



Business, Media Now More Trusted Than Government
Young Elites More Trusting in Business Than Older Cohort,
2008 Edelman Trust Barometer Finds

January 22, 2008, NEW YORK —Trust in business is higher than in government in 14 of 18 countries, according to the ninth annual Edelman Trust Barometer released today. The United States is experiencing the widest divide between business and government in the survey’s nine-year history, with 58% saying they trust business to do what’s right, an all-time survey high, compared with only 39% for government. The gap between business’s and government’s credibility is also especially wide in developing nations like India, Mexico, and Poland.

“Business is realizing its broader dual mandate to make money and make an impact on major societal issues like the environment and human rights,” said Richard Edelman, president and CEO, Edelman. “Companies have moved from philanthropy to programs that are directly aimed at making money while doing good. In a recession, with attendant job cuts and need for outside capital, this type of approach will be especially important to guarantee business the license to operate.”

Twenty-five-to-34-year-old opinion elites, studied for the first time this year—and historically cynical about business—tend to trust business even more than their older counterparts in many regions of the globe. “Business has a tremendous opportunity to tell its story through these young “info-entials” who are more likely to spread both positive and negative information about companies,” said Mr. Edelman. For example, in France, 52% of young elites trust business versus 30% of 35-to-64 year olds.

Trust in media as an institution is at a high point in the study's history, with marked increases over past year standings in the U.K., Germany, the United States, Canada, Japan, South Korea, and India. Mainstream media—newspapers, television news, and business magazines—are the most widely used sources of information about companies. While business magazines are the most trusted source globally (57% of respondents) “trust in media is rising because the definition of media has broadened to encompass social media,” said Mr Edelman, “and mainstream entities are now available as and when needed.”.

Social media is on the rise, particularly in the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India, and China). As expected, it is also more highly used and trusted by young opinion elites. Wikipedia ranks as the No. 2 source of credible information among 25-to-34-year-old opinion elites in the United States, by 55% of respondents.

Across the globe, all age groups rely on credentialed experts and people like themselves for information they trust. Globally, trust in financial or industry analysts, academics, and doctors or healthcare specialists is above 50% (57%, 56%, and 55%, respectively) and trust in a “person like me” is 58%. Meanwhile, trust in CEOs continues to lag at about 20% in the United States, versus 43% for an average employee. “Companies need to be engaged at the intersection of the top-down and peer-to-peer models of communication,” said Mr. Edelman, “relying on both experts and empowered employees to supplement statements by the CEO.”

American brands like Exxon Mobil, McDonald's, and Citicorp continue to suffer from a 30% trust discount in Europe versus their trust levels in Asia, Latin America, and the United States. Global companies headquartered in Sweden, Germany, and Canada are the most trusted; companies headquartered in China, Mexico, and Russia are on the bottom of the list.

Other key findings of the 2008 Edelman Trust Barometer include:

- Technology remains the most trusted sector in 17 of 18 countries surveyed, followed by the biotech and life sciences, and automotive industries.
- 85% of respondents will pass along good information about a company or will discuss negative experiences.
- Only 20% of respondents trust corporate or product advertising.
- Going online for news tops shopping as a person's main motivation.

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About the Trust Barometer Survey

The 2008 Edelman Trust Barometer is the firm's ninth trust and credibility survey. The survey was produced by research firm StrategyOne. The survey was conducted by a 30-minute telephone survey conducted in October and November 2007. In 18 countries, the survey population included respondents who are between the ages of 35 and 64; college educated; in the top 25% of household income nationally; and report a significant interest and engagement in the media, economic, and policy affairs. The nations represented include United States (400 respondents), China (300), United Kingdom (150), Germany (150), France (150), Italy (150), Spain (150), the Netherlands (150), Sweden (150), Poland (150), Russia (150), Ireland (150), Mexico (150), Brazil (150), Canada (150), Japan (150), South Korea (150), and India (150). In 12 of these countries, opinion leaders aged 25-34 were surveyed: United States (100), China (75), United Kingdom (50), Germany (50), France (50), Russia (50), Brazil (50), Canada (50), Japan (50), South Korea (50), and India (50). This was the first time the Trust Barometer surveyed 25-to-34-year-old opinion elites.

About Edelman

Edelman is the world's largest independent public relations firm, with 3,000 employees in 51 offices worldwide. Edelman was named a top-10 firm in Advertising Age's "2007 Agency A-List," the first and only PR firm to receive this recognition, and CEO Richard Edelman was honored as "2007 Agency Executive of the Year" by both Advertising Age and PRWeek. PRWeek named Edelman Large Agency of the Year in 2006 and awarded the firm its "Editor's Choice" distinction.