

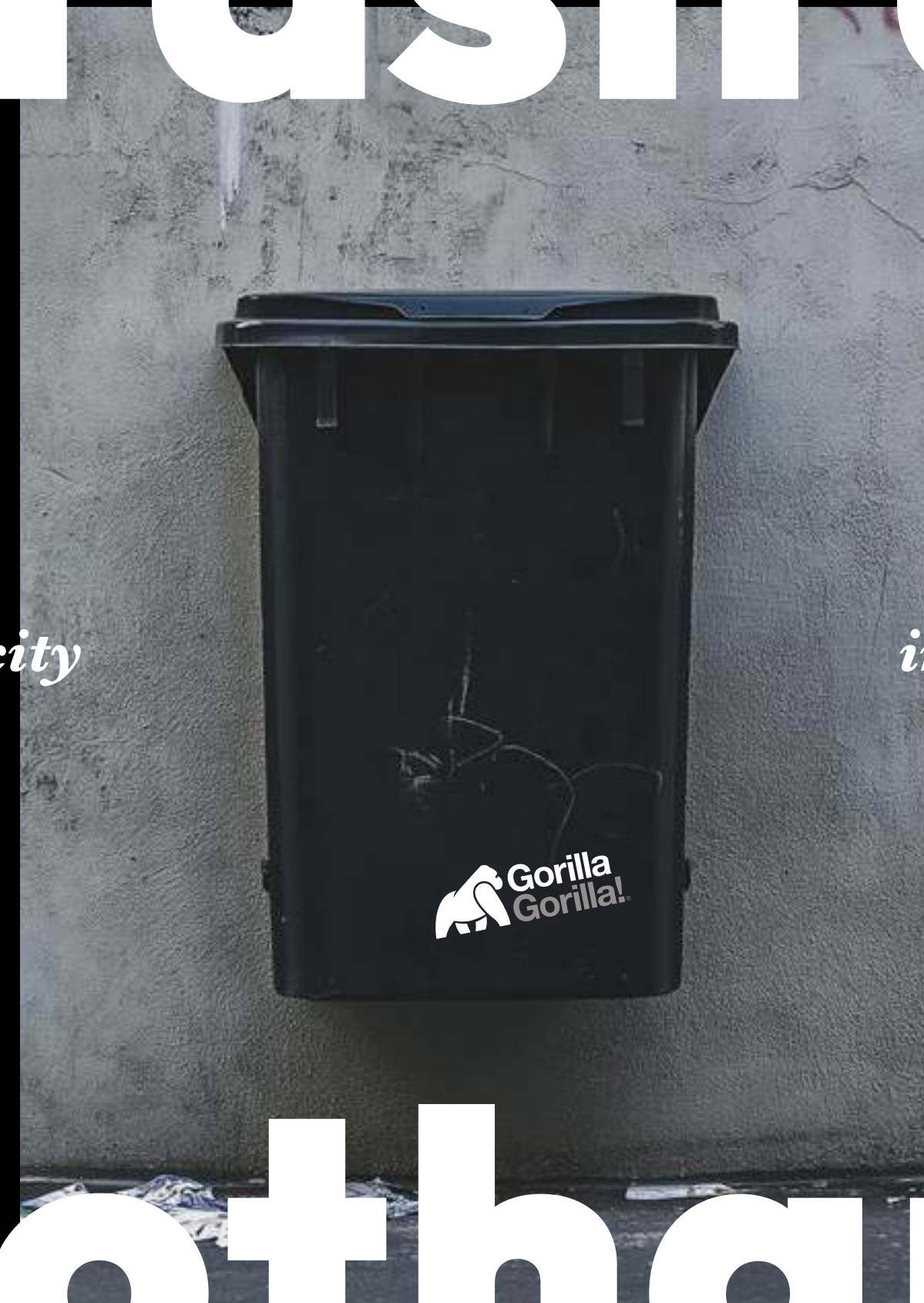
No trash cans

Rebuilding authenticity

in the age of AI

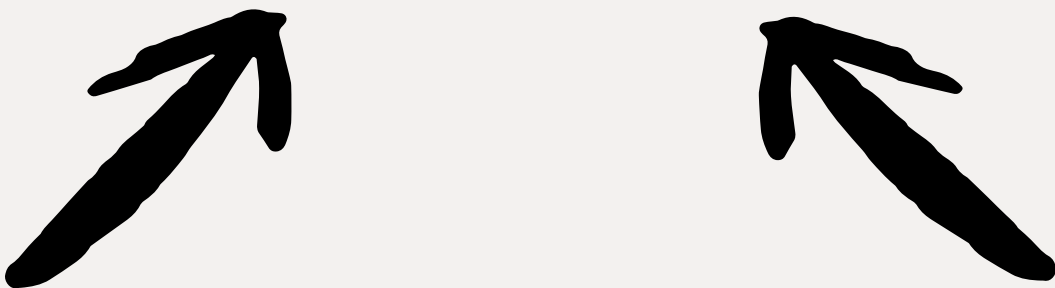
in Gotham

**A Gorilla Gorilla!
Field Guide**



What if we told you the biggest corporate risk in 2025 isn't AI, market shifts, or competitors?

It's trust.



In this Gorilla Gorilla! Field Guide, we'll share a new framework for building trust across leadership comms and storytelling, and when using AI. You'll see why executives need to step into the role of Chief Trust Officer, why storytelling builds belief, and how to work with robots without sounding like one.

But first, because we're in the business of telling stories, let's start with one. I once saw Christopher Nolan reviewing CGI Gotham for a Batman film. Everyone was thrilled. That was until Nolan stared at the screen and quietly said: "There are no trash cans." Then he walked out.

That moment stuck. Because if you're in comms or content, your audience knows when something's off and when there's not enough of a genuine, human touch. They might not say it, but they sure feel it.

And lately, we've been noticing something:

- 1. **If people don't trust your leaders,**
they leave
- 2. **If they don't trust your story,**
they switch off
- 3. **If they don't trust your AI content,**
they ignore it

At first, the fear was deepfakes and AI fakery. But as people looked closer, they didn't just spot bots, they spotted the over-polished CEO, the hollow statement, and the off-key tone.

Truth is, AI didn't kill trust.

It just revealed how little we had.



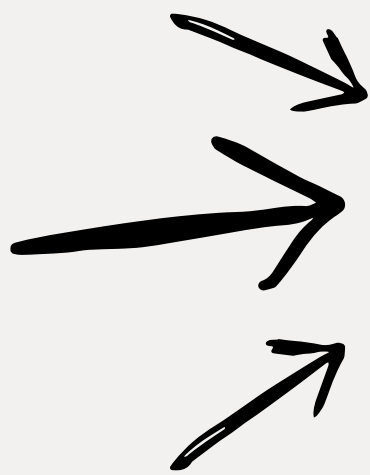


Leaders not posters

Section 01

What does leadership look like when trust is running on empty?

How do execs lead, not just manage, on platforms built for influence not authenticity?



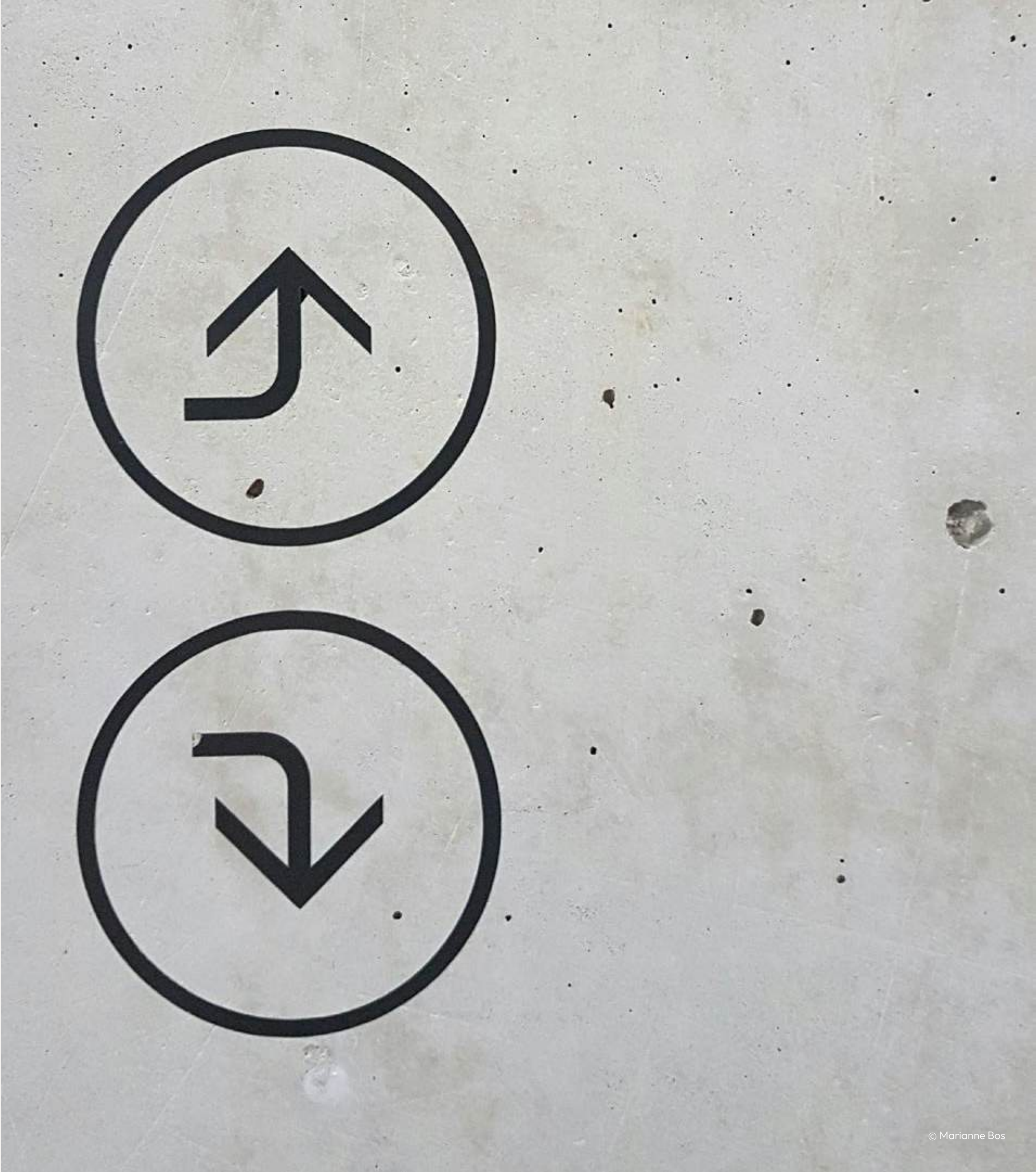
First, let’s admit it that social media isn’t really social. Meta, LinkedIn, TikTok, X are all ad tools designed to turn attention into influence. And the most persuasive users? Celebrities, experts, and familiar faces all using trust-based psychology to sell.

Like an over-slick tabloid, these platforms amplify self-promotion and comparison to monetise our focus. Even the dad with the built-in-a-lunchtime treehouse is selling something. Dad-vertising. That perfect mom with 12 lunchboxes and an Etsy store? Mom-vertising. We know it’s curated but we still buy in.

So, what should leaders do?

Start by tuning out the noise. Don’t feel pressured to “get on LinkedIn” just to post. Visibility doesn’t equal trust, especially if your message feels corporate. But we can learn from those who do it well.

The trick isn’t the platform, it’s how you show up. And the same moves work in a boardroom, a town hall, or over coffee.



Three standout influencers:

Codie Sanchez, the contrarian capitalist, teaches ownership through unglamorous businesses.

Daniel Priestley, the systems strategist, helps businesses grow through structure, positioning, and honesty.

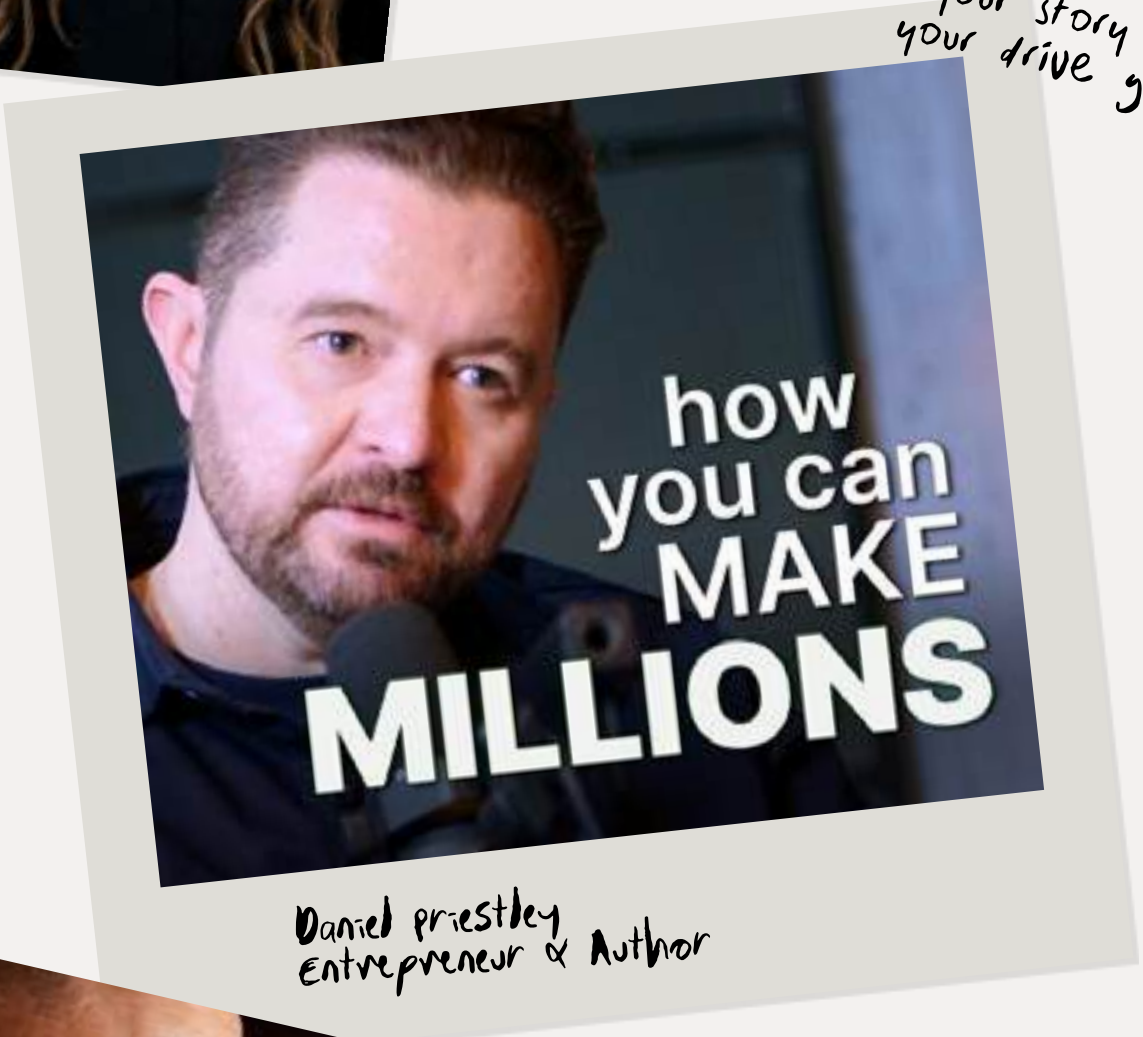
Steven Bartlett, the introspective entrepreneur, builds trust through vulnerability, reflection, and emotional intelligence.



Codie Sanchez 2.5M followers



Growth can be a bit uncomfortable, but in a good way!



the value of your experience, your story and your drive gains

Daniel Priestley Entrepreneur & Author



Everyone is just trying loudly, failing loudly, and trying again. And so should you.



Steven Bartlett 4.2M followers

The Diary of a CEO podcast

How they build trust through five clear behaviours:

One:
Radical transparency

They share real stories, including failures. Priestley is open about business pivots, personal shifts, and lessons learned. Great leaders grow in public.

Two:
Consistent value

They give more than they take. Sanchez offers step-by-step advice for free. Be generous with substance.

Three:
Clear, no-BS communication

They speak plainly and with purpose. Bartlett breaks down complex ideas simply through his questions. Unpick the jargon.

Four: Conviction

They stand for something, even when it's unpopular. Sanchez champions "boring" over flashy. Trust follows specificity.

Five:
Mission-driven authenticity

They walk their talk. Bartlett's message is rooted in emotional intelligence and legacy. Say what you mean. Mean what you say.

You don't need their follower counts. Just show up with clarity, courage, and consistency. Borrow what works and don't become a content machine. Forget going viral. Be visible. Be believable. Be human. That's how leaders earn trust.

From the front.



Storytelling as a trust engine

Section 02

**What makes you trust
a message enough to
act on it?**

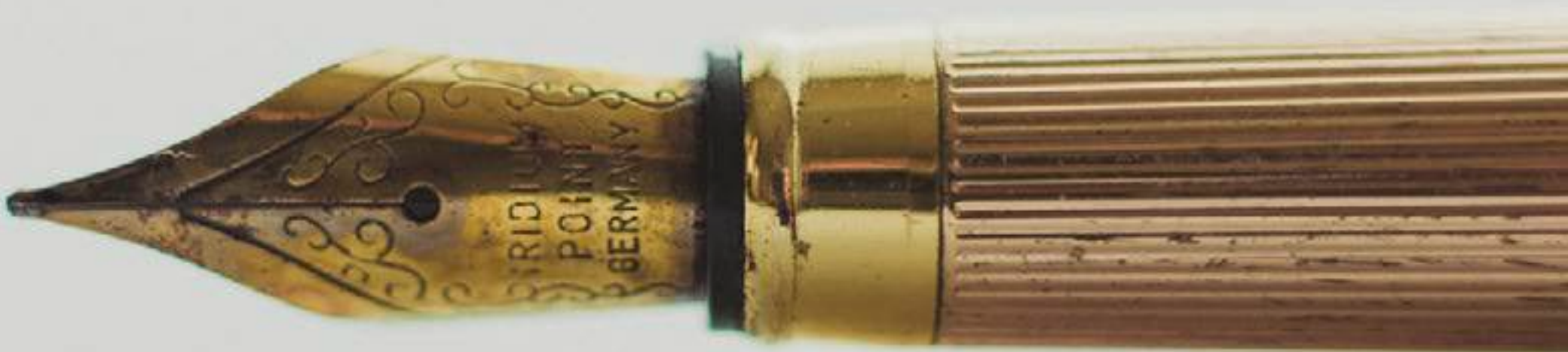
**Logic, proof, or the
subtle feeling that it
'gets' you?**

Good storytelling brings ideas to life. And besides, we trust living things more than static statements.

And here's the thing: they encourage action. In business, storytelling is often the only way to be both clear and credible.

However, most companies focus on *selling* and are not so great at *telling*.

And in a crowded world choc-full of sales and naked messaging, storytelling might be your last unfair advantage.





Storytelling vs selling

Great selling aligns logic, emotion, and urgency. Great storytelling builds relevance and interest, and does this in a timely way. Ideally, you get them all in a row.

Take Messi’s Adidas boots:

- **Logic:** Top performance, well-designed
- **Emotion:** Messi = greatness
- **Urgency:** Limited release

Now switch to an idea that needs sharing:

- **Logic:** Make it **relevant**
- **Emotion:** Make it **interesting**
- **Urgency:** Make it **timely**

If you want us to care, shape your message like a story. Logic, emotion, urgency all wrapped in something we recognise.

Tell them a story about themselves

Want people to listen? Make them feel seen. You can’t customise a story for every audience. But you can speak to shared experiences.

That means tapping into universal aspirations and delivering stories that are timely and relevant.

Great examples:

- **Think Quarterly:** looks at the future of marketing, not just Google
- **Wealthsimple Magazine:** teaches about money, not just their products

They earn trust by telling stories people already want to hear. And when it’s time to act, they’ve already made the connection.

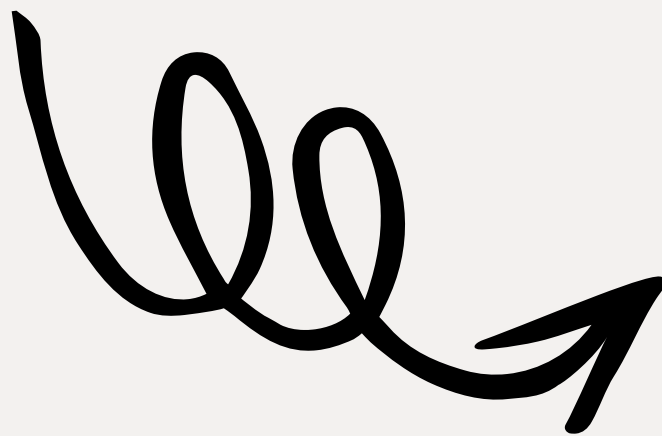
If you need somewhere to start to tag this idea in, ask: **What story does my audience already want to believe?**

Purpose over product

People need multiple touchpoints to trust you. But if all they hear is sales, they’ll tune out.

Stories help people get to know you and yes, it’s best through real humans, not polished scripts.

So, put your people in the picture. Show growth. First wins. Setbacks. Missed deadlines. Pivots. These stories build trust because they’re real.



What makes a good people story?

At Gorilla Gorilla! we focus on four essentials:

- **Start with the struggle**
No tension? No attention. Begin with a challenge or a question. Real stories bring people in.
- **Lead with the hook**
Surprise. Insight. Emotion. Make us lean in. Include a flash of emotional clarity, a personal insight or an unexpected twist.
- **Show the growth**
Transformation beats perfection every time, and it’s not a timeline it’s a journey. Trust is not being perfect, it’s learning.
- **Balance emotion with evidence**
Facts matter more when wrapped in feeling. The people behind the numbers are always more inspiring than stats.

This is how we frame stories. It can be taught. Just wrap what you want me to know in something that feels relevant and real to me. Bonus if “me” is a whole audience segment.

Trust is earned when people recognise themselves in your story. That’s the power and responsibility of storytelling.



AI and trust

(when the robot talks too much)

Section 03

**How do you stay human
when the tools themselves
start talking for you?
And how can a single
punctuation mark quietly
blow your cover?**

The em dash test

AI is everywhere and it’s shaping what we read, buy, and believe. In comms, that’s a problem: everything’s starting to sound the same.

The result? Content that’s technically perfect but emotionally absent. Polished pieces that look right but don’t feel right. Thought leadership minus the thought you could say.

Let’s zoom in on a small thing: the em dash (—). It’s used for emphasis or interruption. Humans use it occasionally. AI? Constantly. If you’re seeing one every few lines, and amid perfectly polite phrasing and sentences that never breath, guess what: a robot helped.

**The curse of thoughtless
thought leadership**

We’ve all seen it: posts that sound slick but say nothing. Too tidy, too smooth, too AI. The problem isn’t using a bot: it’s letting it think for you.

When content feels templated, people scroll. Sometimes they even reply with auto-generated comments. Bots talking to bots. More noise, more blah, less meaning.

The takeaway: AI can help, but trust comes from human thinking, real tone, and a clear point of view. Templates don’t build connection, truth does.

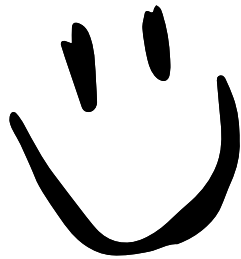


Here’s how you know AI’s been
whispering in the margins:

- Em dashes where commas would do
- Corporate clichés (“In today’s fast-paced world...”)
- Zero mistakes, not even a rogue typo
- Over-politeness (“It’s worth noting...”)
- That weirdly literary-but-not vibe

Useful for FAQs, sure.

But not for anything meant to
mean something.



Where AI belongs (and where it really doesn’t)

AI isn’t the enemy, it’s all about how you use it.

Good for:

- Transactional writing
(emails, reports)
- Outlining & editing
- SEO, summaries, cleanup

Not so good for:

- Thought leadership
- Emotional storytelling
- Anything that should stand out

The better way to use it

1. Write your messy first draft.
2. Then let AI tidy it up.
3. Then go back and ~~mess it up~~ ^{mess it up} again mess it up again but with your voice, your quirks, your edge. That’s how trust gets built. As for a couple of metaphorical trash cans?
They’ll make it authentic.

A trust manifesto

Section 04



© Sekatsky

What follows isn't a checklist or comms framework.

It's a mindset.

Universal principles that separate the noisemakers from the belief-builders: all drawn from leaders, creators, and brands who still know how to truly connect.

You don't need to post more or pretend to be someone else. You just need to show up with clarity, honesty, and humanity, then your audience can feel it.

Here are *five rules*.
Let's call it a *trust manifesto*.

A Trust Manifesto

1. *Tell them a story about themselves*

People trust what mirrors their reality. Your audience isn't listening for your message but rather they're listening for themselves in your message.

2. *Trust lives in the rough edges*

Perfection feels sterile. Believability lives in the real: the typos, tangents, tension points. These aren't flaws: they're signals you're human.

3. *Use AI to lift the load, not erase the hand*

Efficiency is fine. Invisibility isn't. Use AI to support your thinking, not replace it. The ideas still need your fingerprints.

4. *Borrow from influencers, but don't become one*

Transparency. Conviction. Consistency. Value. Mission. Trusted voices online aren't polished brands but they're clear, human signals. Leaders can adopt those same traits without ever logging onto TikTok.

5. *Earn attention by being relevant, timely, and interesting*

No one owes you their focus. To earn it, speak to what your audience already cares about and place your message inside that.

When your brand shows up this way, trust isn't requested. It's earned. Whether it's executive visibility, culture, or campaign work, the goal isn't more content, it's better connection.

Trust doesn't come from volume. It comes from transparency, consistency, and a human voice.

So, give your messages space, care, and intention. Apply these ideas in a way that fits your world, your audience, your goals. That's what people believe. That's what they follow.

Powerful stories of change

At Gorilla-Gorilla! we combine creative insight with filmmaking flair to help brands tell powerful stories of change.

If you're ready to craft content that cuts through the noise and makes a lasting impact, we'd love to chat.

Get in touch to see how we can help bring your next project to life.

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