

# Consumers Expect Brands to Be Open and Honest on Social Media

## Article

**N**ot only do consumers want businesses to be open and honest in their social posts, consumers actually hold businesses to a higher standard than they hold for themselves.

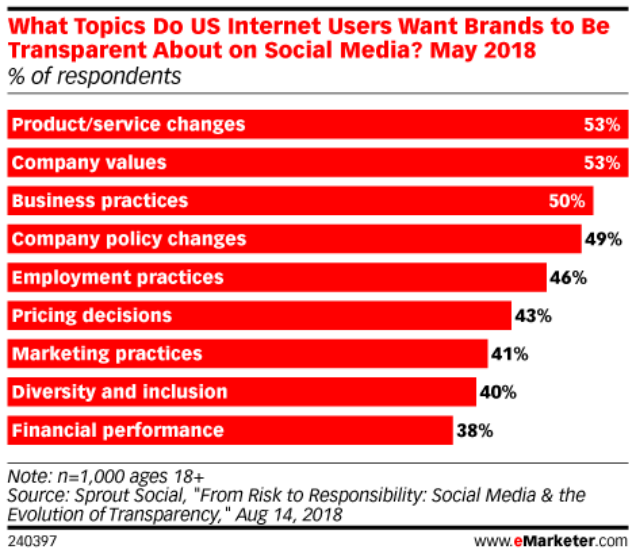
In a new study from **Sprout Social**, consumers singled out brands as the group with the greatest responsibility to be “transparent” on social media, a broad term but one that the survey suggests includes honesty, openness, clarity and even authenticity.

More than three-quarters of the consumers (81%) surveyed said brands must be transparent on social media. By comparison, only 71% said that they themselves had a responsibility to be transparent. Celebrities got an even bigger pass, with just 57% of respondents holding them to that standard of behavior.

What demonstrates a lack of transparency? The two most cited behaviors included "withholding information" and "ignoring customer questions." But the respondents also expressed concerns about companies that ignore employee questions as well.

For a smaller but not insignificant portion of the survey base, avoiding political or social issues was interpreted as lacking transparency. More than one-third (34%) of respondents said that was an issue.

However, the consumers surveyed said social media candor can increase the likelihood of future purchases (53%) or how frequently a purchase is made (37%). Some 42% said they'd recommend a transparent brand to family and friends, while one-third would share a positive post on their personal social media account.



However, a number of studies have found that despite consumers' expectations about corporate responsibility, those efforts aren't as powerful as product quality or cost when it's time to make a purchase decision.

A survey by **Cone Communications** and **Porter Novelli** found that **product quality was the leading attribute** influencing buying decisions for 41% of respondents, while 39% said cost

was the most significant factor. That compares with 20% who said a brand's purpose was the most critical attribute.

Millennials—thought to lead the charge in holding brands' more accountable—place a **similar focus on cost and quality**, a **Morning Consult** survey found. Nearly 90% of respondents said that a product or service that is “well priced, given the quality” is the top attribute that drives their loyalty. By comparison, qualities like ethics and transparency were less likely to drive loyalty.