

Trustmarks 101: Building Trust to Build Business

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Introduction

High-profile attacks, zero-day vulnerabilities, and privacy concerns have consumers nervous about shopping online. A spring 2010 consumer survey found that 8 million households had had serious problems because of spyware within the preceding six months, and one million households had suffered monetary losses or account misuse because of phishing. Online shoppers are growing justifiably cautious about sharing their sensitive information or using unknown, potentially risky, websites. And, their fears are probably costing you business. A Harris Interactive study found that one in five shoppers completely abandons a cart due to online fears,¹ contributing to tens of billions of lost ecommerce sales.

Many merchants know that they lose sales every day due to shopper mistrust but are at a loss how to respond. Trustmarks—third-party seals of approval—are one of the easiest, simplest tools merchants can use to reassure customers that it is safe to shop on a site. In fact, where everything else is equal, consumers will choose the site with a trustmark, choose to buy more, and choose to buy more often. Read on to learn how to harness the momentum of trustmarks for your e-tail site.

What is a Trustmark?

Before the Internet, before the Better Business Bureau, before the Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval, there was the Underwriters Laboratory (UL) certification. Back in 1894, in response to faulty electrical components driving up the incidence of fires, the National Board of Fire Underwriters conducted the first test on noncombustible insulation material. Today, the UL Mark is so influential that UL must fight counterfeiters who try to hijack the Mark's credibility to validate their products.²

In the brick and mortar world, trustmarks are the little symbols or seals that overtly or subliminally reassure us that something is safe. The UL Mark shows product safety, the Good Housekeeping Seal warrants products will perform as promised, and the Better Business Bureau Torch attests that local leaders have vetted a business.

Types of Online Trustmarks

Because of the virtual nature of the online experience, e-tailers must work harder at building trust than their brick and mortar counterparts. After all, consumers cannot count the cars in the parking lot to see if the business is popular and legitimate or window shop from the sidewalk to gauge the quality of the merchandise.

To help establish trust, merchants can turn to online trustmarks that confer credibility, authority, and the social proof of popularity on different aspects of a business and product.

Online trustmarks can be broken down into four types, each offering a different kind of assurance:

- **Personal Privacy**—These symbols indicate that a site protects user information and rights. For instance, a TRUSTe-accredited site owner commits that they will comply with TRUSTe's privacy policies of disclosure, choice, access, and security and support their dispute resolution processes.
- **Business Reputation**—A service such as BBBOnline requires businesses to have a physical presence, be in business for at least a year, and have a positive track record of handling complaints.
- **Secure Transactions**—A locked padlock or solid key icon appears in your browser, the URL says https://, and you know you are on a Secure Sockets Layer (SSL)-enabled site. A standard SSL validation verifies that a site is who it says it is. It also confirms that the site uses encryption for data communication and transactions. Extended validation SSL certificates (EVSSL) can turn the URL display bar green to reinforce the positive message.
- **Security and Vulnerability Scanning**—Malicious content planted on websites and misconfigured websites present ripe opportunities for hackers, spammers, phishers, and scammers. Regularly scheduled vulnerability scanning will identify these weaknesses in a website, enabling owners to correct flaws promptly. To keep up with criminals, Yankee Group experts recommend daily testing: "Trust seals that provide a 'set it and forget it' approach are of little use to both (businesses) and their customers."³ Web scanning trustmarks like the McAfee SECURE™ seal tell shoppers that a site is scanned rigorously every day for vulnerabilities, dangerous content, and links that expose a consumer's computer and personal information to malicious use.

"Only a seal indicating a website has been externally scanned by a third-party security organization for vulnerabilities and malware infection can provide the extra level of assurance that a customer's computer and personal information are protected from data- and identity-stealing malware infections."

Trust Marks: What's Behind the Label Counts, Yankee Group

1. McAfee and Harris Interactive Study, May 2009, <http://investor.mcafee.com/releasedetail.cfm?releaseid=392507>

2. <http://www.ul.com/global/eng/pages/corporate/aboutul/history/>

3. Excerpted from a commissioned work, entitled "Trust Marks: What's Behind the Label Counts" conducted by Yankee Group Research, Inc. on behalf of McAfee, Inc., February 2009.

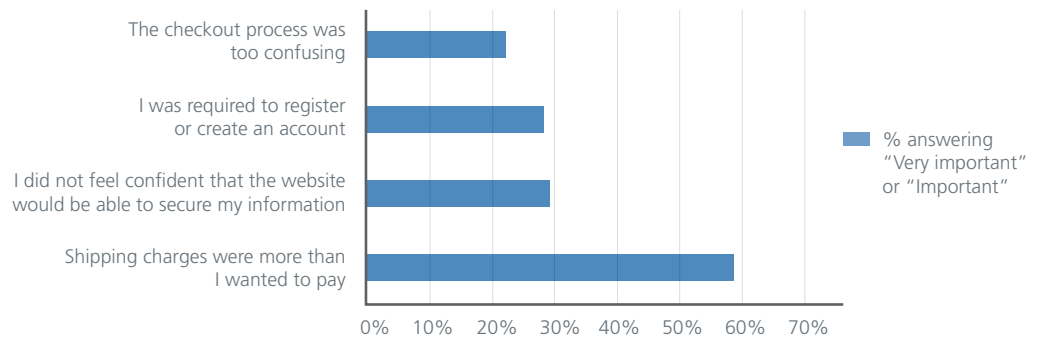
Are Trustmarks Really Necessary?

Consumers are frightened of the unknown

While many consumers blithely hand over personal information on social networking sites like Facebook,⁴ most online shoppers have gotten savvy about sharing their credit card numbers and other financial information. They are loath to part with this data unless they feel sure of a site. A 2010 PayPal Merchant Services study revealed that lack of confidence that the website would be able to secure their credit card, debit card, or bank account information drove 29 percent of respondents to terminate their transactions.⁵

In 2009, a Harris Interactive survey found that more than 90 percent of people were jittery and concerned when shopping on new or unknown sites. That survey also showed that almost half of consumers had abandoned their shopping carts or terminated orders because of fears about security.⁶

How important were each of the following in causing you to decide NOT to complete the purchase at that time?



Source: PayPal Merchant Services

Consumers are increasingly looking for trustmarks

The Harris survey also held out some good news. It turns out that customers are learning ways to overcome their fears. They are looking for cues about a website’s security: 47 percent of consumers said they look for trustmarks to feel safe when shopping on a lesser known site. Even in an attempt to get a good deal, 63 percent will not purchase from a website that does not display a trustmark or security policy. So trustmarks make a difference to these shoppers’ willingness to give you their cash.

Trustmarks help smaller merchants compete

Trustmarks have such an impact on consumer confidence that one-third of the respondents said that they would rather buy from a smaller website with a trustmark than a larger, more well-known e-tailer.⁷ Therefore, security is not a tax you should pay grudgingly. It can actually help bring in more shoppers, allowing smaller retailers to compete against the big guys.

Why Do Trustmarks Work?

According to Tim Ash, CEO of SiteTuners.com and author of Amazon.com bestseller *Landing Page Optimization: The Definitive Guide To Testing and Tuning for Conversions*, two psychological factors explain the influence of trustmarks: authority and social proof (or consensus). These concepts come from the marketing classic, *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*, by Robert B. Cialdini.⁸

“Trustmarks have such an impact on consumer confidence that one-third of the respondents said that they would rather buy from a smaller website with a trustmark than a larger, more well-known e-tailer.”

McAfee and Harris Interactive Study

4. 40 percent of respondents in a 2010 Consumer Reports survey had published their full birth dates on a social networking site. <http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/magazine-archive/2010/june/electronics-computers/social-insecurity/overview/index.htm> and <http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/magazine-archive/2010/june/electronics-computers/social-insecurity/state-of-the-net-2010/index.htm>

5. <https://www.paypal-marketing.ca/merchantservices/en/full-survey.html>

6. McAfee and Harris Interactive Study, May 2009, <http://investor.mcafee.com/releasedetail.cfm?releaseid=392507>

7. Ibid.

8. The six influences are Reciprocation, Commitment and Consistency, Social Proof, Liking, Authority, and Scarcity. *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*, by Robert B. Cialdini, William Morrow and Company, 1984



When Tim applied Cialdini's ideas to trustmarks, he developed two ideas:

- *Authority*—Trustmarks provide external validation that helps when a customer is not internally confident. They provide a third-party "authority figure" that conveys trust and compliance, the way a uniformed police officer can reassure a traveler.
- *Social Proof or Consensus*—We do not merely care about outside experts, we care about the behavior of our peers. A trustmark we see repeatedly offers a shortcut that tells us our peers have bought in, so a decision is safe.

Tim Ash suggests that these two influences matter because of the abstract, fleeting nature of web relationships. Normally, trust builds over time in an extended relationship based on multiple contacts. However, visitors rarely have much of a relationship with you when they hit your website, so you must create an environment of trust quickly. Trustmarks offer a simple way to leverage influence—from both authority and consensus—that has been established ahead of time.⁹

What Can Trustmarks Do for Your Business?

This authority and social proof adds up to increased sales, a benefit the 80,000 McAfee SECURE users experience every day.

An average double digit sales increase

Overall, shoppers presented the McAfee SECURE trustmark become buyers more often—an average 12 percent more often—than those not shown the trustmark.

Your mileage will vary

Obviously, many factors affect specific results, and no two businesses are the same. Visitors may have existing relationships with a site, know a brand from its bricks and mortar counterpart, or be part of a loyalty program. The following two examples contrast results for a very targeted site and a broadly visible consumer brand:

- *Justoffbase: 15.73 percent*

Justoffbase caters to military personnel and their families stationed overseas, a perpetually evolving, targeted audience. Their A/B test found sales conversion rates up 15.73 percent. More people stayed to buy when they saw the McAfee SECURE mark. Visitors also trusted Justoffbase with more of their money, showing an average order value increase of about 20 percent.

- *Jelly Belly: 6.42 percent*

At the other end of the size and brand name spectrum sits Jelly Belly, the world's #1 jellybean maker. They had recently upgraded their web presence and were skeptical a trustmark would make much difference. To their delight, their six week test showed a 6.42 percent improvement. The cost of the McAfee SECURE for Websites service compared to the sales increases due to use of the trustmark translated into a 2,400 percent return on investment for the McAfee service.¹⁰

The Justoffbase example shows that trustmarks can really help smaller sites accelerate the trust relationship and increase revenue. The Jelly Belly example underscores the reality that sales improvement figures do not have to be double digit to be material. For high volume sites, a one percent improvement can represent a large and meaningful absolute dollar amount.

"We project an annual ROI of just shy of twenty four hundred percent."

—Jelly Belly

"The really astonishing thing for me was that average order value (AOV) increased by about 20 percent. We have an AOV of around £90. That's what really convinced me that people really do respond to the McAfee SECURE brand."

—Justoffbase

What are the Best Practices for Trustmarks?

So far, we have been discussing why trustmarks are important to ecommerce. Now, let us look at how to implement them for maximum impact.

Every page is a landing page

During a recent webinar, Bryan Eisenberg, Chief Persuasion Officer of FutureNow, noted that “Today, because of Google, every one of your pages is a landing page. The first question that people ask as they come to your website is ‘Is it related to what I’m searching for?’ Secondly, they consider, ‘Do I trust this website?’ Since a search can take the viewer to any page on your site, it makes sense to display the mark on each page.”¹¹

Consistent use reinforces the message that you are committed to earning trust. Trustmarks on pages other than checkout reassure customers and make them feel safe enough to *get* to checkout, where the trustmark reinforces confidence.

Location, location, location

Just the way “above the fold” banner headlines lured buyers into newsstands in the pre-Internet days, you want your influence builder to be immediately visible when the page loads. Internet shoppers are “skimmers” who quickly scan the page as it loads, so your trustmarks should load early, above the scroll line, to help draw the customer in. Multiple studies have found that the upper right corner of the webpage is a particularly effective location. Brand icons and company logos traditionally appear there, so people expect confidence building images there.

These recommendations are borne out in a recent test done by an existing McAfee SECURE service customer, Candy.com. For their site, moving the trustmark from the foot of the page to the top, middle section of the page—right next to the search bar—drove better results. With more prominent placement, Candy.com saw incremental improvements:

- 20 percent increase in conversion rate
- 10 percent increase in average order value (AOV)
- 10 percent decrease in bounce rate

In addition to being most beneficial when it appears “front and center,” there are other subtle options for trustmark placement. Since a trustmark is all about building confidence, place your trustmark right beside other value and trust messages, whether they are for risk-free returns, free shipping, or customer service information.

Confidence building is job one

On each page that you request personal or financial information, place the mark prominently next to the data entry field or BUY button. This placement helps discourage shopping cart abandonment, coaxing those skittish shoppers across the finish line.

Not just for data miners or ecommerce

Some site owners have asked about the merit of trustmarks if the site does not collect financial or other regulated information. Trustmarks remain a good idea, since the customer wants to know that your site is safe to surf and that you will respect and protect even their basic lead information. A security scanning service, like the McAfee SECURE service, tells viewers that your site will not load their system up with keyloggers, rootkits, and other malware or link them to risky sites. If they see the seal as one of the first things they view on a page, they are more likely to stick around. In addition, customers may not know that you are passing them through another site to actually process their financial information or do their fulfillment, so they hold you accountable for their security. Win their trust.

“Because of Google, every one of your pages is a landing page.”

—Bryan Eisenberg, FutureNow

“Only 2-3 percent of people scroll to the bottom of a web page. You can’t influence people who don’t see the sources of your influence.”

—Tim Ash, SiteTuners.com

More is better

We are often queried about displaying more than one trustmark—is it constructive or confusing? The different seals deliver different messages—privacy, reputation, transaction encryption, and security testing—so it is fine to display more than one type.

Conclusion

Surveys show that shoppers are becoming more discerning. More people are choosing to protect their personal information and their systems from identity and credit card thieves, spammers, and disreputable operators. These security sensitive shoppers are actively directing their business to the sites that demonstrate a commitment to strong security.

Trustmarks can help your business influence these cautious shoppers toward choosing your site, spending more time on your site, and spending more money on your site. As you consider your options, be a discerning shopper. According to the “Trust Marks: What’s Behind the Label Counts” study by Yankee Group, trustmarks that cover only privacy, reputation, or SSL are insufficient to truly protect customers. Only trustmark services that provide “daily scanning and audits of a merchant’s website infrastructure can ensure the highest level of security and safety.”¹²

Visit www.mcafeesecure.com to get started with the most comprehensive type of trustmark: security and vulnerability scanning.

About McAfee

McAfee, Inc., headquartered in Santa Clara, California, is the world’s largest dedicated security technology company. McAfee is relentlessly committed to tackling the world’s toughest security challenges. The company delivers proactive and proven solutions and services that help secure systems and networks around the world, allowing users to safely connect to the Internet, browse and shop the web more securely. Backed by an award-winning research team, McAfee creates innovative products that empower home users, businesses, the public sector and service providers by enabling them to prove compliance with regulations, protect data, prevent disruptions, identify vulnerabilities, and continuously monitor and improve their security. www.mcafee.com.

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12. Excerpted from a commissioned work, entitled “Trust Marks: What’s Behind the Label Counts” conducted by Yankee Group Research, Inc. on behalf of McAfee, Inc., February 2009.

