

# 2021 B2B

## TRUSTED BRANDS REPORT



# Introduction

The **2021 B2B Trusted Brands Report** by Sagefrog Marketing Group (Sagefrog) is an annual report revealing and discussing the most trusted B2B brands of the year.

## **BRAND TRUST IN 2021**

2020 was a challenging year, but it uncovered important values like putting in extra effort to connect with people and find joy in simple pleasures. More than ever before, people craved human connection. In turn, the pandemic took an emotional toll on purchasing behaviors. Consumers were more distrustful of companies and people than in previous years.<sup>1</sup> 81% of consumers see brand trust as a deciding factor in purchasing,<sup>2</sup> and 45% of consumers claim that once broken, their trust cannot be regained.<sup>3</sup>

The value of brand trust—and the risk of losing it—is colossal, which is why both B2B and B2C companies had to change course on go-to-market strategies in the wake of COVID-19, prioritizing brand trust. In a year when we couldn't connect in person, leading B2B companies made human connection possible by extending a virtual hand and fostering more personal relationships with businesses.

Sagefrog performed a deep dive on the top trusted brands of 2021 and what they have done to connect with businesses and earn brand trust despite roadblocks.

**See our survey methodology before diving into the results.** [!\[\]\(a870788d6ed9b8fd294b7654a8c8526b\_img.jpg\)](#)

# Survey Methodology

At the beginning of each year, Sagefrog distributes a customer-choice survey that simply asks B2B professionals: What brands do you trust? The survey lists the most prominent B2B brands for their consideration. Once the data is collected, which comprises more than 2,600 votes, we analyze the data and produce an overall ranking report based on brand Trust Factor.

**See the most trusted B2B brands of 2021.** [↓](#)

## THE TRUST FACTOR

The Trust Factor is calculated by taking the most-trusted company and assigning the percentage of customers who trusted that company with a value of 100%. This year, the most trusted brand had 49.55% of customers report that they trust it. Using the difference between 100% and 49.55%, which is 50.45%, we adjusted the proportion of all other brands to determine their Trust Factor.



# Top 30 Most Trusted B2B Brands of 2021

<b>70+</b> Exceptional Trust Factor Score	<b>55+</b> Excellent Trust Factor Score	<b>40+</b> Good Trust Factor Score
1 Apple	11 Visa	21 John Deere
2 Amazon	12 3M	22 CVS Caremark
3 Adobe	13 Starbucks	23 Canon
4 LinkedIn	14 Marriott International	24 IBM
5 Google	15 MasterCard	25 Sony
6 Microsoft	16 Johnson and Johnson	26 YouTube
7 FedEx	17 Samsung	27 Home Depot
8 HubSpot	18 Salesforce	28 Ford
9 UPS	19 Costco	29 Proctor and Gamble
10 American Express	20 Dell	30 HP

\*For permission to use any of the results in this survey for promotional services, please contact Noelle Roque, Marketing Associate, at [noeller@sagefrog.com](mailto:noeller@sagefrog.com).

# What Can We Learn from the Most Trusted Brands?

The top four trusted brands of 2021 have lessons to offer B2B companies of all sizes and industries. Last year, seamless customer experiences and subsequent positive word of mouth were considered the driving forces behind brand trust. This year, trust is the result of something bigger: **human connection**.

1

## APPLE

Relate to Your Audience & Show Where You Fit in



3

## ADOBE

Fuel Collaboration & Creativity from Home



2

## AMAZON

Focus on the Critical Needs of B2B Companies



4

## LINKEDIN

Engage Your Audience with Resources That Help



Dive deeper into the lessons offered by this year's most trusted B2B brands. [📌](#)



## LESSON 1

# Relate to Your Audience & Show Where You Fit in

Apple has been a trusted brand for years, and it comes as no surprise that they topped the chart in 2021. Apple at Work is the company's business division. You can expect the same hardware, software, and services that you know and love for personal use but deployed across organizations of any size.

To reach B2B buyers and build trust and optimism during the challenges of 2020, Apple released "The whole working-from-home thing".<sup>4</sup> This campaign shows a team being challenged with an arduous project, constricting timeline, and inconsiderable budget. How do they accomplish their goals? Through the power of Apple at Work.

### Know Your Audience & Deliver Authentic Content

With over 30 million views on YouTube, this campaign reflects the impact of making human connections in B2B marketing. Apple is spot on with references of what real people working from home deal with, and whether you're a small startup or a largescale corporation, you can relate.

**31% of ads that derive from emotions are successful compared to the 16% of ads that derive from logic.**<sup>5</sup> By nailing down common human struggles and showing various Apple products at work, this ad effectively taps into today's B2B buying market.

### Everything You Need at Your Fingertips

Apple at Work emphasizes the company's ability to accelerate the pace of business. You can deliver a seamless experience for users across your entire organization by equipping them with an iPhone, iPad, Mac, Apple Watch, and various applications. Several existing features on these devices are being showcased more often for their ability to **unleash greater productivity and sharing capabilities** in remote work:

- Receive notifications on all devices to never miss a call or meeting
- Scan and send essential documents in the Notes application
- Utilize Split View on iPads and Macs for multitasking
- Share presentations via AirPlay

**In taking on a relatable approach, Apple shows B2B professionals that that the company sees them, hears them, and understands them, earning the trust needed to invest in Apple products for the whole organization.**





## LESSON 2

# Focus on the Critical Needs of B2B Companies

Amazon has been a most trusted brand for years, simplifying purchasing decisions for consumers and businesses. The company maintained excellent customer service and reliability in 2020, despite unprecedented order volumes and supply chain disruptions.

The Amazon Business division provides B2B professionals with the same pricing, selection, and convenience millions of customers expect from Amazon. By serving the vital needs of businesses, Amazon formed human connections and garnered greater loyalty and trust. Forrester estimates the value of Amazon's online B2B eCommerce opportunity size to reach \$1.2 trillion in 2021.<sup>6</sup>

### Support for Small & Medium-Sized Businesses

The first year of the pandemic resulted in the closure of roughly 200,000 small businesses, forcing many B2B companies to turn to eCommerce.<sup>7</sup> To provide SMBs with a **lucrative online sales platform**, Amazon announced an \$18 billion investment in logistics, tools, services, programs, and people to help independent companies expand their reach.<sup>8</sup> One of the challenging parts of starting an eCommerce website is having little-to-no credibility or website traffic, two assets handed over by signing up with Amazon Business.

### Analytics & Awareness

A large part of brand trust is empowering other businesses with tools for success. **Amazon Attribution** is a new beta feature that gives sellers insight into how third-party channels like social media and email marketing impact purchasing patterns on Amazon, so you can optimize advertising efforts, drive sales, and grow your Amazon Business.<sup>9</sup> **Amazon Web Services (AWS)** also took part in delivering remote work and learning solutions, but more crucially, AWS provided a public data lake for COVID-19 research and development, featuring up-to-date and curated datasets to help fight against the spread of the virus.<sup>10</sup>



**Amazon focused on the needs of B2B companies in 2020, building brand trust through intentional efforts to relieve SMBs of challenges faced throughout the pandemic.**



## LESSON 3

# Fuel Collaboration & Creativity from Home

In the past year, everything became digital, and it's no longer enough just to have an online presence. Adobe enters 2021 as a top trusted brand for many reasons. Throughout the pandemic, the company offered distance learning resources and replacements for common in-office capabilities like eSign and Adobe Scan.<sup>11</sup> Adobe continuously reinforced the need to be nothing short of personal, beautiful, and compelling in the digital world, and creative B2B professionals leaned heavily on its programs to maintain collaboration and produce content.

### Enhanced Virtual Collaboration

At one point, the world expected to work from home for just two weeks. Over a year later, many businesses are still fully remote. With this came the loss of face-to-face collaboration. **Adobe Creative Cloud helped companies overcome this by integrating with communication platforms like Microsoft Teams, Slack, and Gmail** that would allow creatives to quickly share assets, preview designs, add collaborators, and facilitate spontaneous interactions that usually only occur in person.<sup>12</sup> Adobe's online creative community has over 24 million members who can collaborate as if they are face-to-face.<sup>13</sup>

### Creativity for All

Working from home took a toll on another pillar of human existence: creativity. Adobe, a company rooted in art and imagination, did not take a back seat on this matter. **Adobe MAX**, the well-renowned creativity conference, was made virtual and free to all, providing creatives and B2B professionals with a chance to expand their knowledge and bring new insight back to the team. Further, the company created a resource center that breaks down major industries, serving up relevant content to keep businesses moving forward.<sup>14</sup>

**By leaning into two vital aspects of human nature—collaboration and creativity—Adobe formed and nurtured deeper connections with the B2B sector, locking the company in as a top trusted brand.**





## LESSON 4

# Engage Your Audience with Resources That Help

LinkedIn proved to be a valuable tool this year, earning its spot in the top four trusted brands of 2021. As employment took a downward turn, the company remained laser-focused on helping people find jobs and helping businesses find people. However, this platform is more than just a job search tool.

Many fruitful business relationships start here. In fact, 46% of social media traffic to B2B websites is derived from this platform.<sup>15</sup> Leading B2B companies utilize LinkedIn to house a company page, review insights, share content, identify target audiences, and connect with businesses and potential customers. Now is the time to engage with other companies, solidify your position as a B2B thought leader, and remind people how you can transform their businesses.

### Skill Building at Scale

For B2B professionals, **LinkedIn Business Solutions** became a hub for skill-building and navigating the new world of work. In LinkedIn's fifth annual **Workplace Learning Report**, the company shared insights on working in a post-pandemic world and the need to upskill to thrive.<sup>16</sup> This report urges business owners and executives to invest in themselves and their team to uncover new efficiencies and potential. In addition, **LinkedIn Learning's Course Club** empowers organizations to develop the most in-demand skills of each quarter, such as leadership and digital learning.

### Support for Small Businesses

In response to pandemic-related shutdowns, **LinkedIn for Small Business** constructed a resource center with business-critical news, tools, and networking.<sup>17</sup> Starting with the basics, small business owners can set up their accounts for success and gain access to virtual events, live streams, trend reports, and more. These practices have proven value for smaller B2B companies and startups, along with companies that are thousands strong. Showcase services, discover providers, and grow business through LinkedIn.

**By providing professionals and small businesses with relevant content designed to help them thrive through the pandemic, LinkedIn achieved a more personal relationship with B2B leaders.**

**For more information on the 2021 B2B Trusted Brands Report, including its methodology and results, or for help increasing your brand's Trust Factor, contact us.**

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