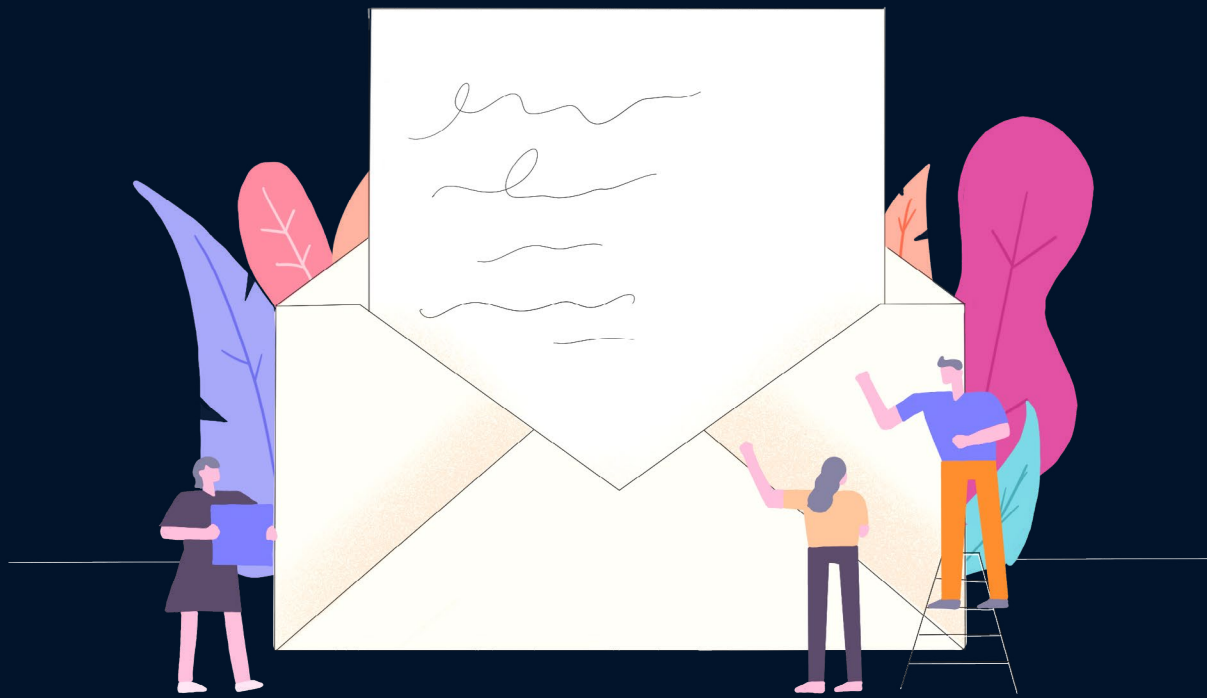




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# Documents That Build Credibility for Your Business



DECEMBER 2018

**Credibility is a key component in establishing trust with prospective and existing customers. It gives them confidence that your company will deliver quality products or services.**

Using professional-quality printed documents can help your business come across as trustworthy. Even if your company is committed to operating without using printed materials, online versions of these documents can still benefit your company. Customers expect companies to have certain documents. Without them, your company could appear inauthentic. In addition, you miss a key opportunity to educate future customers about your company's offerings.

## How Documents Build Business Credibility



Imagine you talk to a small business owner at a local event. They mention what their company does and you're interested in learning more. You ask for a business card and they tell you they don't have any yet. You still want to give this business a chance, so you take out a pen and paper to write down its website address only to be told by the business owner that they don't have a website. You'd likely thank them for their time and move on since you perceive this business is either not yet fully established or would be difficult to trust with your time.

Instead, if the business owner in the same scenario handed you a professional-looking business card with a phone number and a website address, along with brochures that answered common questions, and a product catalog, the interaction would come across differently. There's a better chance you'd make a purchase with this business. It's a business that clearly deals with customers on a regular basis, has the profits to invest in its marketing materials, and is likely vetted by other customers. Essentially, having professional marketing documents to give to you changed your perception about the business and helped you to develop trust.

**Eighty-four percent** of professional marketers believe that future marketing efforts will center on establishing trust. This is largely because people want only to do business with companies in which they have confidence, especially millennials who eschew from faceless corporations in favor of smaller businesses or those with social missions. Think about the **boom in craft beer, organic food, and same-day delivery services** led by this generation. With millennials' buying power at more than **\$200 billion**, smart businesses are doing whatever they need to create a trusting relationship with prospective customers.

# Types of Documents That Build Credibility

Fortunately, there are many things you can do to help your business build credibility with customers. This includes offering excellent customer service, providing the highest quality product or service that meets customer expectations, and creating marketing documents that establish credibility. Whether you plan to draft these documents on your own or you want to outsource to a professional content writing firm, the following documents are a great starting place.



## Brochures

A brochure is a small, printed document that provides pictures and written information about your company's product or service. Brochures can be product-specific or provide a general company overview. The information you feature in a brochure should answer common questions customers have in the buying process and let customers know precisely how to make a purchase.

When you first commission a brochure, start with a basic tri-fold that describes your company. Give its history and contact information, and detail a comprehensive list of services or products your company offers. From there, you can create brochures for each service. You can use these brochures throughout the sales process, giving customers a copy when:

1. Your team meets them at a vendor event or conference.
2. They ask for more information about your company or its services.
3. Customers fill out the contact form on your company's website.
4. Sponsoring gift bags for conference attendees.
5. A team member speaks in public.
6. Your sales team meets with customers or stops by potential leads.

You'll save money by printing large batches of brochures at once. However, it might make sense to start with smaller batches and update the brochures with feedback until you create the perfect one. Avoid using too many stock photos and choose some original photos of your company, its location, and staff to personalize your brochure and help it stand out from competitors.

## Business Cards

Business cards with basic contact information should be the first printed collateral you have printed. You can also use this space to list your most common services or products, so customers immediately know the type of business you operate.

## Product Catalog

A product catalog, whether printed or accessible only online, provides customers with an overview of what your company sells. It should include specifics such as available sizes and colors. In terms of credibility, seeing what other products your company carries can help customers see your company as a successful business with an entire product line to shop.

Due to search engine penalties for duplicate content, you don't want to rely on vendor- or supplier-provided product descriptions for products you sell on your website. It's well worth the time and investment to create original content for your products. You can repeat content from your printed product catalog and your e-commerce website without worry.

## White Papers

White papers are in-depth reports that can help service businesses establish authority and credibility in a given space. For instance, this document you're currently reading is a white paper about documents that establish credibility from a content marketing company with experience creating these kinds of documents. It helps to demonstrate your knowledge to potential clients.



## Capability Statement

A capability statement provides an overview of what your company is capable of, including any specializations. This is an ideal document for technology, consulting, and professional service companies that may have no other way of letting customers know about their intangible services.

## Business Plan

No matter how long your company has been in business, it's important that you have an updated business plan that conveys your company's mission and how it operates. If you apply for a bank loan, a business plan can help establish credibility for your business in the eyes of the bank loan officer.

## Marketing Plan

A marketing plan provides research on your company's position relative to its competition and its overall marketing strategy. This can include details about your planned marketing spend, goal ROI, marketing channels, and assessment strategies. This document can keep your business on target for meeting its goals and growing the business.

## 10-Year Plan

A five- or 10-year plan outlines your company's long-term goals and its plan on achieving them. It can be helpful in securing investors or convincing a customer to buy into your company's warranty program. If customers have confidence your company will be around in 10 years, paying for a warranty or service plan makes more sense.

## Written Proposals or Quotes

Some businesses only provide customers with verbal quotes on how much a particular service will cost. Others have a standard quote form with a "fill in the blank" line. However, these strategies might miss an opportunity to establish credibility and authority with your prospective customer.

A longer written proposal can better position your company for the sale. Instead of just having a number, you can detail what services your company will provide, information about your company's background, and why your company is best positioned to provide such a service. This information isn't included in a simple quote but could make a difference in a sale.

## Yearly Report



An annual report discloses key information about your business's performance, shares details for the future scope of the company's services, and provides a routine update for interested parties. Corporations are often required to create yearly reports and public companies with shareholders often make PDF copies of these documents available on their websites. You can access each year's report by simply downloading it.

Even if you operate a sole proprietorship or an LLC that is not required to file an annual report with your state's government, creating an annual report anyway can be a smart move. It can provide customers and future investors or buyers with a picture of how your business is thriving. Anyone can create an authentic business website that gives visitors the impression of success. An annual report shows customers, in concrete terms, that your company has an established market.

## Conclusion

**Without business credibility, customers will hesitate to buy your company's products and services. People want to buy from reputable businesses they can trust. With the highly publicized data breaches and scams, who can blame them? The way for your company to overcome skepticism and hesitation from prospective customers is to establish your credibility with documents that build confidence.**

The professional documents listed can provide credibility for all types of businesses, from e-commerce retailers to dentists and website developers. Your company may not need every document type to succeed, though many companies find that once they create a document, it's easy to keep it updated and available. If your company faces challenges in obtaining customer transactions, consider improving its credibility with professional documents that outline its capability and experience.

