comparisons with past experiences. If your success relies on instant gratification or surprise, then feel free to experiment. However, if your success relies on Trust, then you must, without question, deliver what people expect.

The more specific your promise, the more vital the need to deliver. We're indignant if a FedEx package shows up late (when it absolutely, positively needed to arrive overnight), or if a Timex watch takes a licking but doesn't keep ticking. Brands that fail to live up to their raison d'être earn negative fascination: bad word of mouth. The brands that we consistently trust are those that fulfill our expectations.*

### Be Authentic

To be authentic is to be the genuine article, the gospel truth, the real McCoy. And no wonder we're fascinated by the real McCoy, with so many fake McCoys around. We want what's real, and honest, and genuine. We want transparency. Authenticity must be earned over time, making it one of the most difficult ways to fascinate. Authenticity must arise from your brand's story. All elements of your behavior, attitude, culture, beliefs, and benefits must tie back into this story. True authenticity is never contrived or manipulated—it lives within substance, not style. The more you attempt to force authenticity, the more surely it will elude you.

#### Flavor of the Month

Tempestuous by nature, fads can feel sexy and exciting. They whip up exaggerated, even zealous, discussion. However, trends are fickle mistresses. They're difficult to maneuver or maintain.

* People look to FedEx for urgency and punctuality. Yet when Fred Smith founded FedEx, the overnight shipping company didn't find overnight success. When the corporate bank account once dropped to $5,000 in the early years, Smith flew to Las Vegas and turned this meager pot into $27,000—enough to keep the company running for another week.



For iconic people and companies, fads erode credibility. Or worse, they damage Trust. If your brand speaks the language of stability, your messages are not mercurial. For a retailer, sustaining the same message may sound easy enough, but the reality is that tastes change, economies change, and companies change. Sometimes it's easy to give in to the temptation of cashing in on a fad.

#### Fashion Victim or Fashion Victor?

A quintessential classic, the Tiffany & Co. logo is engraved into 170 years of exclusivity. Yet in the late 1990s, Tiffany's lower-priced line of silver jewelry became a must-have sensation among teenage girls. In particular, one $110 charm bracelet became an essential fashion item. Other brands would rejoice at such brisk sales, yet Tiffany's executives knew that these trinkets could make the brand seem too accessible for older, wealthier patrons. As the company's stock prices rose, so did the concerns.

In a controversial move, Tiffany raised its prices on the silver pieces to put the brakes on this trend. This decision probably lost the company short-term profits from shoppers wanting an affordable look, but it preserved prestige from the company's long-term wealthy base.

It's a risk to remain unchanged. Ruts are sticky. But for companies that rely on long-standing Trust as a primary Advantage, every message must communicate stability.*

### Accelerate Trust

Earning Trust demands an investment of time and effort, because predictability requires a guaranteed certainty. Trusted brands carefully pay attention to detail, reinforcing consistency between

* In twenty years, when those teenage girls acquire the spending power for lavish gold and diamonds, they won't associate the Tiffany & Co. logo with the one attached to that cute little sterling silver trinket they wore back in high school.