

Digital brands are still built on trust

By [Gil Sperling](#)

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Building a brand in any industry is all about trust. Ignore the channels or the tactics - achieving that trust is a fundamental foundation for success. The way the majority of us have been forced to adopt technology over the last 18 months to help perform everyday tasks has changed the way we live, interact and make purchases - but what has driven that near-instant adoption is the trust we have in the brands we've interacted with.



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The property industry is a great example of this. Proptech has disrupted the way people find homes, but because of the sheer magnitude of the transaction involved, they still want a trusted face to ultimately guide them through the process. In the US, 90% of residential property transactions over a 10-year period happened via an agent – and it's safe to bet that that number is closer to 100% in South Africa. Agents are an essential part of the process – and the proptech revolution isn't going to change that.

Building fundamentals of trust online

While transactions involving buying groceries or hopping in an Uber are high-frequency-low-value, a purchase as large as a property is a low-frequency-high-value one. It involves a years-long decision cycle for a buyer, influenced by changes in their work circumstances, the growth of a family, children changing schools and other lifestyle choices. Someone buying a property wants a trusted guide to get them safely through that process. The difference is that would-be buyers are no longer choosing agents and finding properties based on suburban billboards and flyers – they're looking online, where they're looking at their other purchases and being targeted by brands. That means that the fundamentals of trust, reputation and service levels now need to

be built in those online spaces. Proptech helps connect the right agents with the right prospects – and in a hyperconnected online world, it's essential to tap into those networks in a targeted way to ensure that their digital reputation matches their hard-won offline reputation, established over years.

Digital helps eliminate inefficiencies

Doing that requires being active on the digital platforms where people spend their time – and Facebook and Instagram lead that pack by a significant margin. The arrival of the PoPI Act also removes the tool that many agents have relied on for years – purchased databases and those built up over years that people haven't necessarily consented to being part of. Digital helps eliminate the inefficiencies associated with the interactions driven by those ancient databases – a low open rate for emails, low engagement rate, never mind the vast expense.

Proptech solutions enable agents and prospective buyers to be matched, based on the buyer's behaviour – if a would-be buyer is looking at properties in a specific area or price range and an agent is plugged into those networks in the right way, the tech connects the two parties to proceed, based on genuine intent, rather than a machine-gun mail-and-pray approach.



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More personalised approach

The world of digital brand-building means that billboards are inefficient and unmeasurable and our new low-touch environment means that people are less likely to pick up flyers at a traffic light. It's about a more personalised approach – but that can be hard to manage if you don't have a grasp of digital advertising and the mysteries of Facebook's algorithms. Platforms like Flow remove the challenges of understanding those processes by automating them, allowing companies to focus on building that trust, sending genuine prospects to them, when they're ready. They may still reach out via mail, call or Google, but it's essential that they have seen the brand on their online platforms at a consistency and frequency that places it top of mind for them, when they reach the key part of that lengthy consideration cycle.

Any brand needs to occupy the new digital world its customers inhabit and take its reputation online.

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