

success it is today. Actually, it flopped. Soundly. Earnings didn't come close to the cost of production, the studio was disappointed, and the director, Frank Capra, was criticized and humiliated. The holiday movie seemed destined to fade into obscurity. But then, serendipitously, Trust came into play.

In 1974, the film's copyright protection ended. It became public domain. Now television stations could air *It's a Wonderful Life* for free. And air it they did. Every year, the movie played throughout the Christmas season. Families gathered to watch. Children grew up with Jimmy Stewart and the angels. Americans saw the same images year after year. Jimmy Stewart and the angels became emblazoned on our collective concept of holidays, hope, and American optimism. From a marketing perspective, the movie has become an ingrained part of the Christmas "brand architecture" along with gift-wrapped toys, caroling, and the colors red and green. It's a tradition.

Yet like many traditions, one might argue, this one succeeds not because it's the highest-quality option, but because it's the most familiar. Familiarity and repetition have turned the movie into a fascinating holiday tradition. We love *It's a Wonderful Life* because, unlike the audiences in 1946, we're familiar with it.

Television stations took advantage of the freebie and inadvertently created a family tradition. Over time, viewers grew to expect to see the movie each year around Christmas. They'd comb through the television guide to see when it was airing and make sure the family gathered 'round to watch it. This loyal group of viewers trusted the stations to air it. They knew that Jimmy Stewart would still be the star, that, in the end, another angel would get its wings, and that they would be suffused with the same wonderfully warm feeling they had the year before. Being familiar with the characters and the story is what they liked most about it. Now, seventy years later, it's one of the most popular movies of all time.

What could you do to create a feeling of comfort and familiarity with customers? When you speak the language of stability, and use Trust as an Advantage, you create familiarity with loyal, returning customers.

What Is "Trust"?

Trust is Twinings, the British tea maker, which has continued to use the same logo since 1706. It's the real estate agent who sends clients flowers or chocolates for their birthdays. It's Raymond James being the only major investment-services firm to be named to *Forbes* magazine's list of America's most trusted companies for its absolute consistency. It's Walmart matching prices from competitors without requiring customers to present the competing ad. It's Nordstrom, where consistent customer experience is so essential to the brand that the staff will even wrap a present you've purchased elsewhere.

TRUST:

THE LANGUAGE OF STABILITY

Trust delivers consistently and reliably. Ever dependable, it maintains expectations, and thrives on being loyal and worthy of your business.

The Top Five Traits of Trust

The following adjectives best describe how to speak the language of stability: