

# 4 psychological triggers that make people like and share content

[People](#)



How do you get people to like and share your content online? That's the million dollar question, right?

More social interaction equals more traffic. More traffic equals even more social interaction, which leads to even more people linking to your content. That creates a storm of Google-goodness, and that gets you . The snowball of traffic, social interaction and backlinks continues.

But wait -- let's back up. It all starts with getting people to spread content around online, right? How do you get people to like and share your content? What makes readers pull the trigger and decide to put their mark of approval on your article, video or graphic?

Here are four psychological triggers that make people want to like and share content online:

## **1. People want to look good.**

Jonah Berger, author of "Contagious: Why Things Catch On," " before people share a piece of content, they evaluate its social currency. The better it makes them look, the more likely they'll be to pass it on."

Remember going to the beach with your parents as a little kid and sitting in the sand digging for shells? When you found a huge, interesting looking shell, you jumped up and started showing everyone your awesome discovery. Why? Because it made you look good.

Whether it actually made you look good is another story, but that's how it felt in the moment, right? You found an awesome shell, so that means you're a great shell-searcher, or you're just a winner overall.

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Of course we know that's not 100 percent true. Finding something awesome doesn't make you awesome, but that's how our brains work. We're competitive, and we like to look good in front of others. Sharing really interesting things makes us look good. When you find an article that really teaches you something, sharing it says "look what I found," and therefore, "look what I already know."

Buffer cites in one study, of respondents said they seek to share interesting content as opposed to content that is important or funny. When we find something super interesting, we share it so others can see how interesting we are. When we share something funny, we feel like it shows others our sense of humor and just how funny we are.

So, how do you use this in your business? Simple. -- digitally -- that makes them look cool. For example, you'll share this article based on how many interesting tidbits you find. If you scanned it and found even just a few points that made a lightbulb go off, you'll share it. Why? Because you want to show other people that you found a really useful article. You get social points, and it makes you look like the kid with the extravagant seashell.

Tip -- Throw in statistics or little-known facts. People love numbers, and when they can throw an impressive stat out there on social media, it makes them look awesome (or at least they feel like they look awesome, which is good enough).

## **2. People want to support people and causes they care about.**

We've established that people like and share as a quick way to connect with their friends, but there are other reasons as well. says 84 percent of their study respondents said they share content because it's a good way to support causes or issues they care about.

For example, if you support , and they tweet that they're in Africa building a school, you'll probably like it or retweet it. Why? Because it's your way to quickly support a cause you care about, and it lets other people know what type of person you are, therefore making you look better.

It's not self-centered -- at least it shouldn't be -- but deep down inside, we want other people to know what we stand for. So sharing content that stands for something, even something as small as a tweet, helps us look better by showing the world who we are as a person. Plus, it helps us feel better by supporting something we care about.

Another example: You're scrolling through your Facebook feed and see an article posted from your favorite blogger. You feel the , just to "give back" to that blogger. They've helped you with their blog posts, videos, courses, etc., so liking their post is your way of supporting them without having to go out of your way.

But what if you see a blog post from someone you don't know? Chances are you'll share it too, especially if it takes a stand or supports a cause you believe in. You want folks to know you feel the same way as the blogger.

If your business is practically unknown -- like the blogger example above -- what statement can you make that people will align with? For nonprofits, this is easy. For businesses, it might take a little work.

For example, is the “ anti-interruption marketing” guy, among many other things. If he posts something about how advertising is the old way of marketing, he’s going to get all kinds of shares from people who share the same view, no matter how good or bad the article is.

is the “ anti-debt” guy. Anything he posts about cutting up credit cards and getting out of debt will get shared by people who share that cause with him.

Honest is “ all-natural” or “ anti-chemical” (my words, not theirs), so anything they post about only putting natural things in your body will get shared by people who feel strongly about that cause.

So my question to you is, what’s your stance? What change do you want to make in your industry? Don’t shy away from controversy. What do you believe that flies in the face of what most people believe in your industry?

Hint -- It usually ties directly into your value proposition. It doesn’t have to be super-unique either. It just needs to be something you believe in; something you stand for.

It might be harder for plumbers to find their cause than it is for a homeless shelter, but it’s entirely possible. For a plumber, maybe your cause is honest workmanship. Maybe you actively stand against dishonest contractors, so you make your brand one of honesty and integrity. Of course, you have to

actually live that out, but if you do stand for something like that, your content will get traction.

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What happens when that same plumber posts content about “ How to Spot a Dishonest Contractor,” “ 3 Signs Your Phone Calls Are Being Avoided” or “ 3 Ways to Teach Your 3-Year-Old About Integrity?”

It catches people’s attention. Everyone supports , so they’ll share it just to show support and make a statement about who they are as a person. Plus you’re standing for something and talking about things other contractors aren’t talking about. This sets you and your content apart.

Is it directly related to plumbing? Not always. But your customers want someone they can depend on. That’s what they need when their kitchen is flooded or they can’t use the bathroom because the toilet won’t flush. And I promise you they’re much more likely to hire the honest, dependable brand that stands for integrity than they are to hire the plumber with the most certifications.

Stand for something they care about. It's a good way to get people talking and sharing your content.

### **3. People want to stay connected.**

Human beings are , and we like to interact in group settings. That used to only happen at places like church, school, work, parties, restaurants -- places

you went. Now, with social media, we have that same type of group connectivity all the time.

With these online connections, we can't possibly mingle with everyone in our network -- like we can at a party -- so our way of "connecting" with everyone in our group is to like, comment and share their posts. Seems basic, but it's the starting point for understanding why people like and share content.

See, social media is the modern group get-together, . Instead of having conversations with each person (remember AOL Instant Messenger?) we now like, share and comment on posts. But many times, people only interact with posts to make themselves more social. That needs to stop. Stop thinking about what you can do to earn a like or a share, and instead start thinking about how you can help people connect with their friends, family and causes they care about.

Your content absolutely has to either make them look better or make them feel better by helping other people in their network. After all, deep down inside, the only thing we like more than helping ourselves is helping other people -- especially our friends.

Here's an example: You're scrolling through your Facebook feed and see that a friend of yours posted a picture of his/her new car, so you "like" it. Why? Because it's your way of saying, "cool car, nice job." In your mind, you've supported that friend and stayed connected, all with the click of one button. Will that friend ever know you liked their post? Maybe, maybe not. If there

are tons of likes on it, it's doubtful they'll even see it, but it made you feel better because you supported them.

How can you help people stay connected through your business?

Try this. Think about what it would take to get a person to share your post, then tag their friend in it. Not all content will be tag-worthy, but the ones that are will go much further. Think about articles like "3 Hilarious Truths Only Moms of Toddlers Will Understand" or "3 Signs Your Husband Secretly Thinks Your Cooking Sucks." Those are the types of topics that make you want to not only share, but share with a specific person. Why? Because you're allowing that person to connect with someone they care about, and you're making them look better by sharing something that's either funny or insightful.

It should also go without saying at this point, but you must, must, must in order to get them to like and share your stuff. You can build a deep connection with an audience by telling personal stories, being genuine, giving tons of stuff away for free and staying in constant contact with them. Then they'll like and share just to stay connected with you, even if your content isn't that great.

#### **4. People instinctively want to help others.**

Maybe you already knew this, but science has shown that people tend to get more out of giving than receiving. There was a psychologist named Liz Dunn who on college students that helped prove this theory.



Dunn and her colleagues gave college students an envelope of money and told them they had to either spend it on themselves or spend it on someone else by 5: 00 p. m. that day. They found that the students who spent their money on others were happier than the students who spent it on themselves.

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What's interesting is the envelopes had different amounts of money in them, but that didn't affect the level of happiness. Giving to others -- no matter how little -- tends to make us happy. The same principle applies when it comes to social sharing. We love sharing things that will inspire, empower or entertain others. We like to add to the joy or fulfillment of others more than we like to gossip.

Fractl and BuzzSumo did a study of the million most-shared articles on social media, and found that, of the top 1, 000 articles shared on social, had a positive tone.

How can your business use this? If you want your content to get shared, you have to provide at least one thing that's extremely -- not just moderately -- helpful or uplifting. It could be a quote, statistic, news, step-by-step guide or anything else, just as long as it is helpful. Remember to write in a . Some writers will write an article that has a positive topic, but write it in a negative tone.

Bottom line -- You should write content you're eager to get in the hands of someone else, just because it's helpful. If you can't honestly say that about your content, you might want to go back and add something to it.