How User-Generated Content Helps You Build Trust and Credibility

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Authenticity is a game-changer in building brand trust and credibility. In an era where consumers value the opinions of fellow consumers as much or more than polished marketing campaigns, user-generated content (UGC) increases your brand messages' perceived authenticity. UGC functions as social proof that enhances your brand's reputation.

In this article, we explore how your business can encourage audiences to create content and how to incorporate it into your marketing strategy.

Related: **The Beginner's Guide to User-Generated Content**

The importance of user-generated content (UGC)

User-generated content is content specific to your brand that has been created by customers, fans or others who share their experiences with your brand. It's also known as consumer-generated content, and social media platforms are among the primary outlets for photos, testimonials and quick video reviews of a product or service.

Because it has been generated by actual users, UGC is more authentic and trustworthy than branded content. This high level of authenticity not only reflects on the product or

service but also increases overall brand trust and credibility among prospective customers.

Two different 2017 surveys found that UGC influenced the purchase decisions of 90% of all consumers, with authenticity being especially important to millennial customers. More recent data shows that more than one in three U.S. adults relied on customer reviews and always read them before making purchases from local businesses.

How user-generated content benefits brand trust and credibility

User-generated content showcases your brand more genuinely than polished advertising and marketing materials. This authenticity aids customer trust.

Opinions and experiences of real customers are social proof of a product’s or service’s performance. Published on social media channels, they act as peer recommendations and become one of the most powerful tools for influencing purchase decisions.

UGC can foster a sense of community among your users, making them feel connected and involved in the brand. User-generated posts and comments also support your business’ SEO rankings and increase engagement on social media.

How to encourage customers to create UGC

Develop ways to create touchpoints that encourage customers to share their experiences. Online contests and photo challenges work well. Offer incentives like discounts or exclusive offers to those sharing content, and make it easy to access reviews and share images.

Reward clients by sharing and showcasing UGC on your brand's channels or your website. Seeing their content shared can be a huge motivator for contributors. Acknowledge loyal creators and engage with them to recognize their contributions.

Related: If You're Not Using This Type of Content in Your Marketing, You're Missing Out

How to leverage different types of UGC

Different types of UGC offer different opportunities for your brand:

- Feature customer reviews or testimonials on your website, product pages and social media to boost credibility. Respond to all reviews to demonstrate the importance of feedback.
- Sharing customer-created social media content on your channels adds authenticity to your feed. Branded hashtags let you collect and curate UGC without becoming overwhelmed.
- Unboxing videos and product tutorials are among the most popular forms of UGC. They help potential buyers understand what to expect from a product and build trust in its quality.
- In-depth UGC, such as customer-written blog posts or case studies, provides valuable insights and detailed testimonials for customers looking for more specific information.

Best practices for leveraging UGC to build trust

Following these best practices will ensure that you maximize your UGC and build long-term relationships with your followers.

Always seek permission before sharing or reposting user-generated content, and give credit to the creator to show respect and build goodwill. Choose UGC that aligns with your brand values and aesthetics. Low-quality or inappropriate content could reflect badly on your business.

Showcase a diverse range of customers and viewpoints to appeal to a broader audience and foster inclusivity. To maximize the power of UGC for your brand, integrate it across all of your platforms, such as social media, email newsletters and even adverts.

Two examples of successful UGC campaigns

UGC can work well for businesses of any size. Here are two examples of household-name brands that successfully integrated content shared by their users.

Example 1: GoPro's #GoProFamily campaign

Action camera manufacturer GoPro launched the hashtag #GoProFamily to build a sense of community among users and showcase the camera's capabilities. At the time of writing, 15,000 users were posting about the hashtag on Facebook. Instagram is showing more than half a million posts.

Example 2: Starbucks' #RedCupContest

Starbucks has a track record of celebrating seasons and

holidays. Launched in 2016, its #RedCupContest challenged customers to create their own red cup art and share images to create a flood of user-generated content. Red cups still feature prominently in the company's end-of-year marketing. In 2024, a reusable red cup giveaway encouraged sales and created a buzz on Instagram.

Common pitfalls to avoid when using UGC

Just as there are best practices, there are also a few pitfalls to avoid when you're leveraging UGC.

Your brand team needs to moderate inappropriate or offensive content to avoid damaging the brand's image. Negative content, on the other hand, creates an opportunity to engage with clients to address the issues professionally and demonstrate your commitment to improving your brand.

Avoid over-commercializing UGC on your marketing channels. Much of its appeal lies in the fact that it can be a little imperfect. Remain balanced when you're using UGC to create real connections.

Related: 10 Easy Ways to Upgrade Your Digital Branding With User-Generated Content

Measuring the impact of UGC on brand trust and engagement

To assess the impact of UGC on your brand, you need to track likes, shares and comments to understand audience engagement and response. Using branded hashtags allows you to gauge volume and sentiment quickly.

Consider surveys to ask your audience for feedback on how UGC influences their purchase decisions. Tracking conversion rates

will allow you to see how effectively UGC is driving consumer action.

User-generated content is a powerful tool for building trust, establishing credibility and connecting with your audiences. By encouraging customers to share their experiences, brands can enhance their reputation and encourage customer loyalty. Implement UGC strategies thoughtfully and consistently to see long-term benefits.

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