

# Got G-Cred?

In this hype-happy, what-to-believe world, it comes down to a very basic, very fundamental thing: Credibility. How does one get it? How does one convincingly communicate it? And, is there a *Good House Keeping* seal of the 21st Century?

"Street Cred" has been one recent barometric buzzword. Defined by the American Heritage Dictionary as: "Acceptability or popularity, especially among young people in urban areas," the legitimacy of Street Cred should not be minimized. As discussed in Malcolm Gladwell's *The Tipping Point*, the urban environment of Street Cred has been the birthplace of more than a few trends that have found their way to the mid-American mainstream. As true as that is, however, in today's high-speed cyberspace Street Cred is...well...so 2005. There's a new cred in town and it's called, "G-Cred."

If you haven't guessed, the "G" is for Google. And, while the term "G-Cred" may be new to you, it's been listed in the Urban Dictionary for over a year.

**G-Cred:** n. 1) Google Credibility. 2) What someone sees when they Google your name, business, product, organization or whatever. It's an increasingly important measure of legitimacy and how seriously someone will take you.

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**If someone Googles you and little comes up, you'd better hope it's not your clients doing the searching.**

More than the cred-of-the-day, G-Cred is the cred of the next decade. In her new book, *The Credibility Factor*, market communications strategist Jennifer Mclean offers support for that claim: "...while there are multiple forms of credibility found within a company or product, Google is playing an increasingly important role in the perception puzzle. The bot-



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tom line is: credibility fosters trust and Google is here to stay as a measure of that credibility."

As Google and the web continue to mature online visibility will equate to credibility on every level. It does now through blogs and a myriad of social media sites that have become a respected, easily accessible, and exponentially expanding source of cred. In short, word-of-mouth on steroids. What's important to realize in this Web 2.0 world is that G-Cred doesn't just apply to every business, product, and organization. It also applies to every professional. And, that's not a new thought. Respected marketing gurus like Tom Peters and Seth Godin have preached the value of building one's "personal brand" for years. Godin's *Purple Cow* champions the value of standing out and "being remarkable." Similarly, Peters' *The Brand You* explains how career sur-

vival is not about blending in, but rather, standing out:

"Regardless of age, position, or the business we happen to be in, we need to understand the importance of branding. We are CEOs of our own companies: Me Inc. To be in business today, our most important job is to be head marketer for the brand called You."

If that was true when Peters wrote it back in 1997, just imagine how true it is today. And that means visibility online. If you happen to be the focus of a Google search and little comes up, or it's dated, well that's not good. If you happen to be someone in the marketing communications business and that happens, you'd better hope it's not your clients doing the searching.

As Google continues to rattle the cages of traditional media (*"Google Gooses Big Media."* TIME, March 16th) traditional agency execs had better start focusing more attention on the online model -- regardless of their success at immediately monetizing it. In less than a decade Google has gone from 0 to \$3.1 billion in after tax profits. With that, the new reality is that "non-traditional advertising" ain't so non-traditional anymore. Regardless who wins this latest Clash of the Media Titans I would venture to say that no media company, or ad agency, should expect to win long term if they don't fully understand, and embrace, the new rules of the game.

As much as this is sounding a lot like an ad for Google, it's not meant to be. I have no business or personal ties to Google, no direct or indirect company connections and, unfortunately, no Google stock. My point is simply that, as I hear a growing number of CEO's and business owners refer to advertising as "the A word," I've come to realize that it's no longer enough for agency execs to merely know about the curve. We'd best be ahead of it.

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