

# Preparing your brand to ride out the social media sh!tstorm

By Leigh Andrews

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Mike Stopforth of Cerebra continued his social media workshop held as part of Red & Yellow School's #ExecEd series by explaining trust as a commercial factor for your business.



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The internet runs on cyphers, Kardashians and cat videos, sure, but Stopforth points out that 'CATS' also serve as social business principles to rely on. Here's why...

“ [#Catvideos](https://t.co/HWSNYSGqm) are cute and all, but they're irrelevant to your [#socialmedia](https://t.co/HWSNYSGqm) strategy: <https://t.co/HWSNYSGqm>  
[pic.twitter.com/QRoiHHvYuN](https://t.co/HWSNYSGqm)— [GrowSocialWise \(@growsocialwise\)](https://t.co/HWSNYSGqm) August 2, 2017 ”

In many businesses, there's a love-hate relationship with social media as it's seen as something new and scary. But if you isolate the four basic aspects that make social media sparkle for a brand, you'll soon change your perspective. Stopforth explained the CATS acronym as follows:

- **Conversation** - as expressed by [The Cluetrain Manifesto](#), itself published before social business was the status quo, there's no denying social media has disrupted the world as we know it and a powerful global conversation has begun. Websites started out as glorified ad brochures stored online for the longest time without dialogue, until blogs emerged. Traditionally, we spoke at people through advertising. Now, there are such excessive demands on our attention spans that our capacity to process all that information is limited. Stopforth says to break through traditional communication barriers and have fun with it, but keep in mind that when you publish something in the social media space you are subject to the same rules as any other media.
- **Authenticity** - it is guaranteed that social media will amplify your brand truth, you then need to stand by it but it's best if the individuals within your company have opinions, not the brand itself. People believe they can say anything they like from behind the safety of an avatar, which is why brands often take complaints back to a personal level. Remember that the power has shifted though, so customers are publishing their experience and the brand is no longer just what you tell them, it's also what they tell you about your brand. What is said on social media often becomes the truth.
- **Trust** - it may come as a shock, but every brand-customer relationship begins from a place of *mistrust* or suspicion. This is why it's frustrating to start from scratch and resubmit your basic info each time you interact with a brand, as it

proves you're just a number to them. While you may think you're protecting the business, you are actually dismantling the trust factor, says Stopforth. So for your business to really stand out, all you need to do is take a single-customer view and integrate all the data you have at your disposal. The disruptors that really make an impact have simply figured out how to monetise trust. Stopforth says you may also need to innovate from the inside out and prove that you trust your employees and coworkers.

- **Sharing** - In the Industrial Age companies thrived on expertise, then came Google, which flipped this from a position of owned knowledge to a space of democratised information to all the world, for free. This is also why the notion of being a generalist rather than a specialist is becoming more compelling.

Keeping the CATS acronym in mind will help your brand sail smoothly over the seas of disruption when other companies innovate and steer clear of a social media crisis.



#RYExecEd: Why your brand's missing out if it's not taking social seriously

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[Click here](#) to view Stopforth's MyBiz profile, [here](#) for Red & Yellow School's press office and [here](#) to access Cerebra's free downloads.

## ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh\_Andrews.

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