

# next tuesday afternoon

January 27, 2009

"Trust everyone, but cut the cards yourself." Spoken by the infamous W.C. Fields, this is an apt statement to describe the dizzying levels of distrust felt by consumers these days, especially towards large corporations. Marketers take note.

With no end in sight to the carnage and the shocking scandals taking place in corporate America today, the effects on how they and others position their brands will be long lasting indeed. Citigroup, pay close attention. That \$50 million jet will cost you plenty after taking TARP funds.

This crisis of confidence has coincided with new brands being rolled out promising integrity, durability and even purity. Honest Tea, Pur water filters and FreeBird organic, free-range chickens are a few. This is risky branding in this environment.

A brand, very simply, is a promise. A promise that it will help the user make or save money, feel great or look better. Dove promises that all women are beautiful, regardless of size. Volvo promises safety. Honest Tea promises natural ingredients and no preservatives.

The foundation of all these brand promises is trust. Consumers have been primed to trust that a brand will deliver on its promise-and trust that the company will always be there to make good on any snafus. Trust is the secret sauce that sells a brand. If people don't trust a brand, it doesn't matter how much healthier, richer or safer we would all become with the brand. Without trust, the brand's foundation cracks. The cards fall. It doesn't matter who has cut them.

Marketers today need to take a close look at their brand's promise and double down on ensuring its delivery. They need to make sure everyone associated with that brand understands its promise and understands how to bring it to life. To regain consumer trust and to be perceived as credible, everything connected to that brand and every branded experience must be consistent.

Sure, it's tempting to pitch a brand's quality and durability, especially in uncertain times when consumers crave reassurance. But it has never been riskier to do this: We're living in an age of transparency, where everybody can see and hear everything almost instantly. One wrong move, one product fault, and the word is out. Bad news travels faster than ever before, be it through the ubiquity of YouTube, Facebook, blogs or "tweets." So, be careful not to make promises you can't keep.

I'm Lisa Davis. Let me know if I can help you in any way, please feel free to visit at [OneAlliance.com](http://OneAlliance.com) and I'll be back next Tuesday afternoon.

**Lisa Davis**  
**859.225.2684**  
**[Lisa@OneAlliance.com](mailto:Lisa@OneAlliance.com)**

*marketing • brand management • interactive*

