

Canadians' Deep Cynicism towards Leaders and Brands Impedes Business Growth
NATIONAL Public Relations' report calls for businesses to re-engage Canadians

Toronto, ON, August 15, 2016 – In its second [Bold Thinking Report](#), NATIONAL Public Relations finds Canadians' attitudes towards businesses and governments mired in deep cynicism, prompting reluctance to trust leaders or brands. Overcoming this cynicism is a key business challenge, as strong relationships are fundamental in an increasingly transparent world.

The Bold Thinking Report applies NATIONAL's Belief Based Behaviour research, a unique application of digital ethnographic analysis, to understand predominant values that influence Canadians. Authors Julien Coulter, Vice-President and Head of Strategic Planning and Michael Mahoney, Senior Strategist at NATIONAL in Toronto, say the study serves as a canary in a coal mine to help organizations understand how values influence perceptions.

Researchers analyzed 44,000 online conversations over one year across five social networks and found:

- 91 per cent of conversations had strong expressions of cynicism
- 75 per cent of conversations included fairness as a prominent value
- 61 per cent of conversations indicated authenticity was key to appearing fair

Canadians feel they have little influence over the choices of key decision makers that impact their lives. They feel let down by "the system" that isn't delivering its promise of economic growth, security, and the freedom to make their own choices. This sentiment cuts across demographic groups, from students graduating into a shaky job market, to retirees who question the sustainability of healthcare and retirement plans.

The study found Canadians attach importance to two predominant values – **fairness and authenticity** – in assessing the politicians and companies they support. The value of fairness is an expectation that those in positions of power will act in the best interest of impacted individuals and not out of personal or corporate interest. Its companion value, authenticity, relates to alignment between an organization's positioning and stakeholders' perceptions of what that organization stands for and the actions it takes.

Understanding this **bi-focal values filter** – whereby Canadians evaluate what they perceive through the lens of these two values – is the key to helping leaders and organizations cut through the cynicism to build deeper and more meaningful relationships.

"Cynicism is a cancer that eats at relationships and is not sustainable," says Kim West, Chief Client Officer in Toronto and partner at NATIONAL Public Relations. "People don't want to just buy something, they want to buy into something. More and more, people will support companies and leaders with whom they feel they share common values. By delivering on expectations for fairness and authenticity, businesses and leaders can develop better practices and communicate in ways that resonate."

About NATIONAL Public Relations

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