

Transcript – the weight of social ties on trusted resources

Nadia Caidi, University of Toronto

Often people will act on information or on advice given to them by others based on relationship that may not always be based on the quality of the information. They may be based on reciprocity and obligation. So if you trust somebody or if somebody has helped you in the past with a particular issue or provided you with a particular information and then you ask that person again advice about employment or advice about a particular issue in your life that person will weigh in some way more than a settlement worker who may have a more realistic picture of the issue.

And I think that's really critical and to be aware that people will take on information based on a range of reasons not all having to do with the validity and the credibility of the information. It may have to do because you know you don't want, you have this relationship with this person, they maybe sponsored you, you live in the house for a year, you don't want to go against the advice that they give you. So you will take on that job at McDonald's you know instead of going and pursuing classes to take your tests. So you will make choices that may not be in your best interest but the reason for that it's not because they don't know respect the work that you do or the advice to give them but because they're entangled in a network of social ties that's outweigh, really, just against the need for information. It doesn't mean that you don't they will not later on kind of act on the information you're giving them about about taking a particular test or choosing a different path but for now they're in a situation when they cannot get out of that.

People really value redundancy and triangulation. People will go to a settlement worker but often will also check with family, friends, relatives, will go online and do their own research. So I think it's important not to take it personally. But I think people do check. People have natural inclinations to triangulate and and be redundant.

But what we do find also is finding information in their own language really often comforts people especially around health, for example. So I think it is important as as a sector to think about multilingual information. It may be just kind of a short piece in the language, in another language, and then a link perhaps to sources you know that have deeper content in English. But just that the familiarity of the language is really essential.

People respond very well to multilingual information and again we need to do more on that front.

People love videos. The visual culture is very very strong. It's easy. People can pause the video, can stop it, can watch them after hours. So there is a convenience of the video that I think cannot be underlined enough. I really recommend that as much as possible information be recorded in video and that makes it easier so to do multilingual information provision. Because you can have somebody maybe who works or who is familiar with an issue and can speak about it in the language. And people find very easily the YouTube channels. And I think in terms of credibility and building kind of a quality brand, you know getting into the whole YouTube channels, and really providing videos and providing links and information to newcomers.

Once people identify a particular service or sites that they trust, people will pass on that information. We found that word of mouth is really the way it works. People share information through word of mouth. People will take on information and advice. What's interesting about that it's very easy to email or text a link on WhatsApp to your YouTube channel or to your website than copy and paste a whole information on a small screen and app.

So there is so much to be said about kind of the visual culture and I think more can be done on that front.

But at the end of the day I would say nothing really replaces quality information. Now what we know also from research is that there's different ways in which you can provide the information. Government websites, for example, are always, the feedback we get about them is - everything is there, but I don't understand. I don't understand the steps. The language is confusing. I'm afraid to do the wrong thing. Maybe I didn't understand properly. So people take that as gospel and they really understand the validity of it. But they always take it to somebody who can work with them on it, to translate it not in the language, but to simplify. To just give them a how to - what do I need to do, what are the steps.

So it is quite information. Is it usable information? It's probably a different question right? So I think the settlement sector can do a really good job at translating or simplifying or decoding some of that information for people.

So you might have a link to the official website but at the same time having kind of synthesis - this is what you need to know, these are the steps. So really trying to say the same thing in different ways is very helpful.

And I find that the credibility of a settlement agency will really come from how helpful and how usable people find it.

You can just stay home and find information online but why is it that people will go to see a settlement worker or go to a settlement agency? I think it's that ability to mediate, to help people negotiate that information or that space, or that environment. And I think that's a very important space to inhabit. Because if not for that people will rely on other people, again who may not always have their best interests at heart, or who may not appreciate the situation of the newcomer.

