

# R-E-S-P-E-C-T

To quote Aretha Franklin: "R-E-S-P-E-C-T, find out what it means to me." (I do wish I could sing this to you but...)

We do business with people and brands we respect. This is why we see the rise in rating websites like Yelp and Angie's List. We are looking not only for value and good quality, but to respect who we are doing business with. On Angie's List, one of the parameters used to rate service providers is professionalism. Professionalism is about whether a person exhibits good judgment, whether he or she treats his or her customers with respect.

It is said that respect is earned. That is true. To earn respect, you have to act in ways that garner trust. For instance, if you read a newspaper and find interesting and informative articles there, you continue reading it. You respect and trust the information it provides. But once you start seeing factual mistakes, typos and lapses in editorial judgment, you start losing respect and trust for the publication (or its editors). Same goes for blogs, company newsletters, anything.

As a marketer, one of your tasks should be to earn your customers' respect and make sure they trust your product or service. You do that by providing honest information. If you are marketing an office supply store and you say in your advertising that you carry everything for the office, but when a customer is looking for a desk or a file cabinet, and can't find that at your store, you are not being honest with your customers. Your customers will lose respect for you. If you say you match pricing from any other store (and you make that really large print) and then list exceptions (in very small print), you are not being honest with your customers. And yes, that will cost you respect.

It does come down to R-E-S-P-E-C-T.