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The New Age of Conversation Growing online relationships

By Robin Grant, We Are Social

In January 2009, the Edelman Global Trust Barometer showed a record low in the level of public trust in companies. Consumers are giving priority to communication with each other through social media, placing their trust in the reviews and opinions of like-minded individuals. Conversation is king, and if brands are to connect with target audiences, they too need to be involved. The power and sentiment of online discussions on products, services and sales are something that marketers can not afford to ignore.

Savvy brands such as Ford and Skype are now listening and responding to conversations in real time, and dealing efficiently with consumers' shared negative experiences has become a priority. We Are Social edits Skype's blog network and runs the user community on its website. We also respond to discussions about the brand as they happen on forums, blogs and social networks such as Facebook and Twitter.

More than ever, brands need campaigns that surprise, delight and engage audiences. For the launch of Ford's new Fiesta models, we asked creative bloggers in Europe - from the art, design, fashion and photography industries - to submit personal, visual representations of the word 'Now' to a dedicated group on Flickr. The best entries were highlighted on a campaign blog, guest edited by select contributors who also used the Flickr site to curate their own visions of 'Now'.

These brands are building stronger connections and understanding with consumers, which encourages loyalty and increases the chance that they will recommend on to others. This approach to trust is what brands need in our new age of conversation.

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