



HOW Designers
and Creatives
**Cultivate
Brand Trust**

HOW TO BUILD BRAND TRUST THROUGH DESIGN

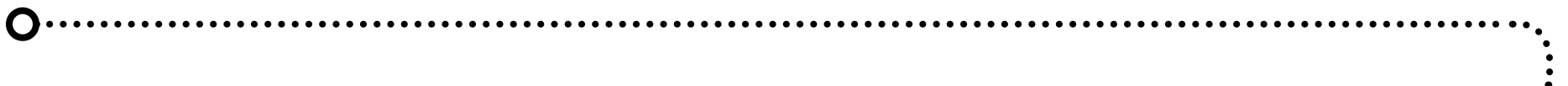
Winning and retaining consumer trust is how brands grow, thrive and achieve longevity. But these days, trust is at a premium. [The Edelman Trust Barometer](#), which measures trust in various institutions, found massive declines in overall trust between 2020 and 2021.

In particular, consumers' trust in media and government (two institutions that help to vet false and misleading claims) has declined substantially. Trust in traditional media dropped eight points in the last year to [just 53%](#), the lowest level since Edelman started tracking the metric. Similar collapses in trust around government and social media platforms have left many consumers assessing the veracity of those organizations and the information they disseminate.

Against this backdrop, brands have more responsibility than ever. While people have lost faith in politicians or journalists to do the right things, [86%](#) [still expect](#) CEOs and brands to speak out on issues of public concern. In a world of declining trust, brands must find ways to establish and maintain trust or risk falling short of these widely held expectations.

Brand trust is at the heart of many key metrics that modern brands value. With [81% of consumers](#) saying trust in a given brand is their No. 1 consideration, trust is a key determinant of brand perception. Trust impacts consumer engagement, satisfaction and loyalty.

Responding and measuring up to this level of social and cultural responsibility can be daunting. But with so much at stake, designers and creatives can lead the way in cultivating brand trust. From visuals to user experience to humanizing data, design teams are uniquely positioned to build and reinforce trust in their brands and forge deeper, more honest relationships with consumers.



HOW TO HUMANIZE DATA



Our world is becoming more data-driven every day. Gartner projects that 90% of all corporate strategies will mention or incorporate data and analytics by 2022. A growing number of companies [now employ a Chief Data Officer](#) to put data at the center of their corporate structure. There's no doubt that data can and should drive informed decisions, produce valuable insights and help brands to better understand their customers. However, data on its own isn't enough.

An increasingly data-driven world requires tools to help consumers and brands understand data in an accessible, simple way. This is where designers and creatives can thrive. Bringing accessibility to complexity has always been a core principle of design. It's a role that goes far beyond the creation of charts or infographics.

Like a photograph, data can provide an intricately detailed look at a single moment in time. And the presentation of that data can determine how much weight is given to that single moment. The role of design creatives is to provide depth and context in how they represent the data.

When the audience is decision-makers, designers can visualize data in a broader context to show how decisions reverberate over time or across different global markets. When consumers are the audience, designers can showcase data personalization, creating accessible ways to scale down data to the needs of an individual. In every case, design has a powerful impact on how data is understood and put to work across the decision-making process.

WHERE TO SPOT IT

If you're looking to see data humanism in action, go straight to the source. The [portfolio of design agency Accurat](#) is full of great examples, which makes sense, since it was founded by Giorgia Lupi, the leading voice of the data humanist movement.

HOW TO CREATE CLARITY

Designers need to make a brand's values and mission crystal clear. For digital products, consider rethinking the layout of information in a more straightforward way or streamlining navigation in accordance with consumers' changing needs. Someone who lands on your site or app should know what your brand is all about immediately. If not, trust can erode quickly.

Clarity also applies to your consumer offerings. Design shorter paths to knowledge or services you provide — and never make that journey confusing. The easier it is for customers to get what they need from your product (like information or a check-out button) the more likely they are to see your brand as honest and forthright. Complicated paths to purchase — or to further information — often leave the impression that brands are trying to obscure something or mislead. The principles of good design cleanliness, user focus and clarity support increased trust.

Customers may also wonder how products are made or how they work. Bringing this information front and center visually empowers and educates the consumer and builds the foundation for trust.

WHERE TO SPOT IT

The [Glossier](#) brand is built around simplifying beauty product shopping. Designers led the way by creating a clean, bright space that makes products the stars and offers a simple path to purchase.



HOW TO CLOSE KNOWLEDGE GAPS WITH DESIGN

We're living in the midst of an information crisis. From COVID-19 to national politics and beyond, consumers are drowning in a sea of false and misleading information. This is coupled with declining trust for what were once viewed as sources of reliable information. The age of misinformation and disinformation has left consumers with serious knowledge gaps — and brands that fill them can cultivate trust quickly and reap long-term benefits.

When it comes to informing consumers, content teams are often on the front lines, creating blog posts, eBooks, email newsletters and other resources to deliver messages and information to consumers. However, in our increasingly visual world, design teams play a critical role in bringing complex topics to life. Data visualizations, tutorials, videos, infographics, data sheets and FAQs all are essential parts of new content products, allowing consumers to easily understand and interpret complex information in ways that copy alone cannot. Collaborating with design teams to simplify data and make it accessible and available democratizes information and keeps consumers informed and aware.

WHERE TO SPOT IT

The direct-to-consumer pharmacy [Capsule](#) has to educate and inform its customers not only about its own services but about the medications they receive. Clear, concise information design is essential, and Capsule does it well.

HOW TO USE NEW INSIGHTS

Design is an interactive process. This is especially true in digital design that users interact with on a regular basis. Designers have the opportunity to continue learning and improving over time by incorporating new user data and feedback into their brands, products and experiences. Continuing to adapt design and UX to better meet the needs of consumers will help them feel like your brand is responsive, open and engaged with their needs — just the type of qualities that engender long-term trust and loyalty.

Design teams have access to tremendous amounts of data and feedback, including heat maps, product surveys and behavior tracking. They all help to identify problem areas and challenges. In addition, customers often provide feedback on their own, submitting product and service comments through “contact us” forms and other open channels. While it’s tempting to push back on negative feedback, design’s ultimate role is to meet or exceed users’ needs and expectations. An easy way is by being open to continuous learning and feedback.

WHERE TO SPOT IT

UK Retailer [Very](#) uses data from user site activity to customize its design. From personalized messages to products it puts center stage, data and design work hand-in-hand to enhance customers experience and build trust.



HOW BRAND IDENTITY IS BRAND TRUST

Trust is inherently tied to brand identity. The visual manifestation of a brand communicates its values and brand promise to consumers. It also conveys trustworthiness, especially when encountered in a new setting. Consistent branding tells consumers they are safe and extends the experience to new locations or features that share the brand's visual identity cohesively. Whether it's a Disney Park visitor setting foot on a Disney-branded Cruise ship for the first time, or a Taco Bell diner picking up a newly released meal, the brand identity conveys the brand's established trust and reputation.

Designers maintain brand identity. Creative teams must develop the identity and visual voice of a brand, and then interpret it across every surface, platform and product to create a unique, unified experience. In this way, designers also disseminate brand trust. Consistency and cohesiveness of design are the front line of the battle to extend that trust to new products and experiences.

WHERE TO SPOT IT

In a [Morning Consult poll](#) the U.S. Postal Service ranked as the most trusted brand in the U.S., beating out top contenders like Google and Apple. From a design perspective, gaining brand trust required translating the post office's reputation for reliability and efficiency to its digital platforms and putting top services like package tracking and stamp pricing front-and-center.



READY TO CULTIVATE TRUST THROUGH DESIGN?

Against the backdrop of declining trust in media, government and other institutions, designers and creatives have a unique opportunity to cultivate trust in their organizations. When done right, consumers receive clear brand values, humanized data and ease of navigation on your app or website. These characteristics reinforce your brand as a trustworthy source of information and offerings — and sets you apart from the competition. Sign up for **HOW Design TODAY**, our bi-monthly newsletter, on our website. It hits on these and other pressing topics for creatives across industries.

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