

Seven Tribal Laws for Building Trust Through CEO and Executive Messages



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introduction

More than ever, business leaders must connect honestly with their tribes to energize, persuade, inspire, teach, provoke, stimulate, motivate and mobilize. They need to not only lead their companies, their departments or their teams on a path to renewed integrity, but they also have to forge honest, emotional links with employees, investors, partners, customers and the media. The reason is simple: in today's environment, they need to work harder than ever to keep our trust or perhaps even regain it.

But how do you win over a jaded public that regards the business community with suspicion? How do you instill confidence in shareholders and potential investors, or inspire your staffers to give their best? One way is for leaders to tell them the truth, sharing their stories with warmth and honesty, and treating their audiences with respect. Our message is simple; top executives

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must channel their authentic and emotional self on camera to build that connection.

This emphasis on authenticity is partly a reaction to political and economic turbulence. The public has become

disenchanted with business people and politicians that are seen as phony or insincere. They don't want slick leaders anymore; rather, they demand sincerity, honesty and integrity.

Video is one of the most effective ways to project these qualities across a large organization. It demands that leaders understand the power of the moving image to convey key emotional triggers and cues that will help them build trust. And the more authentic you come across on screen, the more you'll be able to transform your audience into believers and followers. Many corporate leaders, such as Lee Iacocca, Steve Jobs and Elon Musk, have transcended their companies to become role models

for integrity, candor and truthfulness, which are the building blocks of trust.

But getting to this point is a complicated process, which is why we've published

CEOs need to guide their corporations as well as their respective industries on a path to renewed integrity.

this book. Often, building authenticity requires letting our guard down a little to reveal some vulnerability, and that takes courage. Many people

feel vulnerable in front of a camera.

We've seen this behavior up close, and it can make or break your ability to connect in meaningful ways with your audience.

That's why, after years of working with the world's largest companies and their

executive leaders, we've synthesized these "Seven Tribal Laws for Building Trust" to help you tell your story with the sincerity and passion it takes to establish trust. We know these laws will help you build the foundation of a successful, candid and effective executive communications program.



LAW ONE

Be Personal and Inspire

People do business with people.

This is as true today as in the days of local merchants. While technology and social media have increased our physical separation, the connections we make with one another are still very personal. Let your personal stories strike emotional chords within your audience. One of the richest men in the world is IKEA

founder Ingvar Kamprad. His personal struggles with dyslexia inspired him to create IKEA's famously simple, graphics-driven brand and grow an international business that thrives on customer satisfaction.

He continues to inspire his employees and

entrepreneurs by his choice to live frugally, drive an old Volvo and shop locally.

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Tell the Truth

There's an old saying: "*When in doubt, tell the truth.*" Authenticity comes from the combination of truth and accomplishments, so use facts, avoid hyperbole and be original. And watch out for hollow platitudes or corporate jargon. Not only do they obscure meaning, they also can be interpreted as having something to hide. We believe one part of being an authentic leader comes from letting our guard

down to reveal vulnerability. This often takes

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a measure of courage, especially in front of a camera. Admitting we're not perfect underscores our values and draws our audience closer.

Starbucks' CEO Howard Schultz says, "When a leader shows vulnerability and sensibility and brings people together, the team wins."

LAW THREE

Do Your Homework

There's no substitute for hard work and preparation before you appear on camera to speak about important topics or issues. Be sure to reference what's happening now; being topical and acknowledging current trends, headlines, controversies and debates will help make your message resonate. At the same time, it's

helpful to couch this message in terms of shared experiences. Find the human insight, show your empathy and connect with what's happening in the world now to your company or institution.

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happening in the world

LAW FOUR

Know Thy Audience

What's interesting to you is not necessarily interesting to others.

Highlight the elements of your message that matter to your audience and be as specific as possible. Focus on how you want people to think or feel rather than just what you want to say. It sounds simple, but it's surprising how often people forget this. Don't just rattle off facts and

figures, or show graphs and charts; tell a story that provides meaning and context for your audience, and make sure it's tailored to the specific groups you're addressing. Take the time to recount actual scenarios in which what you have to say will have impact and meaning in their lives.

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Do Not Bore

As Mark Twain once said, *“Climb out on a limb; that’s where the best fruit is.”* Engaging your audience means not playing it safe, and that takes a measure of courage. What you don’t want to do is bore your audience. It shows a lack of respect for their time and attention. In this era of instant feedback, all they’ll remember about you is how you put them to sleep. In his TED Talk, “The Clues to a Great

Story,” Andrew Stanton, the writer and director of “Finding Nemo,” “Toy Story” and “WALL-E,” reminds us that all good stories need to build, from first sentence to last, to a single goal. He discusses how audiences need to be vested in a story, first and foremost, by caring about the characters. Keep this in mind: Building a story that invites empathy is key to sustaining interest

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LAW SIX

Don't Operate in a Vacuum

Leaders are able to recognize talent and surround themselves with those they trust to help lead their organizations forward. As Richard Branson puts it, “What is the point of hiring talented team members if you don’t give them the freedom to make the most of the chance you have given them? All *good* leaders listen to their people and empower them to go

away and turn any innovative ideas they have into a reality.” Make sure you engage with others in your organization. Empower them to bring their best thinking to the challenge. Then utilize an integrated approach to sharing your message.

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Whether it's a robust mix of advertising and PR, or a combination of sales calls, webinars and road shows, you'll benefit greatly from tapping a smart distribution strategy designed to deliver your content to the right audiences.

Trust the Pros to Make You Look Good

We live in a media-savvy world, where there are no secrets about how movies and TV shows are made. Audiences expect, if not demand, a certain level of sophistication and polish to the content they see on screen. That's why it's important to pay attention to the delivery and

packaging of your video content.

Good content creators adhere to generally accepted guidelines.

Tapping into innovative digital audio and video recording techniques

can help make messages more personal, more accessible and more immediate.

That's why it's

smart to work with a team of professionals that are experienced with putting leaders on camera.

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conclusion

A Arthur Page, the former VP of Public Relations for the old American Telephone & Telegraph Company, who was considered the dean of corporate communications, established a list of concepts he called “The Page Principles.” Created years ago, they revolve around issues of honesty, integrity, candor and conscience. These still ring true today. One is particularly relevant to building

trust through a CEO's message: "Realize a company's true character is expressed by its people." That's doubly true when the person who's expressing it is the company's leader.

Marketplace turbulence tinged with uncertainty will always be a factor in business. This is an opportunity for new leaders to lead, for companies to take a larger role in shaping the dialogue about

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key issues, and create new and stronger relationships with investors, partners, employees and customers.

The best companies will do so in the new currency of commerce, which is

Authenticity is
the new currency
of commerce

authenticity. The author and consultant Warren Bennis, who helped shape the field

of modern leadership studies, writes, “The process of becoming a leader is similar, if not identical, to becoming a fully integrated human being.” As our

“Seven Tribal Laws” reveal, this quest for authenticity, honesty, integrity and relevance is the foundation of building trust through a leader’s message.



about tribe pictures

Tribe Pictures is an award-winning film and video production company with offices in New York and New Jersey. Founded by Vern Oakley, with a mission: to leverage the power of film to help leaders and institutions express their humanity and successfully connect to the people who matter, making them feel, give, act, change and... mobilize.

At Tribe, we seek to reveal and express the humanity that connects leaders and institutions with those they seek to serve (their tribes).

In our current era of alienation and disconnection, Tribe's human storytelling is a necessary and powerful tool for leaders and institutions.

Each of our films captures and expresses the 'soul' of a person, a place or an idea. The authentic humanity of these stories creates deep and meaningful connections

with its audience. Honestly and, in the end, successfully.

Led by Vern's creative direction, Tribe's work has been recognized with over 500 international awards, including scores of best in shows from Telly Awards, Aurora Awards, CASE Awards, Cannes Corporate Media & TV Awards, the US International Film & Video Festival, and CINE.

Our clients include American Express, BASF, BD, Colgate-Palmolive, Coty,

Hamilton College, Hess, Kenyon
College, KPMG, Montefiore Medical
Center, Pfizer, Princeton University,
Stanley Black & Decker, Swarthmore
College, and others.

Humanize

your leaders,
company and brand.



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Founder and Creative Director of Tribe Pictures, an award-winning film and video production company, discusses the requirements for a successful and candid CEO-led communications program.

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