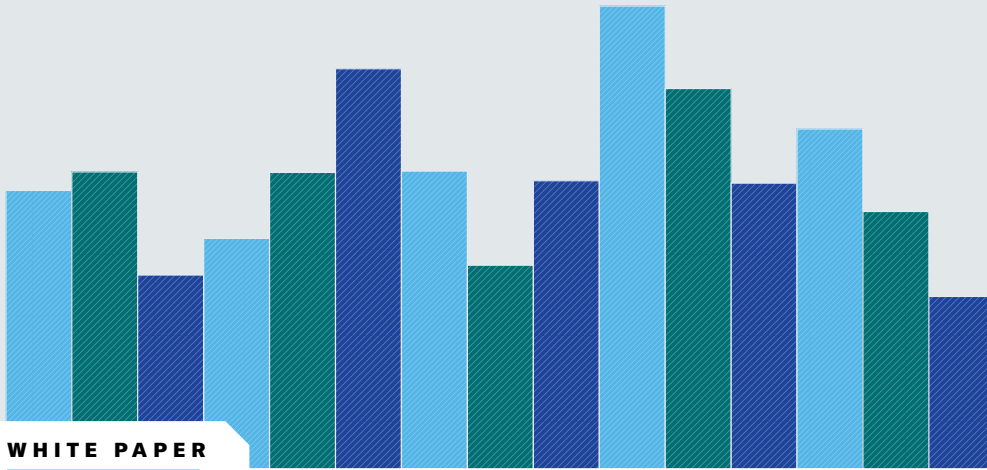




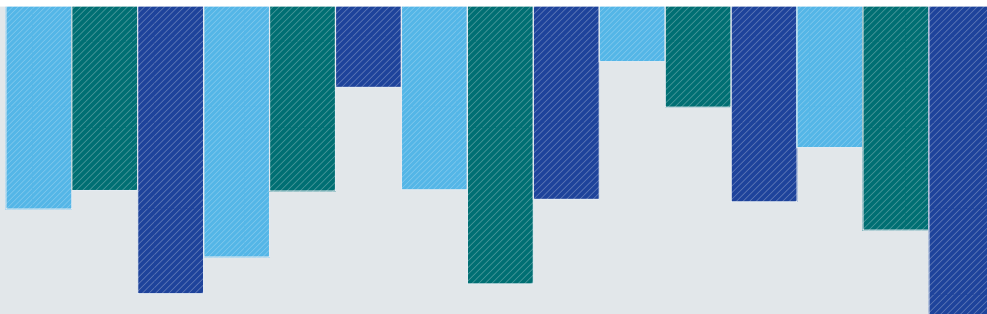
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WHITE PAPER

Building Trust to Combat the Spread of Misinformation about Corporations



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Businesses today face enormous challenges—mismanaging misinformation is just the latest. We at the Boston University [Questrom School of Business](#) are proud to sponsor this white paper from Harvard Business Review Analytic Services on truth, trust, and tech.

Questrom research is foundational to ideas pertaining to these themes. Questrom faculty conceived the concept of the “inverted firm,” which describes how value creation moves from internal employees to external communities, an idea that won the [Thinkers 50 award](#) for best digital thinking globally. The article, “[Pipelines, Platforms & the New Rules of Strategy](#),” has become a *Harvard Business Review* must-read in the categories of strategy, business model innovation, and platforms and ecosystems. Our research presented in “[Free Speech, Platforms & The Fake News Problem](#)” argues for business model and regulatory reform. We invented the “in situ” data right that will be introduced in the latest Digital Markets Act in the European Union. This data right gives users new power over how firms can use their data and helps smaller firms compete more equitably against the platform giants.

This scholarship is not alone. According to Stanford University research, 11 Questrom faculty rank among the top 2% of all scientists in terms of global influence. We believe in research with impact. Our [Digital Business Institute](#) conducts foundational research on digital platforms, health care, customer engagement, supply chains, and fintech. Our [Susilo Ethics Institute](#) produces results on ethics-enhanced competitiveness, improving human judgment, and ethical leadership.

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We encourage readers to use this report as a practical guide to understanding the challenges of managing misinformation and the challenges and opportunities of truth, trust, and tech. We plan to continue exploring the ways business schools and other institutions are transforming their organizations to manage these issues. We invite you to [explore with us](#) the opportunities and challenges discussed here.

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Susan Fournier
Allen Questrom Professor and Dean
Boston University Questrom School of Business



Marshall Van Alstyne
Boston University Questrom Professor in Management
Professor, Information Systems

Building Trust to Combat the Spread of Misinformation about Corporations



Fake news has been blamed for its role in undermining democratic processes and hurting the self-esteem of teenagers, but corporations are also feeling its effects. Misinformation about organizations can be direct—such as false claims about products or about corporate policies—and the repercussions can lead to stock price drops or revenue hits. Roberto Cavazos, an economics professor at the University of Baltimore, estimated that the spread of false and misleading messages online alone cost the global economy \$78 billion in 2019.¹

But the impacts of misinformation can also be indirect, causing prospects and customers—businesses or end consumers—to lose their trust in, and positive sentiment toward, institutions in general and individual companies in particular.

Research into the impact of misinformation suggests that those companies that make a concerted effort to earn sustained trust from their constituents may enjoy greater business outcomes. But combating misinformation and building trust among customers and other stakeholders is far from a simple task, particularly for any one company on its own. In today's world, businesses face greater threats that false information will spread about them, as well as significant obstacles to combating those threats and maintaining the trust that would cause those stakeholders to doubt the validity of a false claim.

In other words, the defenses people and organizations attempt to build up against fake news also invariably undermine belief in legitimate information outlets. “There are so many sources and so much disinformation and untrustworthy information out there that people are a little more careful, cautious, and guarded, not just toward sources of information, but also

HIGHLIGHTS

In today's world, **businesses face greater threats that false information will spread about them**, as well as significant obstacles to combating those threats.

Because misinformation impacts businesses on so many levels, **combating it is also a multipronged process**.

Perhaps the **most powerful tool** organizations have to ward off the ill effects of mis- and disinformation is to **foster trust across their constituencies**.

ultimately toward people and institutions and businesses,” says Stephen M. R. Covey, cofounder of CoveyLink and the FranklinCovey Global Trust Practice, a Salt Lake City, Utah-based management consulting firm.

Compounding the challenge of combating misinformation is the changing nature of the corporation. The ascent of platform companies, which use technology to create value by bringing customers and producers together, has likewise facilitated inverted business models, in which value is created by users rather than employees. Even for organizations that do not fit the inverted model, more demand is now created externally on social media. The loss of control that comes with that shift from internal value creation to external makes fertile the opportunity for misinformation to spread.

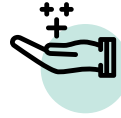
Organizations, however, can recapture the trust of customers, partners, and other stakeholders. They can deploy strategies to respond to false narratives, protect their reputations, and battle back against misinformation. They can adopt policies, practices, and data models that reflect the empathy, logic, and authenticity required to foster trust among customers, partners, and other stakeholders when it comes to organizations’ motives and actions. But doing so takes strong senior leadership; sustained commitment to trustworthy practices; and an openness to new ideas, regulations, and data models in order to combat misinformation and win the customer confidence that supports positive outcomes and greater growth.

“Trust is the foundation on which other measures of competitive advantage tend to build,” says Helio Fred Garcia, adjunct professor at New York University and Columbia University and president of Logos Consulting Group, a New York City crisis management firm. When trust is present, he says, “you’ll see the stock go higher. You’ll see employee productivity increase. You’ll see greater ability to charge premium prices for premium-quality services or products. Those have a tangible demonstration on the bottom line.”

The High Cost of Misinformation

Business analysts widely agree that engendering trust among employees is key for retention and recruitment, and for achievement of long-term business goals. Reputation damage through misinformation or disinformation—intentionally planted falsehoods, cancel crusades, and troll attacks on social media—erodes that trust. Disillusioned workers may also pass along negativity to customers, hurting the top and bottom lines.

Indirect misinformation has also cost businesses money in many ways. “Businesses tend to think about first-degree impact only,” such as a boycott, says Rachel Happe, founder of Boston-based workplace consultancy Engaged



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Organizations. But there are many layers to the effect that indirect misinformation can have. For example, a second-degree impact can easily occur because news algorithms magnify a small PR incident into a larger issue. A third-degree, sector-level impact comes when others in the industry are affected, such as other pharmaceutical companies feeling reputational repercussions when one is falsely accused of unsafely rushing vaccine development. A distrustful society represents the fourth degree. “It’s all fueled and compounded by algorithms that are designed to prompt reaction, and companies have a tangle of complexity to address,” she says.

Then there is safety. Logos Consulting Group conducts annual crisis simulations for the U.S. subsidiary of a global company, testing its ability to respond to events such as product contamination or weather damage to a facility. In 2022, the firm chose a new theme centered on widespread reopening of workplaces as corporate and government strategies involving the pandemic evolve. “They said, ‘What we’re worried about is in the reopening, people are going to come back into the workplace,’” says Garcia. “‘They’re going to be carrying this divisive political framework, and they are mobilized and activated to be contentious about it. And we worry that there’s going to be violence in the workplace.’ I think that is significant.”

Misinformation, which is unintentional, and disinformation, which is deliberate, have formed a distrust troika with so-called fake news for many years, and corporations have never been immune from their corrosive effects. But advances in the ability to amplify their impact via social media, the rise of inverted corporations, the proliferation of engagement-focused algorithms, and the loss of gatekeepers are what make today’s climate of accountability feel different, experts say. The inverted corporations behind platforms such as Facebook and Twitter—firms where value is created by users rather than employees—are protected from responsibility for this content via Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act,



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so they are free to turbocharge algorithms to support a lack of accountability for what people tweet or post. Traditional media, challenged to compete in this environment, have succumbed to various degrees, from creating more sensational clickbait headlines to swinging further right or left. Add to this mix an awakening among consumers when it comes to how companies are using their personal data, and the result is a decline in generalized trust.

Heightened Suspicion about Believability

Rising distrust has led to a sea change in how people take in information, and heightened suspicion about its believability. According to the 2022 Edelman Trust Barometer, public concern about fake news is at an all-time high, cited as a worry by 76% of global respondents.

Compared to misinformation in the past, “what we have in this contemporary period might look like a difference of degree, but it’s such a degree of magnitude that it really becomes a difference in kind,” says Sarah Kreps, a professor at Cornell University and a nonresident senior fellow at research group The Brookings Institution. “It’s like the difference between nuclear weapons and conventional weapons. You can say a nuclear weapon is just a larger conventional weapon, but it’s at such a magnitude larger that it really does become a different type of weapon.”

David Rand, a professor of management science and brain and cognitive sciences at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) who studies the impact of misinformation, contends that research has revealed the great power of exposure to influence perception. “If you get exposed to the same claim enough times, it starts to ring true,” he says.

Yet problems with misinformation go beyond repetition. Researchers Jennifer Kavanagh and Michael D. Rich of RAND Corp., a nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization, wrote in a January 2018 research brief titled “Truth Decay” that increasing disagreement over facts combined with a rising flood of false news has made it harder to even assess truth. The consequences of truth decay include erosion of civil discourse, polarization, disengagement, and alienation.²

People are also more accepting of claims that align with, rather than challenge, their beliefs, MIT’s Rand explains.

So, if people have a negative impression of a company, they are more likely to believe derogatory information about that organization because it confirms their views, he adds.

Research at MIT has also shown that fake news travels faster than truth. One March 2018 study that specifically studied Twitter, called “The Spread of True and False News Online,” found that it took a truth approximately six times as long as a falsehood to reach 1,500 people and 20 times as long as a falsehood to reach a cascade depth of 10. Researchers found it was humans, not bots, that were more likely to spread falsehoods. The analysis also suggests the high value humans place on novelty was a factor in driving this activity.

Moreover, the public knows it’s being manipulated. Users of social media and the internet have awakened to the role algorithms play in influencing what they consume, with discussion focused largely on the negatives. The same is true of the digital breadcrumbs companies collect and use about consumers. Together, use of black-box algorithms and hidden use of data have sowed additional wariness in a public already primed to be suspicious of the “other.”

“If people don’t know what to trust and they don’t trust anything, it’s sort of a ‘guilty until proven innocent’ rather than ‘innocent until proven guilty’ problem,” says Cornell’s Kreps. “That [assumption] creates an even steeper challenge for companies compared to a previous era where they were fine until they proved otherwise.”

The end result for corporations is that whether they serve consumers directly or serve companies that are run by people, their task to earn trust and battle misinformation in order to optimize their opportunity for growth has become increasingly difficult.

Calling in the Cavalry

As government, media, and social media platforms played outsized roles in fostering this zeitgeist, business leaders may find it appealing to look to them first to set things right. After all, a stable economy depends on a well-functioning society.

The American public is split over the roles they feel government and technology companies should play in restricting misinformation, but the trend is getting clearer—they want big institutions to step in and start to do *something*.

In 2021, 59% of 11,178 U.S. consumers responding to a Pew Research survey wanted technology companies to take steps to restrict false information online, even if it limits freedom of information, up from 56% in 2018. **FIGURE 1** The cry for the federal government to do something along these lines grew even louder; 48% of respondents in 2021 wanted it to take steps to restrict false information online, up from 39% three years earlier.

On a practical level, governments have long struggled to stay ahead of ever-faster technology evolution. Balancing competing interests—in this case free speech rights versus interest in ensuring accuracy—is another perennial challenge. Multiple bills continue to be introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate to amend or revoke Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act. Some recent bills include the Health Misinformation Act of 2021, which seeks to revoke the act’s liability shield for health-related misinformation during public health emergencies; the Justice Against Malicious Algorithms Act, which would end civil immunity for platforms that “knowingly or recklessly” use an algorithm or technology to recommend content that contributes to physical or severe emotional injury; and the Algorithmic Justice and Online Platform Transparency Act, which focuses on transparency in the use of personal information collected to maintain algorithms and moderate content. Some of these legislative efforts have already stumbled in the face of First Amendment issues. Meanwhile, according to the 2022 Edelman Public Trust Barometer, governments lag all other institutions—business, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and media—in respondents’ confidence in their ability to find solutions to societal problems.

But there actually may be some common ground in Washington when it comes to bringing social media titans



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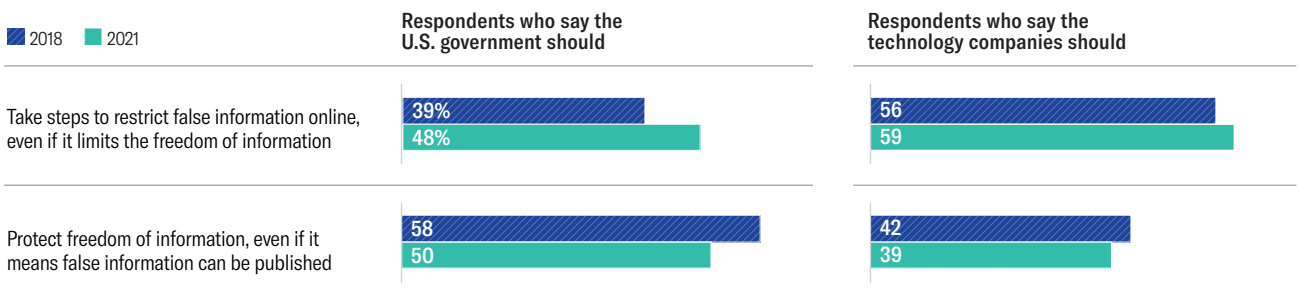
to heel. Several bipartisan proposals to amend Section 230 address child sexual exploitation, content moderation operations, and reduced protections for content that courts determine to be illegal. The unifying theme appears to be that Section 230, as it stands, is not doing enough. But the parties tend to disagree on what needs to change.

State legislatures, too, have been at work here. Data privacy and security laws at the state level have made inroads that can ultimately help businesses regain trust through data-handling practices. And academics, including University of Houston associate professor, Peter N. Salib, have proposed regulatory solutions that may incentivize social media platforms to favor truth-telling,³ such as implementing a Pigouvian tax on fake news—one that would tax social media platforms in proportion to the harm, such as damage to reputation and harm from unwarranted reliance on such lies.

FIGURE 1

Consumers Want Institutions to Address Misinformation

They increasingly favor the involvement of both government and technology companies in restricting falsehoods online



Source: Pew Research survey, August 2021



Fact-checking is notoriously difficult to scale. David Rand’s research at MIT suggests that the wisdom of crowds can successfully address this task. That research found that paying a sufficiently sized group of laypeople to quickly evaluate whether a headline is misleading produced results equal to or better than those of trained fact-checkers.

Because of inverted corporations’ role in enabling the magnification of misinformation—it actually becomes part of their product—businesses may see them as an important arena for addressing the problem. Several platform companies have experimented with different approaches, such as fact-checking, posting cautionary messages on questionable content, and suspending and banning accounts.

Fact-checking is notoriously difficult to scale. But Rand’s research at MIT suggests that the wisdom of crowds can successfully address this task. That research found that paying a sufficiently sized group of laypeople to quickly evaluate whether a headline is misleading produced results equal to or better than those of trained fact-checkers; combined with fact-checkers and machine learning, this approach can scale to the need. Additional steps platforms can take include more labeling and downranking of bad content and providing “accuracy nudges”—periodic statements that prime users to think about accuracy as they consume content, he says. Other academics have suggested social strategies, such as labeling users proven to spread misinformation, reducing their follower count, or delaying the delivery of their content.

Unfortunately, research has also demonstrated that such techniques as teaching media literacy have a tendency to increase skepticism generally, thereby decreasing trust even in trustworthy sources. For example, a March 2018 blog post titled “You Think You Want Media Literacy... Do You?” on the website of the Data & Society Research Institute suggests that a focus on fake news and misinformation in education may also have the unintended effect of fostering wholesale skepticism about the possibility of finding reliable sources of knowledge.

Social and other digital media can play a key role in building or rebuilding trust. For example, after security breaches damaged the reputation of Zoom and its videoconferencing service in the early days of pandemic lockdown, costing the firm academic and business customers, the company had to rebuild trust. Founder and CEO Eric S. Yuan led a multipronged effort to address internal flaws, support users, increase privacy, and use digital media to keep the public

informed on the company’s progress, winning the praise of many skeptics. Apple’s new privacy protections, promoted via videos, blogs, and pop-up notifications, afford another example of a company that has increased consumer trust via digital media.

At a strategic level, some question whether platforms should be in charge of anti-misinformation efforts at all. Efforts toward moderating content to date have largely consisted of half measures and unevenly applied standards, says Logos Consulting’s Garcia, and began too late to be effective. Others have argued that entrusting social media platforms with responsibility for policing content adds even more power to an entity not incentivized to limit the content its customers find engaging.

Yet without transparency into how platform companies collect and use consumer and other data, lawmakers are limited in what they can do. To that end, academics from Stanford University, Harvard Law School, and elsewhere have advocated for the creation of a blue-ribbon type of investigative commission with the power to compel technology giants to provide much more information about how their platforms work so lawmakers can better understand what they are legislating, according to an Oct. 21, 2021, *New York Times* opinion piece, “Facebook Is Bad. Fixing It Rashly Could Make It Much Worse.” By directing tech companies to make their data available to academics, “we can actually learn more about what’s happening and therefore be better informed about what actually would help,” Rand explains. One example of successful collaboration between academics and platforms is Rand’s work with both Facebook and Twitter on the successful implementation of community content review programs.

Organizations can help fuel government or platform efforts to prevent or mitigate the impacts of misinformation with their lobbying, political contributions, or advertising dollars. But results from the 2022 Edelman Trust Barometer suggest that businesses themselves already have higher trust levels than institutions such as government and media, a gulf that has only widened in recent years. In a survey of more than 36,000 people around the globe conducted in late 2021, the

Edelman Trust Barometer found 61% of respondents trust businesses to do what’s right, compared with 59% who trust NGOs. **FIGURE 2** Government (52%) and media (50%) were the least trusted—and saw the biggest declines from when the same question was asked for the organization’s 2020 report, when 65% trusted government and 56% trusted media.

Detecting and Responding to Misinformation

Because misinformation impacts businesses on so many levels, combating it is also a multipronged process. There are tactical steps to detecting, assessing, and responding to particular incidents of misinformation. But these tactical steps may be more successful if organizations also engage at the strategic level to engender trust among their constituencies. Earning trust helps inoculate the business by making those stakeholders more skeptical of claims; fosters credible third-party defense against those claims; and makes the company a better employer and partner.

When misinformation about the organization emerges, typically via alerts, news monitoring software, and social media listening, one important early step is to learn who has been exposed to it. Garcia advises companies to “have a monitoring system where they can detect whether their stakeholders are beginning to be concerned about the validity of the accusation and have a mechanism to get to those concerned stakeholders with the right message.” The best practice is to limit actions to correct misinformation only

to those to have been exposed to it, he adds, unless there is reason to think the story will break larger. The reason for having only a proportional response is to avoid inadvertently spreading the misinformation further by calling attention to it. Creating a disproportional response could mean addressing only specific inquiries—for example, though a contact center chat or a reply to an online comment—or issuing a correction that targets the same narrow audience.

Garcia recalls an incident in which a religious group suddenly began calling one of his major clients anti-Christian and called for a boycott. An investigation revealed that the group made the accusation because the murderer in an episode of the TV show “Law & Order,” during which the client’s ad had appeared, turned out to be a Christian leader. The religious group used the accusation to drive donations. Garcia’s client’s response was proportional—it replied by issuing a corrective statement only to those who actively inquired about the accusation. The use of a low-profile, reactive response turned out to be the right strategy, since the group eventually moved on without the accusation gaining more traction.

Proportional response represents a regulatory opportunity in addition to those proposed by Congress to amend Section 230. With proportional response, social media platforms could be compelled to offer the misrepresented organization an opportunity to target the same users who saw the original message.

But it’s not too much of a worry if the corrective messaging spreads wider, says MIT’s Rand. “I think a key point that comes out of a lot of research on misinformation is that corrections work. You’re not going to make people believe something more by correcting it.” And though it’s a subject of academic debate, he adds, “there’s actually not much evidence one way or the other on what happens when people’s first exposure to a false claim comes through a debunk or a correction.”

Authenticity and forthrightness in the correction are key. “Address it with straight talk and with openness and transparency,” says FranklinCovey’s Covey.

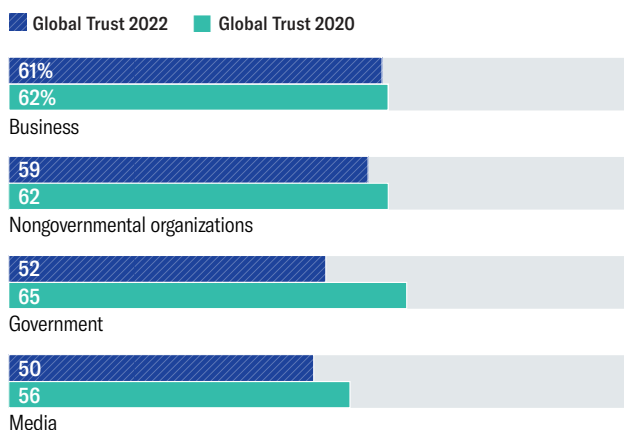
One way to assure authenticity is to ensure the correction comes from a specific person, not a faceless corporation. “Putting somebody’s personal trust on the line means something to people,” says Engaged Organizations’ Happe. Even better is for that person to engage audiences in a dialogue in real time in the channels where conversations are taking place about what they heard and what’s actually true, she adds.

When the misinformation or disinformation is particularly damaging or widespread, or if the organization being discredited already has some trust issues among its stakeholders, the time may be right to bring in a more credible third party to counter the bad information. This independent voice could be an NGO, another customer, or another reputable influencer without a clear incentive to spin the truth.

FIGURE 2

Businesses Are the Most Trusted Institutions

Government has seen the largest decline in public trust



Source: Edelman Trust Barometer, 2022 (Survey fielded November 2021)

“If you’re trying to rebut a claim about your company, someone that is impartial is going to be a better messenger than you,” says Rand. “My colleague Adam Berinsky in political science at MIT has this really cool work that shows that often the most trusted sources are the ones who are speaking against their own interest,” such as a competitor. Back when there were rumors that the Obama administration’s proposed Affordable Care Act would introduce “death panels,” for example, Berinsky found that when study subjects were exposed to a Republican politician’s correction of this false rumor, both Republicans and Democrats were far more likely to disbelieve that death panels would be introduced. Peer endorsement is also especially effective, which is a major reason that organizations are investing in fostering communities of customers and employees, adds Happe.

Trust: The Ultimate Myth Mitigator

Perhaps the most powerful tool organizations have to ward off the ill effects of mis- and disinformation is to foster trust across their constituencies: employees, partners, analysts, customers, and the larger marketplace. By increasing their own trustworthiness through their messaging and behaviors, organizations can bolster a reputation that helps protect them from the damage of misinformation, because the falsehoods don’t align with the beliefs these constituents hold about the organization.

This effort shouldn’t be fleeting. Building trust requires the sustained commitment of leadership, which strives to instill good practices into the policies, processes, and culture it cultivates across the organization. An increasingly critical element of this trust formula, particularly for consumer-facing organizations, is to demonstrate trustworthiness with personal data.

Again, it all starts with leadership. In their 2020 *Harvard Business Review* article titled “Begin with Trust,” coauthors Frances X. Frei and Anne Morriss recommend leaders amass stores of trust by focusing on three drivers: authenticity, logic, and empathy. “People tend to trust you when they think they are interacting with the real you (authenticity), when they have faith in your judgment and competence (logic), and when they believe that you care about them (empathy),” Frei and Morriss write. “When trust is lost, it can almost always be traced back to a breakdown in one of these three drivers.”

To develop trustworthiness in the organization, its leaders often rely on articulating a shared purpose and then setting out to embed this purpose into policies, practices, and behavioral norms and incentives within the organization. Core values vary but might include being transparent or authentic, providing clear value, or being committed to their employees’ well-being.



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For example, Steelcase, Microsoft Corp., and the Procter & Gamble Co. are companies that demonstrate commitment to employees by promising professional development, work-life balance, and flexibility, and reap trust as a byproduct of that effort, says Happe. Investing in management training that increases psychological safety is a critical element of increasing trust, and that feeling can then be imparted outside the organization. “If everybody inside the company is relaxed and trusting, and comfortable talking about issues, customers are likely to intuitively respond to that and be relaxed and trusting themselves,” she adds.

Trust really gets established via actions, not words. “Trust is the consequence of promises fulfilled, expectations met, and values lived,” says Garcia. Companies that manage expectations and then consistently meet or exceed them tend to be those that attract the most enthusiastic fans, he claims. For example, some organizations, such as Amazon, food-delivery firms, and home improvement retailers, were able to increase their trust among consumers during the pandemic by reliably meeting consumer needs, says Garcia. Reminding customers of what steps the organization took to earn their trust over time is another strategy that reinforces the value of the actions that organization has taken.

“We are witnessing an evolution in how consumers interpret trust with organizations,” says Chandra Rink, head of product innovation and strategy at ATB Ventures, the research and innovation arm of Edmonton, Alberta-based financial institution ATB Financial. “This trust has historically been made up of consistency in user experience and reliability, whereas more recently, consideration of data privacy and data monetization is weighing into consumers’ decision-making process.”

More and more, one strategy organizations are deploying to build trust is becoming good stewards of data. Compliance with data privacy and security laws is the baseline, but consumers are looking for more than that. Consumers express interest in having more control over their data and increasingly prefer business models that don’t rely so heavily on its use,



“In a low-trust world, we have to become more intentional and more deliberate, declare our intent, and then do what we say we’re going to do,” says Stephen M. R. Covey, of CoveyLink and the FranklinCovey Global Trust Practice.

according to Rink. The success of Signal, a cross-platform, centralized, encrypted instant-messaging service developed by the nonprofit Signal Technology Foundation and Signal Messenger, LLC, is an example of the potential for a data-light approach that doesn’t sacrifice customer experience, she says. Signal collects virtually no data on its users and secures conversations via end-to-end encryption.

But consumers also understand that they need to exchange some data for the value they’re seeking, and they want greater transparency and the choice to opt in to that process. The concept of “in situ” data rights centers on consumers being empowered to grant or revoke the right to use their data in the location where it resides, such as in a company’s data stores. This concept has been added to the European Union’s new Digital Markets Act.

Such empowerment helps consumers trust organizations more. “I believe consumers are looking for organizations to be forthright and to be explicit,” says Rink. “Don’t bury my decision rights as a customer beneath a pile of legal documentation and the terms and conditions. Tell me where you’re using my data.”

Transparency with data extends to the algorithms it feeds. “All algorithms have a bias,” notes Happe. More transparency about what goes into those algorithms and what they can and cannot do dampens critique and increases trust that the organization is using them in appropriate and responsible ways. ATB Ventures’ Rink believes consumer demand will drive organizations toward more transparent practices and consumer data-light business models. In a May 2021 report, “The Dichotomy of Tech and Trust,” ATB Ventures found 63% of the 1,028 North American adults surveyed are inclined to move their buying power to organizations that respect their privacy.

Research has consistently shown that efforts to earn deeper trust pay off with customers. Trust does indeed impact the

bottom line. According to Deloitte’s February 2022 article “Can you measure trust within your organization?” published on its website, the firm identified examples of three large global companies, each with a market cap of more than \$10 billion, that lost 20% to 56% of their value—a \$70 billion loss, in total—when they lost their stakeholders’ trust. The critical nature of trust warrants a metric of its own, according to Covey. “Trust is a perception. You can measure perceptions,” he says. “I think in 20 years everyone will be measuring trust inside the culture.”

Conquering Misinformation for a Better Bottom Line

The proliferation of misinformation is impacting organizations on multiple levels, from immediate reputational damage all the way to creating a more distrustful society that threatens the economic stability of the marketplace. While it is tempting to turn to institutions such as governments and platform companies to combat this scourge, significant obstacles stand in the way of their success. Fortunately, there are many things organizations can do on their own, from tactical measures to respond to a specific incident, to a strategic investment in building trust among stakeholders so that future misinformation is met with skepticism.

The good news is that mitigating the impact of misinformation is not the only benefit from investing in trust-building. As it turns out, the activities organizations engage in to earn trust also make them better employers, partners, and participants in the marketplace and society.

“In a low-trust world, we have to become more intentional and more deliberate, declare our intent, and then do what we say we’re going to do,” says Covey. “These are universal principles. We need to apply them to a new, changing world.”

Endnotes

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