

## 43 Simple Ways to Build Trust in Your Website

If your website does not create a sense of trust in your visitors, all your efforts will be in vain. Your online business will not succeed. That's the bad news. The good news is that it is very easy to create and build trust in your online visitors. Below, I have listed all the techniques used by the hundreds of websites I have helped launch. If you have additional techniques, please add them to the list.

As the old saying goes, you have only one chance to make a first impression. Building trust cannot be achieved by one single action. Trust is achieved by hundreds of little things you do throughout your website that, when taken together, give readers a sense of honesty, legitimacy and stability.

The other bit of good news is that few website owners focus on building trust in the minds of their visitors. If you do it well, it can become a real and sustainable competitive advantage.

Here are 43 simple actions you can take to get started.

1. Trust is built by lots of small actions on every page of your website.
2. Your website design is the first impression. Make sure it is professional and relevant to the subject matter.
3. Navigation must be intuitive. If visitors can't find what they are looking for easily, they will question your competence in providing what they want.
4. Make the website personal by giving it its own tone and voice. People buy people.
5. Follow the HEART rule of creating online content. (Reminder: HEART stands for Honest, Exclusive, Accurate, Relevant and Timely.)
6. Use language that is appropriate to the audience. It will build empathy.
7. Regularly add new content to your site. It shows that the business is alive and kicking.
8. Review all links. Doubts will quickly form in your visitors' minds if links don't work or, worse still, take them to error pages.
9. Good grammar and spelling matter. Errors give the impression of sloppiness and carelessness.
10. Don't make outrageous and unbelievable claims, like "Read this blog and you'll be a millionaire by the end of the week." People are used to scams, get-rich-quick schemes and rip-offs.

11. Publish REAL testimonials and third-party endorsements. Try to always use real names and link to websites where possible. Some sites show images of letters sent by happy customers.
12. Publish case studies about customers you have helped, who use your product, etc.
13. Don't put down, curse or insult competitors. It's unprofessional. It is better to offer an objective comparison of competitive services or products.
14. Focus on building your long-term reputation, not on making quick sales.
15. Write articles for humans, not search engines.
16. Make your 'About Us' page personal and comprehensive. It plays an important part in making visitors feel comfortable that real people are behind the site.
17. Publish your photo or the photos of the key people involved with the site. Again, this reinforces the fact that there are real people behind the screenshots.
18. Clearly identify who is behind the site. Nothing creates more suspicion than a site that tries to hide the identity of its publishers.
19. On the 'Contact Us' page, provide an email form, telephone number, fax and address of the company. In Europe, it is a legal requirement for sites taking funds, but even sites driven by advertising will benefit from openness.
20. Provide a telephone number that people can call and talk to a person.
21. Provide Web addresses linked to the website domain, not addresses from free webmail services such as Hotmail and Gmail.
22. Don't lie to make money. The most common way is to write a glowing report about a product or service to earn affiliate revenues. It is very short-sighted to lie to visitors to sell them rubbish. They'll won't come back or, worse still, they'll actively condemn your site on forums and blogs.
23. Think carefully about reciprocal links. If your site is about organic food and you have links to Party Poker, people are going to question your integrity.

24. Think carefully about the adverts you display on your site. Ensure that they are relevant to your subject and audience.

25. Be explicit when you are being paid to endorse a product or service. An advertorial is fine as long as it is transparent. Paid-to-post is corrupting the Web and will experience a user backlash. I don't read websites that accept payment for posting.

26. Write and publish your privacy policy. Be clear about what you will and will not do with any personal data you collect. State that you adhere to all data protection laws. Make it easy to read and don't use legal gobbledegook.

27. Write and publish a security policy. State what measures you take to ensure that all transactions are secure.

28. Ensure that you have a security and privacy policy which is linked from the footer on every page. Make the link more prominent on all the order pages.

29. Clearly publish your guarantee. I would recommend making it a 100% money-back guarantee if possible.

30. Clearly state your refund and returns policy.

31. Piggyback off reputable brands. If you use PayPal, put the PayPal logo on your site. If you have a merchant services account with a major bank like Citibank or HSBC, put its logo on your site.

33. If there are well-known industry associations for your subject, join up and put their logos on your site.

34. Put photos on the website of the owners, publishers and/or team. Let visitors know there are real people behind the business.

35. Put images of the credit cards you accept on every page of the order process.

36. Use the words 'secure website' whenever you try to get any information from visitors, including newsletter sign-ups, forum input and payment.

37. On every page, state, "We take your privacy and security very seriously." Link the statement to the security and privacy policy.

38. Remember, reputations take years to build and seconds to destroy.

39. If you are selling a subscription, offer a low-cost, entry-level option. This could be a one-day taster, 'a week before billing starts' or a monthly trial.

40. Use a high level of security when processing credit cards. Make sure you make your clients aware of all the steps you are taking.

41. Don't send credit card information or personal details over the Internet unencrypted. Tell your customers that their data will be encrypted.

42. Only ask for information from customers that you really need. For example, for an email newsletter sign-up, the only information you REALLY need is an email address, so that is all you should ask for.

43. If you have pricing on your website, make it transparent. I recently went to buy a book which was advertised for \$10. When I checked out, they added tax, post and packaging, and the final bill was \$19.50. I didn't buy it as I felt they had deliberately tried to mislead me.

You can't do too much to build trust. Most of it comes down to common sense and good business practice. To ensure that you are continually improving your trustworthiness, every time you go to a website, ask yourself whether you trust it or not. Then ask yourself why you have formed the opinion you have. Continually try to learn what makes a site trustworthy or untrustworthy and implement the relevant changes to your site.

If people trust you, the revenue will follow!

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