes. The company's advertising, for instance, invokes its deep legacy, while its social media communications help raise awareness for causes it cares about.

"Levi's recognizes that trend-following may be the simplest way to attract attention and raise short-term revenue, but following someone else's lead usually causes a company to stray from its own brand identity," says Yohn. "It thrives on its identity as an original American brand in an increasingly global marketplace. It represents individuality and rebelliousness while appealing broadly, and it offers accessibility in an industry that thrives on exclusivity."

To be a more authentic brand, align your marketing efforts with your history and values. – @deniseleeyohn.
[**\(CLICK TO TWEET\)**](#)



2. Engage with your customers.

"Authenticity is about self-expression," writes Mike Ellery, senior vice president of creative at Sparks, a global brand experience agency, in an article for [the SAP Business Innovation blog](#). "It goes beyond the real-world benefits of your product or service to give customers a reason to feel good about their decision to do business with you."

So how do you ensure that customers feel good when they buy from you? Ellery says engaging them in a dialogue to exchange ideas is key.

"Understanding what your audience likes and dislikes allows you to address them on a more personal level and create a tighter bond," Ellery elaborates. "Listening to your customers is the first step to understanding their wants and

needs on a deeper level."

Engaging with customers is key to building authenticity – @Sparksmarketing's Mike Ellery . ([CLICK TO TWEET](#))



3. Drop the corporate jargon.

Micah Solomon, a *Forbes* contributor, says a “stilted, overly formal” communication style creates a barrier between brands and their customers. Companies need to speak like a human in order to build authenticity.

“Customers in today’s marketplace favor a straightforward, down-to-earth, even slangy style of communication from most types of business with which they interact,” [writes](#) Solomon. “Excessive formality is hazardous to your business because it clashes with the personal style of your customers, millennials in particular, making your brand appear out of touch or even condescending.”

A straightforward, down-to-earth communication style helps build authentic customer experiences – [@micahsolomon](#). ([CLICK TO TWEET](#))



Conclusion

Creating an authentic brand takes time, but as these articles show, knowing what your brand stands for and understanding your customers at a deep, fundamental level are a great starting point. [Customer intelligence platforms](#) that allow you to continuously engage with and learn from your target consumers can help ensure that your marketing activities align with their needs and communicate your intended messaging in a relevant fashion. Embracing this authenticity can help companies to [build genuine relationships with customers](#)—an important step towards winning their business for the long term.

