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# BUILDING CONSUMER TRUST

## The challenge for healthcare brands

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There's a lot of debate around the issue of building consumer trust. The dialogue isn't surprising when you consider that trust is highly complex and emotional. When we place our trust in someone or something, we relinquish control over high-stakes things, like family, time, money, or health. Doing so makes us vulnerable.

Our ability to trust is shaped through our past experiences and currently held beliefs. Each time we're faced with the decision to trust a brand, we ask a few key questions:

- **Competence:** Does the brand have the capability to care for what I'm prepared to give them?
- **Comfort & confidence:** How comfortable and confident have I been with how the brand has cared for what I've previously given them?
- **Character:** Does the brand share the same values that I do?

### THE POWER OF TRUST

As marketers, we deal with trust on a daily basis. Every aspect of a consumer's experience with a brand informs how they feel about it. And it's not an entirely logical process. Despite the fact that consumers have easy access to more data and information than ever before, they still rely heavily on emotion to influence their perception of a brand.

### NO ONE SAID IT'D BE EASY

If trust is about relinquishing some level of control to another, there's no other industry in which trust is as important as healthcare. For most people, healthcare

decisions are complicated and intimidating. Layer on the consequences of making the wrong healthcare decision and it's clear that minimizing the perception of risk is key for consumers.

As marketers, our challenge is to engage consumers in a way that builds trust. But there are two obstacles standing in our way:

- The inconsistent nature of service brands
- The sporadic nature of healthcare interactions

#### **Service brands: less trusted**

As a rule, consumers find service brands to be less trustworthy. A key contributor to consumer trust-building is the predictability of an experience or outcome. Unlike product brands, which, by and large, are manufactured and therefore highly consistent, service brands depend on personal interactions, which are, by nature, highly variable.

Whether it's a doctor visit, prescription refill, or an outpatient procedure, how consumers feel as they move through a healthcare transaction is informed by the personal interactions they've had in the past and those they're having at the moment. Along these two tracks, there are many places where the experience can go wrong.

#### **Healthcare interactions: less frequent**

This leads us to the second obstacle: the sporadic nature of healthcare transactions. As a consumer

amasses interactions with the healthcare system over time, the chance she'll find a provider that meets her service expectations in a relatively consistent fashion is likely to increase.

The problem is, unlike restaurants or retail stores, people need to access healthcare less frequently. As a result, there are fewer opportunities for healthcare brands to prove their trustworthiness.

### **BUILDING CONSUMER TRUST IN HEALTHCARE: IT CAN BE DONE**

For healthcare brands, building trust means engaging consumers not only when they need healthcare, but also when they don't. Through this lens, it's more than pushing product at a targeted segment and hoping they'll bite. It's about being relevant and giving consumers something of value—whether it's a new technology tailored to their health needs or simply information that enlightens them, building their propensity to use you in the future.

Day to day, Remedy keeps the following questions top of mind with our clients. If our work together enables a client to authentically answer yes to these six questions, we're well on our way to building a trusted healthcare brand.

1. Perception: Do you have an up-to-the-minute handle on what consumers think about your brand?
2. Like-mindedness: Do you share common values with your customers?
3. Relevance: Are you offering a product or service your customer actually needs?
4. Integration: Is your brand well integrated into your customer's daily life, or are you an interruption?
5. Empathy: Does your customer think you understand them?
6. Credibility: Is your message in sync with the reality of what your brand delivers?