

## S2: E182: The Trust Recession and What Real Leaders Do Next

Hey there and welcome back to the *Make Your Message a Movement* podcast. I'm your host Tiffany Neuman, and today we're going to dive right in. If you're new to the podcast, welcome. This is a fully human podcast with no edits, so it's as real as you can get. I can't wait to talk about the trust recession, which everybody's been talking about for the last year or so, and what real leaders need to do to move through it.

Over the past few months, I've noticed more and more conversations happening around what people are calling the trust recession, although many of us who have been around for a long time have been talking about this for a few years. Honestly, I understand why more and more people are starting to talk about it now, because there's a growing exhaustion happening in the online business world. People are tired of inflated promises and of watching people build audiences without the depth, integrity, or leadership to actually hold them.

Recently, something major happened that brought this into focus for me in a more personal way. A man I know online—someone I called a mentor slightly; I didn't work with him a lot, but I had purchased certain things from him—abruptly shut down his entire business and community. There were hundreds, maybe thousands of people inside it. There were events planned and commitments made by people who had invested financially and emotionally into what he was building.

He considered himself a leader, but cracks started showing in the foundations. Now, people are walking into spaces and places differently. They are much more cautious, more discerning, and they pay closer attention to structural integrity. This is actually a good thing. I didn't want to share this episode or story to come from scarcity and scare people.

To be completely transparent, I've talked to some business owners who were affected by this, and they said, "I kind of want to leave the online space because of this." For a split second, I felt that too. It felt horrible. But I came from corporate, and this type of thing—out of integrity and crazy things happening—happens all the time there too. I am not saying we should all leave the online space. We came here for a reason. I left the corporate world for a reason. Having an online business has given me an incredible amount of freedom and flexibility.

It's not easy, and I'm not going to sugarcoat that. If you've been in business for any amount of time, you understand this too. It's a beautiful space with so many incredible humans. More and more, I believe the advent of AI and people leaving corporate will bring even more people into this space.

Everyone has been talking about this trust recession, but almost nobody is talking about what we should actually do about it. The answer is much deeper than simply "be more authentic" or "build a personal brand." Make sure you listen to next week's episode about personal branding, because that's shifting as well.

I truly think we're entering a completely new era of thought leadership—one where trust itself becomes the most valuable asset in business. Trust is rarely built through one big moment; it's built through small moments that stack over time. During the launch of Brand OS Pro, I've been thinking a lot about what actually creates trust now, especially in an AI-driven and increasingly skeptical world.

To be fully transparent, the launch was incredible in some ways, but not exactly what I hoped for. I hoped for more people to come in. But what I realized is that trust takes more time than ever. People who have been in my sphere for a long time were able to step into Brand OS Pro because they've known me long enough to know I'm the real deal, I get results, and my testimonials are real. People who just landed on my list maybe didn't know me as well and weren't ready to step into the container because of everything I just talked about.

There's no way I'm going to try to manipulate them or force them in because that's just not the way to do things. We've all been in situations on a sales call where you get manipulated into it. I've had a few of those calls over the past weeks where people said, "I'm just not sure, I'm just not ready." I told them, "Perfect. I believe in divine timing. If you want to come in for the next round, that's perfect." I don't want people to come in feeling anxious. I know they're going to get results because I'm watching people go through Brand OS Pro getting incredible results.

The reason I'm sharing this is to reflect back to you: if your sales have been slowing down or your launches have been slower than in the past, stick with it. The sales cycle is simply slower because people are being more discerning, as they should be.

Today, I want to share the three signals of trusted authority. Although this trust recession and AI can seem like a big hurdle, it's actually a massive opportunity for those of us who want to stand the test of time and play the long game. If we can build a real foundation of trust and credibility, we will see massive benefits in our brands over time.

Signal One: Coherence. This is where your message, your behavior, your offers, your leadership, and your values all match and stay consistent. I see many thought leaders needing to dial this in and stick with something for a little bit. I truly believe almost all entrepreneurs have some form of ADHD, whether diagnosed or not. It's not a bad thing; our brains just work differently. It's actually a superpower.

Most entrepreneurs are multi-passionate and tend to switch things up a lot. "Oh, this isn't working, let me start a new offer. This is happening, let me do this." I'm not telling you that you have to settle for just one thing. I help many multi-passionates bring their brand into a cohesive operating system that still allows them to play. However, people can feel when something is disconnected, even if they can't articulate why.

Someone says one thing, but their energy says another. Their marketing sounds supportive, but the way they handle problems feels avoidant. A brand communicates abundance, but their decisions communicate panic. Or perhaps you've been sold a shiny object that promises to solve everything, but it turns out to be smoke and mirrors. Audiences are becoming much more emotionally intelligent. They might not consciously think, "This lacks coherence," but they feel it. Once that trust is broken, it's incredibly difficult to rebuild. We need to be more conscious than ever about creating an ecosystem where everything is coherent.

Signal Two: Consistency. I do not mean consistency in the way the online business world usually talks about it—posting every day and being constantly visible. I mean consistency of leadership, values, and emotional regulation. It's about how people experience you and your business over time. This includes yourself and any team members you have.

People trust patterns. One reason trust has eroded online is that people have experienced too many unpredictable leaders—people who appear grounded one moment and chaotic the next, or people who promise one thing and then disappear when things get hard. This doesn't mean perfection; it means ownership when you miss the bar or when something goes awry. It means stability. People need to feel that who you are publicly is who you are privately.

Signal Three: Humanity. We're in the age of AI. It's exciting, but AI can generate content endlessly. It can mimic structure, tone, and even personality. What it cannot replicate is depth, human energetics, lived experience, emotional nuance, and what I call "human texture." The brands that become the most valuable over the next decade will be the ones that feel unmistakably human—not polished into perfection or optimized into sameness.

People want to experience other people who are thoughtful, grounded, and real. This is good news for heart-centered experts. For years, brilliant people have struggled to compete in an environment that rewarded performance over depth. That era is ending. People are craving leaders who feel safe to trust again—not loud or performative ones, but trusted leaders.

There is a huge opportunity right now for those of us who have real depth, integrity, and expertise to rise into greater visibility. If we hold the course, a new wave of thought leaders will be rising. As we wrap up today, I invite you to reflect: when someone encounters your brand

online, what do they actually feel? Do they feel pressure and confusion, or do they feel depth, clarity, safety, and trust?

Your brand communicates long before someone ever gets on a call with you. Trust is becoming the factor that determines whether your opportunities expand or quietly pass you by. Look at this moment as an invitation to lead differently—to build a business that can hold people well and create a brand that feels emotionally safe and structurally sound.

The future won't belong to the loudest brands. It will belong to the people who bring trust to the forefront. If you enjoyed this episode, please leave a review. It helps get the message out. Stay tuned for next week, when I'll be talking about why the future belongs to people building roots. I'll see you then.