

General Trust Indicators for a Web Store

Online shoppers consciously and subconsciously look for credibility clues, or trust indicators. These are some trust-building best practices^[1] for online retailers, and how they fit into the Trust Enablement™ Framework:

1. Appearance

Make sure the web site is clean, organized (_____ source of trust) and error-free (_____ source of trust). Check for typos, broken links, inconsistencies in graphics, repetition, and cluttered appearance. Lack of attention to such details implies that you may be equally careless (_____) in your business dealings.

Priority Trust Indicators

Experiential	Motive Forces
Interpretive	Proficiencies
Empowerment	Risk Transference

2. Credibility Visuals

Provide familiar visual clues on your site, such as well-known brand names and logos (_____ sources of trust). Also list other trusted brands, including suppliers, business partners and customers — and always display their logos to make a stronger impression. Seeing recognizable names increases shoppers' confidence in your store (_____, because they can tell you are in good company). It is more comforting to buy goods knowing *FedEx* is shipping rather than *Joe X*.

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3. Credentials

If you have attained a standard of excellence (_____) or have met minimum certification requirements, such as for service or security, let customers know about it. Credible trust marks (_____ sources of trust) displayed on your home page will instill confidence in shoppers so they'll stay on your site and discover all you have to offer.

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4. Complete Contact Information

Make sure your contact information is easily accessible. Indicate all the ways that you can be reached – including your physical business address (_____, because it is a self-assertion). Besides providing a customer convenience, this helps assuage fears that you will take their money and run (_____).

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5. Give to Receive

Offer freebies (such as trial software, free advice, or money-back guarantees). This allows customers to experience (_____ source of trust) doing business with you before they actually buy anything (_____). Similarly, if your website is easy to navigate (see tip #1), it tells customers they can expect their buying experience to be just as pleasant.

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6. Insure – and assure – customers

The single most effective thing you can do to build customer confidence in the short term and transform reluctant shoppers into spenders is to provide a third-party insurance policy (_____). Payment services such as PayPal provide Buyer Protection programs that ensure your customers are protected from loss or damage caused by shopping on your site.

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7. Protect Customers' Privacy

Shoppers know that inappropriate use of their personal information can be devastating. Address privacy issues explicitly (_____ source of trust) whenever you are asking for any information. Tell customers why you are collecting the data, how you will use it and how you protect it (_____ source of trust). Use clear, concise statements (_____ source of trust, since the customer is experiencing authenticity). Excessive legal wording and fine print make people think you're trying to hide something.

For customers expecting compliance with specific privacy laws and regulations, explain why you are in compliance and back it up with relevant third-party assurance (_____ sources of trust). A well-recognized privacy seal (_____ sources of trust), such as from TRUSTe.org, assures them you are taking care (_____) to protect and respect their privacy.

8. Be transparent

Online fraud is growing at an alarming rate and consumers are becoming increasingly sensitive to the threat. Online shoppers have no way of witnessing what's really going on in the "store" and often feel vulnerable. Your website should include easily accessible (_____) information on why your store is a safe place to shop. Tell customers (_____ source of trust) how you protect them with safe-shopper policies. Consider joining the ePublicEye.com Safe Shopping program (_____ to access _____ sources of trust).

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9. Hold the customer's hand

Once the customer is ready to buy, walk them through each step of the online purchasing process (that experience is an _____ source of trust). Assure them (_____ source of trust) at each prompt that you are sensitive to their concerns (_____), and deal with each question or issue as it comes up (the experience is an _____ source of trust). Provide a clear link (_____) to your mission statement, customer-service policies and any other aspects of your business (_____) that may need explaining. Even better, follow tip #10. The objective is to eliminate those moments of hesitation – especially in the sale's final stages.

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10. Offer a personal touch

One way to instantly win over customers is to have a real person help them prior to and during their purchase (_____ source of trust). You can use today's Internet technologies to provide a variety of communication channels, ranging from IP telephone to instant chat. For higher-value transactions, provide a 24-hour toll-free phone number — with prompt (_____) and friendly service (_____). It's often the final touch that convinces hesitant shoppers to buy.

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ⁱ Todd, A. (2004) "The Essential Christmas Web-store Makeover", http://trustenabement.com/local/TrustEnablement.com-Web-store_Christmas_Makeover-download.pdf