



The Friendship Factor

**How Trust, Relevance and Affection
Drive Business Growth**

Special report on the power of
Making Fierce Friends

Hello from Mower.



We're excited to share the findings of our **2024 Making Fierce Friends™** research, with a focus on how establishing Trust, Relevance and Affection with customers and clients can drive outstanding business results.

Throughout this report, we provide insights for B2B and B2C marketing professionals across Utilities and Energy Efficiency, Home Improvement and Building Supplies, Healthcare, Travel & Tourism, and Financial Services.

We highlight the impact of Trust, Relevance, and Affection within the customer journey and on brand performance, demonstrating how these elements can boost business performance, increase customer loyalty, and create sustainable competitive advantages.

Here's to the power of Making Fierce Friends™ and its potential to transform your business relationships and bottom line.

Your Mower team

90%

of business executives think customers highly trust their companies while only

30%

of consumers actually do.¹

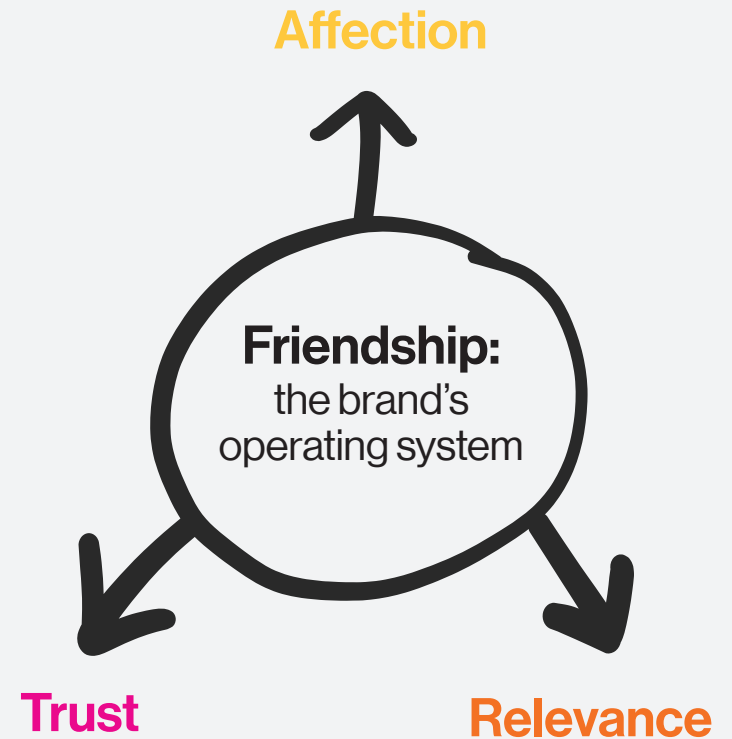
37%

of people worldwide think many companies are prioritizing higher profits over better customer experience.²

The gig is up.

Brands are cutting corners; buyers are noticing.

New research sheds light on fundamental branding truisms many companies may have lost sight of—friendship. It's the tie that binds. It binds humans to each other, and it binds buyers to brands.



When you have trust, relevance and affection, you have friendship. You have a rewarding relationship that is nurtured over time with listening, caring and advising. You have a connection that can withstand challenging moments. You have a competitive advantage; “the moat” that can protect profit and catapult business growth.

¹PWC, Trust Survey, 2024

²Accenture, Life Trends 2024

TRUST



**“I think being
transparent
and upfront
is a big thing
with initial
conversations.”**

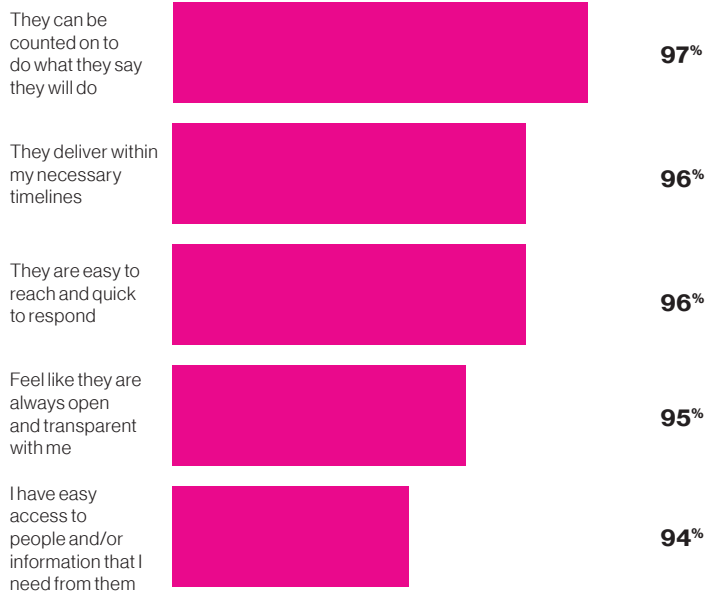
*Mower, Making Fierce Friends Research May
2024, B2B Decision Maker (on New Brands)*



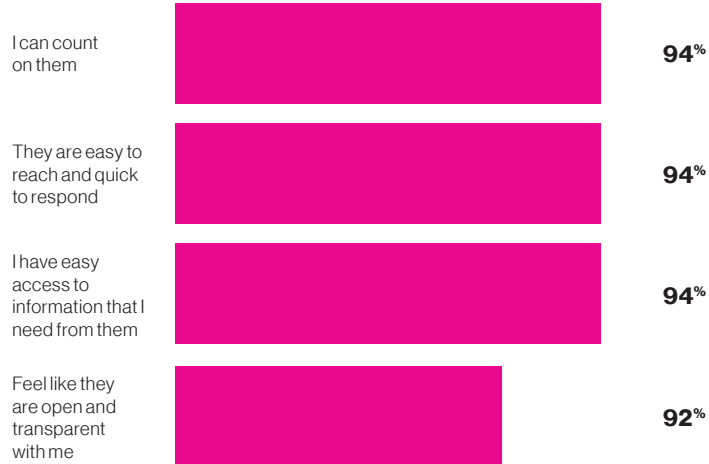
Let's jump into the research.

Dimensions of trust and their level of importance to buyers when considering a brand.

B2B Importance of Trust



B2C Importance of Trust



% who agree statement is Important/Very/Extremely Important in decision to work with a company.

“The combination of rapidly emerging technologies, an abundance of misinformation and unethical data use” have created a perfect storm for brands in building and keeping trust.²



Takeaway:

Trust is hard-earned, easily lost, and the most fundamental aspect of any brand. Without it, brands can't compete. Most brands don't even realize that they're less trusted than they assume.

¹ Mower, Making Fierce Friends Research, May 2024

² MarTech, 2024

Establishing trust with B2B decision makers.

In the words of our research respondents:

Be open

(genuinely open)

"I look for openness and transparency about their policies, costs, fees, etc.; consistent information from all company sources; demonstrated follow-through in what and when they promise to deliver."

– B2B Decision Maker
(on Current Brands)

Be real

"Being authentic and not feeling like I'm being read a script is also extremely important."

– B2B Decision Maker
(on New Brands)

"Demonstrate that sometimes reduced profits are necessary to establish a relationship. Respond to my support requests promptly and helpfully instead of sending me to a scripted drone in a cubicle."

– B2B Decision Maker
(on New Brands)

Be consistently reliable and always follow through on promises

"Consistency builds reliability and reliability builds trust. I should have confidence that I will consistently receive the same level of quality and service each time I interact with the company."

– B2B Decision Maker
(on Current Brands)

"Deliver what they say they are going to deliver. Like if I order something from Amazon or something it gets delivered by the time it says it will be delivered or earlier."

– B2B Decision Maker
(on Current Brands)

"Honor their words. Mean what they say and say what they mean. Deliver a consistent experience."

– B2B Decision Maker
(on Current Brands)

Decision makers who feel brands met their expectations are

2.6X

more likely than the average buyer to recommend to others.

Decision makers who've had a trusting history with a brand are

3.8X

more likely than the average buyer to be a repeat buyer of their company.

Establishing trust with B2C decision makers.

In the words of our research respondents:

Be open

(genuinely open)

“Testimonials are the best way. If I see lots of people having a good experience then I will investigate them more. The key is to be willing to include any bad reviews as well. Honesty is the key.”

– B2C Consumer
(on Current Brands)

Be consistently reliable and always follow through on promises

“Trustworthiness is developed over time with consistent and reliable service.”

– B2C Consumer
(on New Brands)

“To exhibit trustworthiness, a brand needs to be honest, follow through on its promises and go beyond to be helpful.”

– B2C Consumer
(on Current Brands)

Be available and helpful

“Communicate with me and answer questions that I have, particularly around new products and ways to save. Be an expert on what they are selling. Protect my information from fraudulent activity.”

– B2C Consumer
(on Current Brands)

“Offer easy ways to communicate 24/7, so that I can be sure I can get a hold of someone in case the unexpected happens.”

– B2C Consumer
(on Current Brands)

“Providing responsive and helpful customer service builds trust and confidence. Properly addressing customer inquiries, concerns and complaints demonstrates a commitment to customer satisfaction and support.”

– B2C Consumer
(on Current Brands)

Consumers who've built enough trust with a company such that they'd consider themselves attached to it are

2.1X

more likely than the average buyer to increase their overall spend with the company and

2X

more likely than the average buyer to be a proactive advocate for the company.¹

71%

of people would buy less from a business that lost their trust.²

What's more, of that percentage,

73%

said they would spend “significantly” less if they lost their trust.²

“It really doesn't take much degradation of service for a consumer's trust to be eroded entirely.”³



“The lynchpin to all this is Gen Z. If a brand wins with Gen Z, the trickledown effect to all other generations will be substantial. This generation is changing the face of global commerce.”

Edelman Trust Barometer, 2023



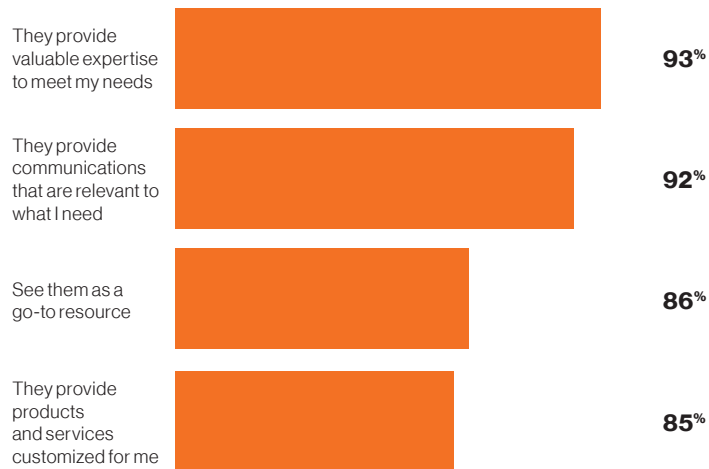
Relevance

Dimensions of relevance and their level of importance to buyers when considering a brand.

B2B Importance of Relevance¹



B2C Importance of Relevance¹



% who agree statement is Important/Very/Extremely Important in decision to work with a company.

Consumers expect personalization from brands as

71%

anticipate personalization and

76%

get frustrated when they don't find it.²

Takeaway:

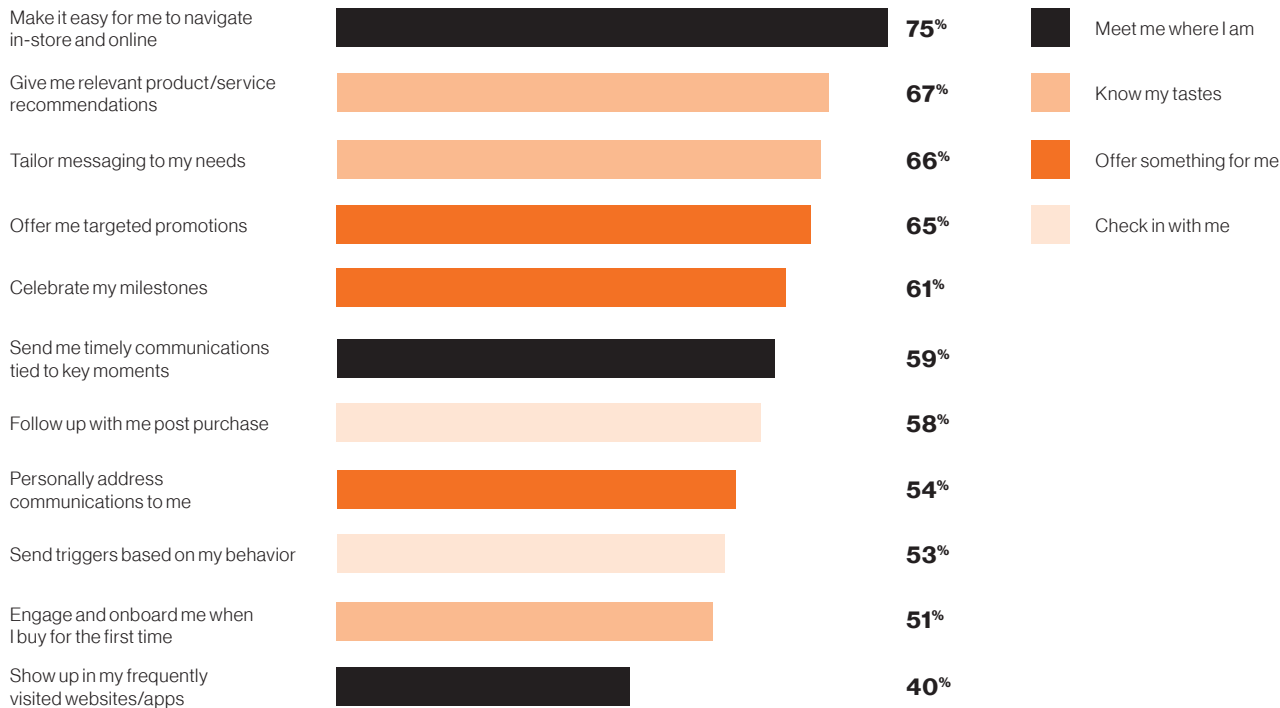
Relevance builds on trust – once brands have established themselves as reliable and credible, they have license to bring more authenticity and personalization to how they engage with audiences.

¹ Mower, Making Fierce Friends Research, May 2024

² McKinsey, 2022

Consumers expect brands to demonstrate they know them on a personal level.

Importance of personalization actions for consumers purchasing for the first time (% of respondents).



Establishing relevance with B2B decision makers.

In the words of our research respondents:

Be the expert and source for growth

“Have a stellar reputation within their industry. Provide a guideline of their recent work with other companies and how they can help my business grow.”

– B2B Decision Maker
(on Current Brands)

“Demonstrate competence in their field and treat me as if my business matters.”

– B2B Decision Maker
(on New Brands)

Ask the right questions

“Periodically ask if I have any suggestions that would help make our partnership more productive and harmonious.”

– B2B Decision Maker
(on Current Brands)

“Persistence in asking questions of what I need overall rather than making me fit into their company as a number.”

– B2B Decision Maker
(on New Brands)

Be a business partner

“By being forthcoming with any issues that may be upcoming. Provide alternatives that could be money saving. Asking genuine questions. Interact like friends or partners, not just a working relationship.”

– B2B Decision Maker
(on Current Brands)

“Listen to my needs and seek out unsolicited solutions and bring them to my attention.”

– B2B Decision Maker
(on Current Brands)

“By meeting personally with me, listening to my needs and demonstrating they have the needed skills.”

– B2B Decision Maker
(on New Brands)

“Offer high-quality results and have my business interest at heart.”

– B2B Decision Maker
(on Current Brands)



Decision makers who say brands feel like the right fit are

2.1X

more likely than the average buyer to develop a long-term relationship with them. ¹



Decision makers who are satisfied by a relevant brand are

2.5X

more likely than the average buyer to be a repeat buyer of the brand. ¹



76%

of people say brands' attempts at direct consumer engagement go wrong when their interactions lack relevance. ²



51%

say things go wrong when a brand is inauthentic or out of touch. ²

Mower Research Respondents (B2B n=1,000)

Q14 - In thinking about companies you buy products or services from, what can those companies do to exhibit trustworthiness?

Q15 - How can a company you've never worked with before demonstrate trustworthiness?

¹ Mower, Making Fierce Friends Research, May 2024

² Edelman Trust Barometer, 2023

Establishing relevance with B2C decision makers.

In the words of our research respondents:

Be the expert

"Showcase a strong portfolio of successful projects, reinforcing your competence and reliability."

– B2C Consumer
(on New Brands)

"Have knowledge of what products they sell and what I am looking for. Treat me like a valued customer. I need to see that they know what they are talking about when I have questions, not just giving me any answer just to make a sale."

– B2C Consumer
(on New Brands)

Customize the offering

"Work hard to learn about my needs and customize offerings to my personal situation."

– B2C Consumer
(on New Brands)

"Provide more perks to committed customers who have been using their services for some time."

– B2C Consumer
(on Current Brands)

"Offer different promotions and variety of incentives throughout different stages of their customers' lives."

– B2C Consumer
(on Current Brands)

Be the source for success

"Be a confidant. Be there through the entire buyer process and afterwards. Go above and beyond to make me feel like I am not alone."

– B2C Consumer
(on Current Brands)

"Give me good advice instead of just selling."

– B2C Consumer
(on New Brands)

Consumers who are satisfied by a relevant brand are

2.5X

more likely than the average buyer to be a repeat buyer of the brand and

2X

more likely than the average buyer to go to the brand first when they have new needs.

AFFECTION

**“Brands that evoke
strong emotions
and create an
emotional bond
with their customers
are able to foster
deeper loyalty.”**



Bernadette Jiwa, Brand Storytelling Expert & Author



Affection exceeds expectations.

Dimensions of affection and their level of importance to buyers when considering a brand.

B2B Importance of Affection

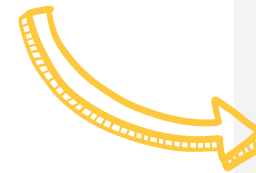


B2C Importance of Affection



% who agree statement is Important/Very/Extremely Important in decision to work with a company.¹

“Getting the right plate to the right person at the right table is service. But genuinely engaging with the person you’re serving, so you can make an authentic connection—that’s hospitality.”²



Takeaway:

All brands may want to build emotional connections with their audience, few get the right to as they must already be trusted and relevant. Once they are, affection is about the two-way relationship brands can have with their audiences.

¹ Mower, Making Fierce Friends Research, May 2024

² Unreasonable Hospitality, Will Guidara, 2023

Establishing affection with B2B decision makers.

In the words of our research respondents:

Be empathetic and invest the time

"They would need to work closely with us and develop reliability and likeability with my company. They must show my company they are the best choice."

- B2B Decision Maker
(on New Brands)

"Any time a brand can put themselves in my shoes and make me feel unique to them, I feel an obligation to go with that brand."

- B2B Decision Maker
(on Current Brands)

Go beyond product and service

"Exhibit care for the communities they reside in. Practice environmentally safe conduct in all aspects of their business."

- B2B Decision Maker
(on Current Brands)

"It's important that their values align with ours. If they are not aligned, we will take our business elsewhere."

- B2B Decision Maker
(on Current Brands)

"Go out of its way to prove it is worth doing business with on all accounts."

- B2B Decision Maker
(on New Brands)

Be on the same team

"Go to bat for our team and act as one team."

- B2B Decision Maker
(on New Brands)

"Show me that you trust in me to make the right decision when it comes to the company and that they have my back."

- B2B Decision Maker
(on Current Brands)

"Always have my back."

- B2B Decision Maker
(on Current Brands)

B2B decision makers and consumers who report being passionate about a brand are

3X

more likely than the average buyer to pay a higher price point.¹

When B2B decisions makers say they feel seen by brands as people, they are

4.1X

more likely than the average buyer to view the brand as an actual partner and

3.5X

more likely than the average buyer to view the brand as an advisor.¹

Consumers who have an emotional connection with a brand:

306%

higher lifetime value*

5.1 years

the average time emotionally connected customers stay with a brand vs. 3.4 years*

71%

rate at which emotionally connected customers recommend brands vs. 45%²

Establishing affection with B2C decision makers.

In the words of our research respondents:

Be empathetic and invest the time

“Actually listen to me and take the time to learn about my needs.”

– B2C Consumer
(on Current Brands)

“Go out of your way to help when I am shopping. Answer all my questions and make me feel confident that I am making the best decision.”

– B2C Consumer
(on Current Brands)

“Show interest in my project so that you may be able to assist more.”

– B2C Consumer
(on Current Brands)

“By taking the extra time to get to know me and make sure that I fully understand the product you are offering.”

– B2C Consumer
(on New Brands)

“Take the time with me as an individual and ‘be real.’”

– B2C Consumer
(on New Brands)

Go beyond product and service

“Value people over profits.”

– B2C Consumer
(on New Brands)

“Do the right thing when it comes to climate change and operating responsibly within the communities they serve.”

– B2C Consumer
(on Current Brands)

“Let us know as consumers what they stand behind and the social causes they support.”

– B2C Consumer
(on Current Brands)

“I need to feel like I am being heard and that my opinion matters.”

– B2C Consumer
(on Current Brands)

When affection, relevance and trust align, brands cultivate fierce friendships with their customers.

Only when A+R+T are combined will a brand realize the benefits to all business-driving measures.

B2B Likelihood	Extremely Likely			B2C Likelihood	Extremely Likely		
	ART	1 or 2	None		ART	1 or 2	None
Pay a higher price point because of the value they offer	++	+		Be a proactive advocate for their company	++	+	
Stand by them when they experience challenging times	++	+		Stand by them when they experience challenging times	++	+	
Stand by them when our business experiences challenging times	++	+		Increase my overall spend with them	++	+	
Be a proactive advocate for their company	++	+		Stand by them when I experience challenging times	++	+	
Increase our overall spend with them	++	+		Pay a higher price point because of the value they offer	++	+	
Continue to work with them when they communicate necessary price increases	++	+		Consider buying newly developed products or services from them	++	+	
Consider buying newly developed products or services from them	++	+		Continue to work with them when they communicate necessary price increases	++	+	
Go to them first when we have new business needs	++	+		Recommend them to others	++	+	
Develop a long-term relationship with them	++	+		Buy/use multiple products or services from them	++	+	
Recommend them to others	++	+		Develop a long-term relationship with them	++	+	
Buy multiple products or services from them	++	+		Go to them first when I have new needs	++	+	
Be a repeat buyer of their company	++	+		Be a repeat buyer/customer of their company	++	+	

+ Significantly higher than 'None' at 95% confidence level
 ++ Significantly higher than '1 or 2' and 'None' at 95% confidence level



Source: Total sample; Unweighted; base n = 1000. Composite Score of those who answered: 'Thinking specifically about [QID14-ChoiceTextEntryValue-1], please rate your likelihood to do each of the following using the scale, not at all likely to extremely likely.

Source: Total sample; Unweighted; base n = 2000. Composite Score of those who answered: 'Thinking specifically about [QID14-ChoiceTextEntryValue-1], please rate your likelihood to do each of the following using the scale, not at all likely to extremely likely.

To assess the levels of friendship your brand garners, consider:

- Regularly track brand perception (inclusive of trust, relevance and affection measures), along with NPS, employee advocacy & satisfaction measures.
- Walking through your brand experience or brand journey as if you were a customer – take note of any inconsistency from what you'd expect or want from the category; consider a delivery vs. expectation map-gap.
- Don't assume or ignore the basics. Ask yourself:
 - Is my brand consistent in how it communicates our offerings across all touchpoints (even sales or non-marketing ones)? Do we truly deliver against what we claim?
 - What does it feel like for customers to interact with our sales, distribution, delivery and/or customer service teams? Where are points of disconnect or frustration?
 - What is the experience in using our products or offerings? Is it a reliable experience?

Even though some of these activities might be outside of brand/marketing's remit, they still very much influence how buyers view and experience your brand.

FRIENDSHIP



“The only way to have friends is to be one.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Mower’s Making Fierce Friends™ movement

Mower is a fiercely independent marketing, advertising and PR agency of employee owners, makers and thinkers who use strategy, innovation, creativity and human understanding to build brands.

We have been making fierce friends between brands and people for over 50 years. We bring Trust, Relevance and Affection to turn early adopters and skeptics alike into strong supporters. Because we know that emotional connections drive value—and value drives positive brand sentiment.

**Thank
you,
friend.**

