

Why brands should be honest on Social Media

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Honesty on Social Media Just May Be The Best Policy

It's remarkable how much **brands** and consumers are alike in terms of their approaches to **social** media. They both are prone to self-exaggeration insofar as their lives and businesses shine in ways that may not actually tell the truth or at least the whole story. It is a form of self-protection to put one's best face forward especially in the often rough-n-tumble world of Facebook and Twitter where trolls often are on the lookout for weakness and are quick to shame or humiliate. Just ask [Leslie Jones](#), the African-American actress and one of the stars of the new "[Ghostbusters](#)" cinema reboot, who has been the target of some [hateful racist abuse on Twitter](#) of late, resulting in her deleting her account the same week her movie was released.

[Editor note: [Jones's Twitter account has since been reactivated.](#)]

Despite the potential to be on the unwelcome receiving end of such undeserved vitriol, **brands** and people alike are better served if they commit themselves to portraying themselves in a more authentic light. Honesty is the ladder to trust, and in the case of advertisers, trust is arguably the most valuable commodity a **brand** can have with its consumer base. Consumers know that **brands** aren't perfect in the same way that they recognize flaws in their loved ones and friends as well as themselves. They are more apt to develop affinity for a **brand** that isn't afraid to present themselves in an honest manner, warts and all. By admitting to mistakes or even frailties, **brands** humanize themselves and consumers will respond in kind with warmth and honesty. This is what leads to engagement and ultimately transactions.

Allow me to give an example from my own company's experiences that reflect this idea. Recently, in our London office, we interviewed a management candidate, who we will call "Lizzie," a young lady with impressive agency experience, superior academic qualifications and glowing client references. While she looked great on paper and was quite endearing in person, we got the sense that she was hiding her true essence. She claimed to lead a boring, quiet life in the suburbs. So we investigated and her Twitter feed revealed something different. On weekends, Lizzie transformed herself with the help of face paint into an alter ego, "Catface," a feline rave denizen.

Did this revelation diminish our strong assessment of Lizzie's worth as a potential Grapeshot

manager? Hardly. We offered her a job on the spot, and she is off to a roaring start, no pun intended.

It's quite understandable why Lizzie held back this colorful part of her personality. Many companies aren't as open-minded and might count it as a strike against her. Those entities are likely the same ones who sanitize every single facet of their online personas across FB, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, et. al. to create these gleaming, flawless, and wholly unbelievable versions of themselves.

By the way, there is a big difference between authenticity and stupidity. Certainly, everyone on **social** media would be badly served by being a total open book. Life and the marketplace are too complex for everyone to allow himself or herself full transparency and that goes for **social** media. There are certainly aspects of ourselves that we all should keep private while at the same time, on the whole, being a straightforward, honest person who people like and trust. So untag those pics of you bleary-eyed with a traffic cone on your head during that college bender. Whereas, Catface on the nightclub podium indicates an authentic, interesting individuality that suggests a creative, broad thinker.

With thoughtful care and attention, any **brand** can convey significant meaning to its customers. Honing in on a dynamic and authentic **brand** signature will ultimately guide you well. In so doing, like Catface, **brands** will likely solidify and broaden their appeal to those folks who will truly appreciate their products or services. By trying to be all things to all people through a sheen of phoniness, advertisers will only serve to alienate consumers and minimize the success of their **brands**.

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