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## **Fair Assumptions**

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NATIONAL Public Relations

The importance of research to our business has never been more pronounced. We now have ready access to massive amounts of information online that, if identified and interpreted correctly, can generate specific data and insights that drive business success.

Our [Bold Thinking Report](#), launched this February, applies our unique research methodologies to study a large and engaged group of Canadians to better understand what drives purchase and advocacy decisions. We used our Belief Based Consumption methodology to look at 2,500 topics and 20,000 conversations happening on reddit. And while there are many discussion boards online that we could analyse, we elected to work with reddit because it is frequented by early adopters, techies and culture creators. Known as the “front page” of the Internet, many of today’s trends are foreshadowed here. Belief Based Consumption is based on the idea that people no longer just buy something. They buy into something. Which means the onus now shifts on brands to not only understand themselves better and talk about more than just their products/services, but also better understand the values of their audience.

What makes our approach different from the research out there? Much of the consumer research that explores values is retrospective. It is, at best, a snapshot of opinion in a moment in time and marketers and business executives hope that opinions expressed will hold true for the future. The Bold Thinking Report does reflect current thinking of the reddit community. But importantly, because of our methodology based on observation rather than direct questioning, and because of the type of participants in these conversations, our report is also a peek into the future. This is what makes The Bold Thinking Report so exciting. “Redditors” are opinion first-movers. Want to get of a sense what mainstream Canadians will be talking about in the months to come? Read reddit. Want to get a jump start on trends? Read reddit.

So what did we find?

Our team of social science analysts have concluded that 2015 will be the year of fairness. Canadians have always cared about fairness but now it is emerging as a dominant metric by which corporations and governments will be judged in the court of public opinion. This matters because we know that increasingly, consumers advocate for, support and purchase

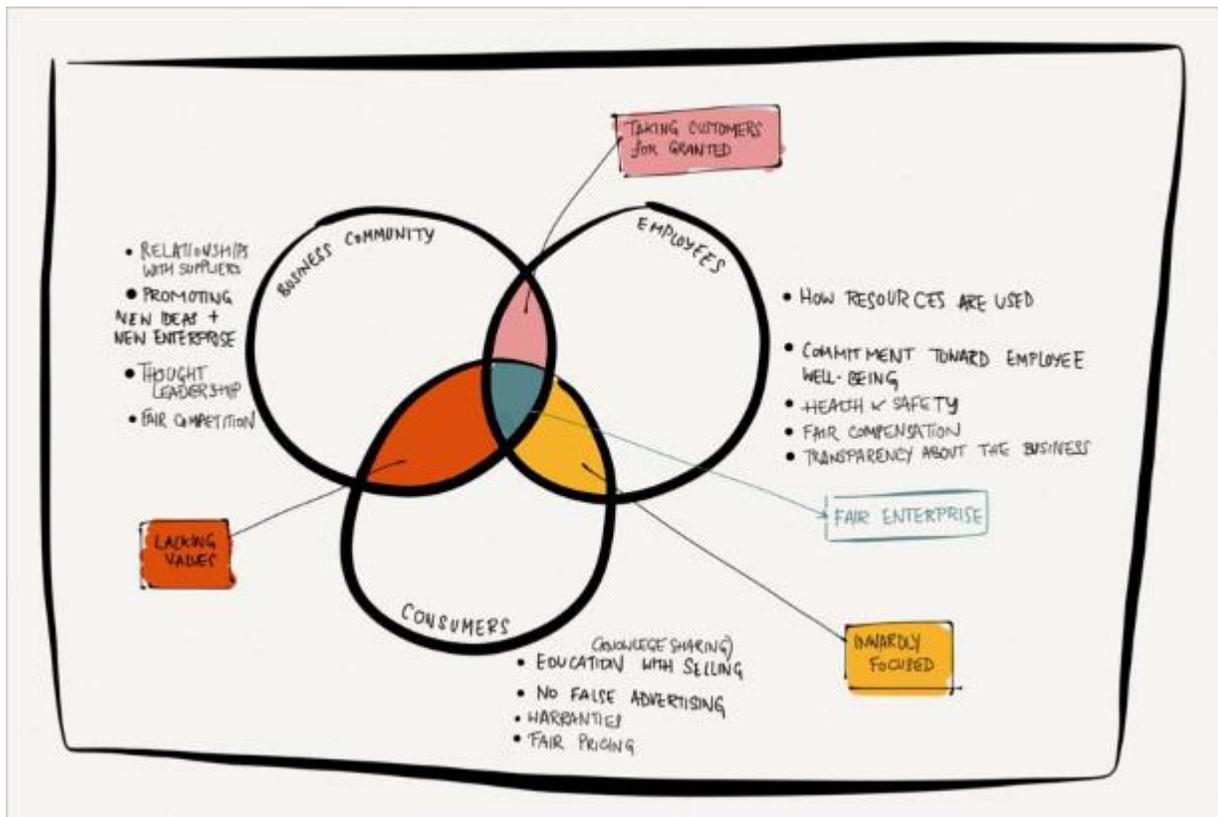
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products from companies with whom they share common beliefs or values. This is the hallmark of our Belief Based Consumption methodology.

In our analysis, we found that up to a staggering 82 per cent of users raised the issue of fairness when discussing businesses and their practices. Act unfairly in pricing or human relations? Consumers will let you know in purchase and support decisions. In 2015, companies need to review their business decisions and their operations to ensure that they are fair and balanced.

For consultants, this requires a translation of the fairness concept into practical and actionable measures for our clients. To aid in this, we created the Fairness Formula to simply demonstrate how fairness is viewed by Canadians in three areas of corporate engagement – with employees, with customers and with business partners.



The good news for corporations is that Canadians believe that it is fair for corporations to make a profit and succeed. They just need to know (and companies therefore need to be explicit) that you are not exploiting your power position. For customers, fairness means a competitive price for your product, warranties, investments in balanced consumer education and truth in advertising and communications. For employees, things like competitive wages, focus on health and safety, and transparency about the business are all

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viewed through the fairness lens. And lastly, fairness is also important in corporations' relationships with the broader business community and partners. This might mean a focus on thought leadership and fair competition.

Communications is at the heart of reputation. Canadians want to know if you act fairly - and you can't count on them to be aware of the positive actions you are taking if it isn't part of a proactive strategy. We see fairness in behaviour, combined with fairness in communications, as a strategic advantage for those who embrace it. For companies, that means walking the talk, and talking the walk. As Luc Beauregard, our Firm's founder, was fond of advising clients, "Do it right, and let it be known."