The Discipline Behind Enduring Brands



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Since I first stepped into the category of hair supplements 8 months ago, I’ve been struck by how the modern media and ecommerce environment makes credibility easy to imitate, and difficult for consumers to evaluate.

A combination of AI, automation, and low-barrier platforms have made it simple for any company to harness the buzzwords, claim the right credentials, and show up on the same stage as brands that spent years earning theirs.

The noise is overwhelming and customers end up paying the cost of trying to figure out which company is backed by something real.

For brands that are doing the actual work, this trust problem can be a burden, but also an opportunity to cut through, educate, and differentiate through their credibility.

Here’s what I believe that looks like in practice.

Closeness, not reach

A marketer’s instinct in a crowded category is to think about how to increase reach. The more important question is how close you can get to the people you serve.

Real proximity means deep customer listening to understand not just what people buy, but what they’re experiencing: what’s failed them before, and what they’re afraid to say out loud.

It means being embedded in the expert communities where your product is evaluated and recommended, and letting your customer’s voice be the primary input into your strategy, not an after thought.

This closeness makes honesty possible. People don’t want to be dazzled; they want to be respected. Being honest about real outcomes like what your product can and can’t do, for whom, and under what conditions, is how you earn the right to be heard.

It requires backing up your claims, answering questions without defensiveness, and engaging in the communities where your customer actually talks—not just broadcasting information to them. It also means showing humanity and vulnerability. If your voice could have been written by anyone, or generated by anything, then it’s already costing you.

Set the standard, but don’t grade your own homework

Setting your own standard can be murky. You have to have the creativity, conviction and discipline to create a new definition of good, and then stick to it. A clear purpose is

the best filter. We often ask a simple question internally: *Does this help us solve the problem we exist to solve?* If the answer is no, it's a pass.

That level of discipline becomes even more important where competition is real and it can be tempting to chase what others are doing. Differentiation only works if you are willing to defend it. You have to be clear on what makes you distinct, and then consistently reinforce it, even when it limits you. It might not happen overnight, but this kind of constraint is what builds belief over time.

Anyone can claim efficacy, or say their product is backed by science. The harder thing is building a standard that's rigorous enough that you'd let someone else evaluate it.

Third-party certifications, clinical partnerships, professional endorsements reflect a clear choice to be held accountable by someone at arm's length. Embrace the organizations that don't drink your Kool Aid.

External validation is critical in a category where anyone can come in and say anything. If you define yourself by that trust standard, you create an honest and clear signal for your customer.

Hold your core values, but push the limits

The best teams that I have worked with have a lot of room to move, but also know what's non-negotiable. They adhere to their values, their quality standards, and their customer promise. Then push everything else.

Recently, we pushed into a new audience that required a significant change to our creative, but our standards stayed firm. Because the team held to its core values, they had the confidence to stretch into new territories.

There's always tension between discipline and disruption, and

what is proven versus what is possible But that tension is where the best work happens.

The brands that will lead through this moment of breakneck pace aren’t the ones shouting about being authentic. Instead, they’re the ones doing the hard work of holding true to clear and validated standards, while staying close to their customer.

These brands will earn their legacy by being as real as they promised.

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