



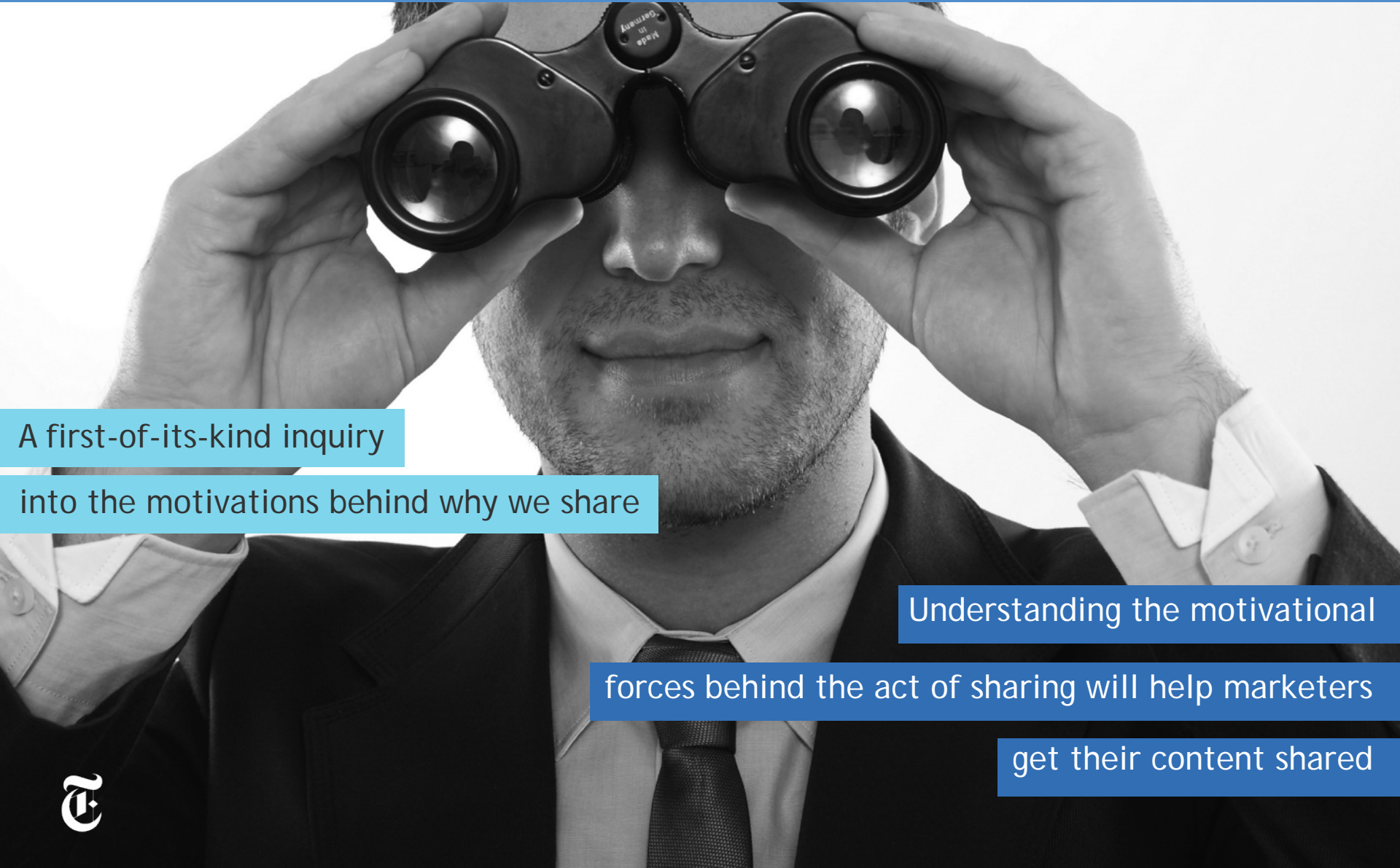
THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SHARING: WHY DO PEOPLE SHARE ONLINE?

CIG

The New York Times | [nytimes.com](https://www.nytimes.com)

CUSTOMER INSIGHT GROUP

The Psychology of Sharing: What Is This Study About?



A first-of-its-kind inquiry
into the motivations behind why we share

Understanding the motivational

forces behind the act of sharing will help marketers

get their content shared



Why do consumers share content online?

What motivates consumers to share content?

Are there distinct personalities with different motivations?

How can understanding why people share help advertisers?



1

Methodology

2

Motivations
for Sharing

3

Online Sharing
Personas

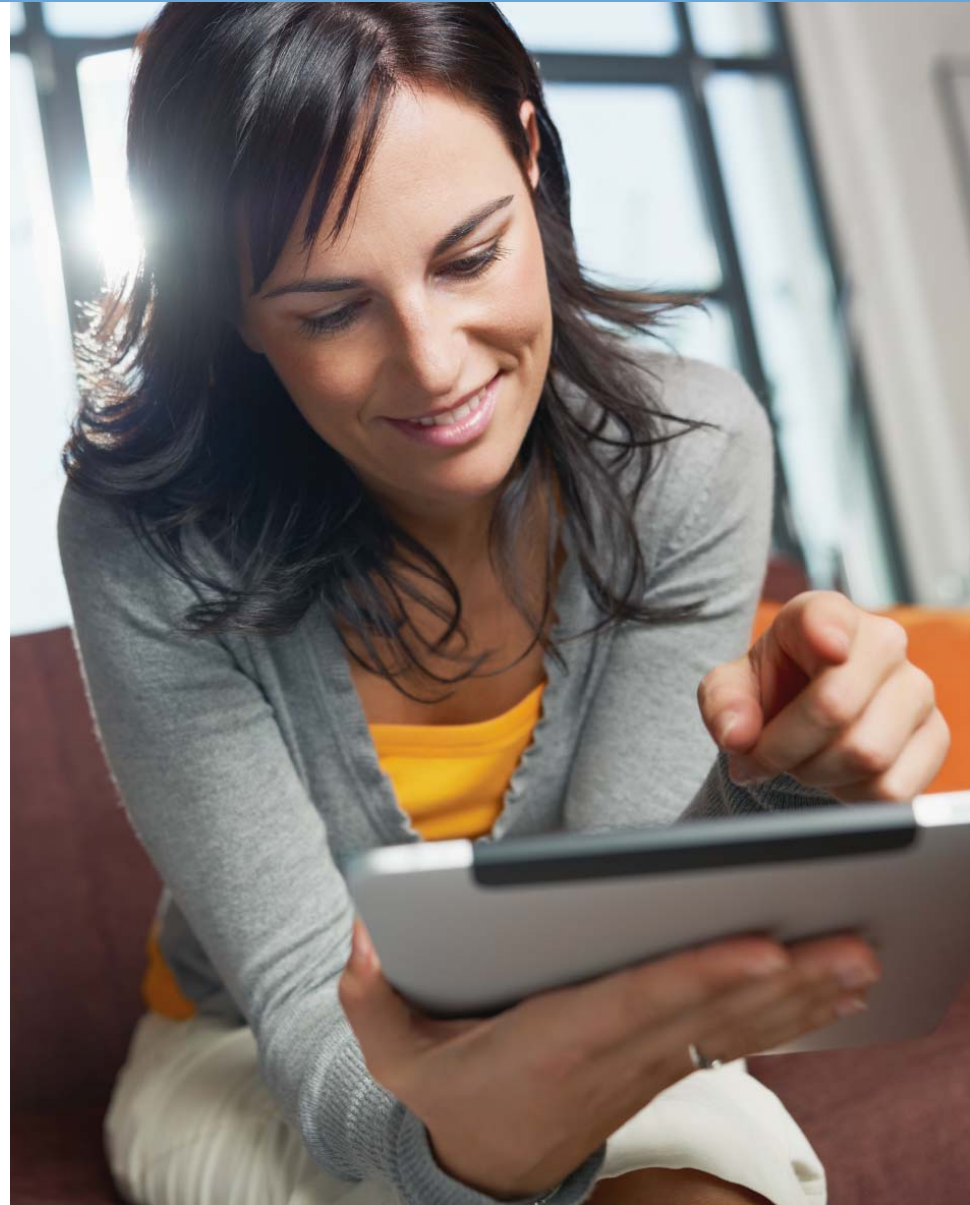
4

Key Guidelines
for Getting
Shared

5

Consumer
Categories

We worked with Latitude Research to conduct a three-phase study to understand why people share content online



PHASE

1

Ethnographies

- In-person interviews in New York, Chicago and San Francisco



PHASE

2

Immersion/Deprivation

- One-week sharing panel

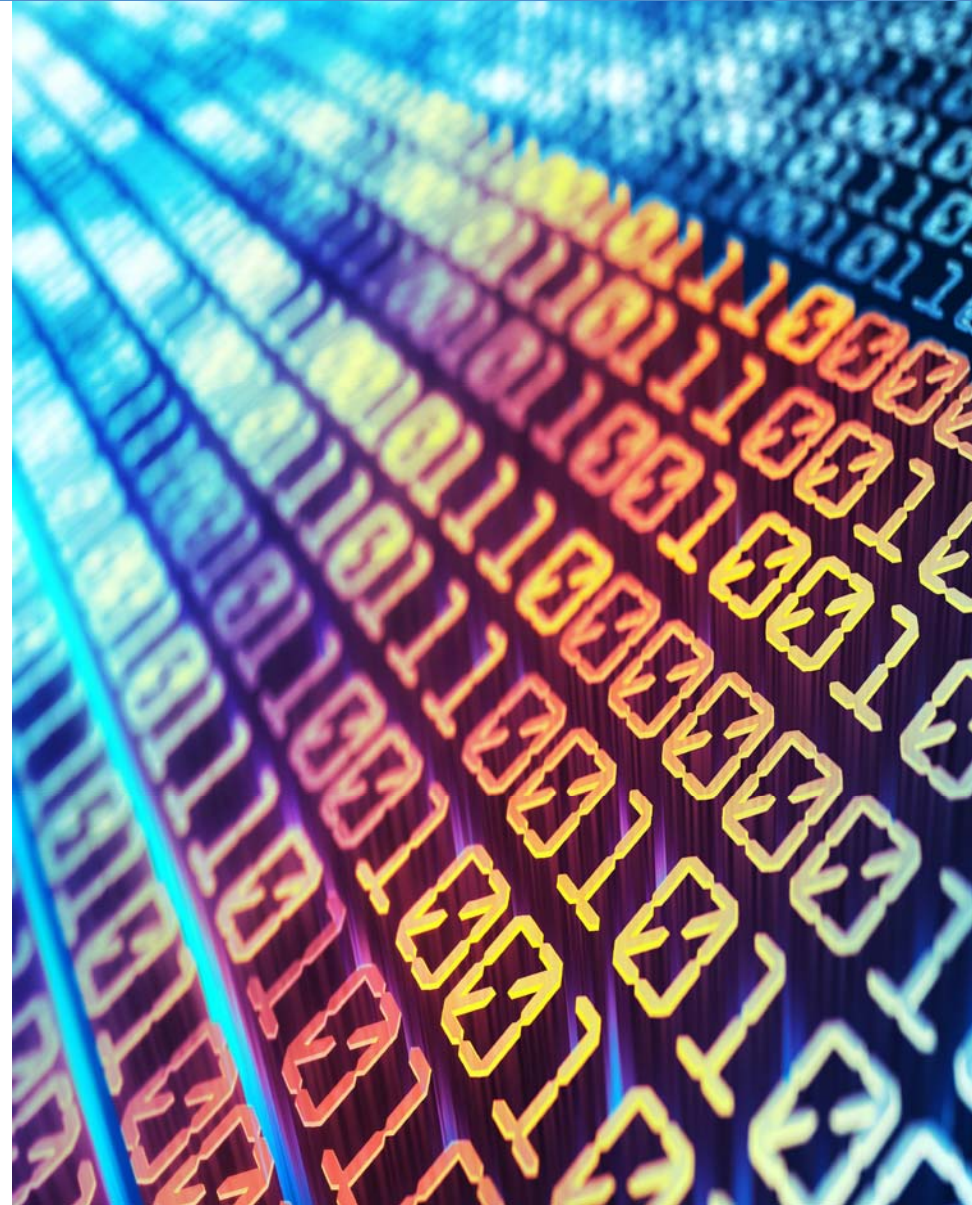


PHASE

3

Quantitative Survey

- Survey of 2,500 medium/heavy online sharers
- Conducted segmentation to identify main types of sharers





 SHARING CONTENT IS NOT NEW 

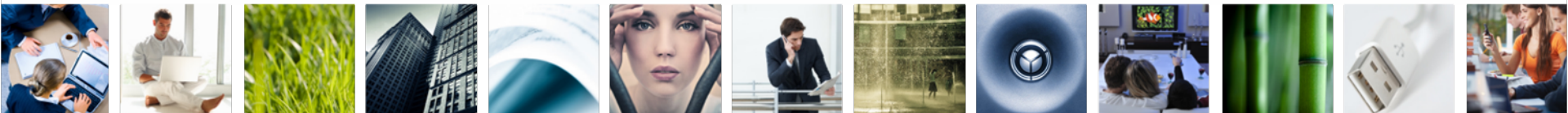
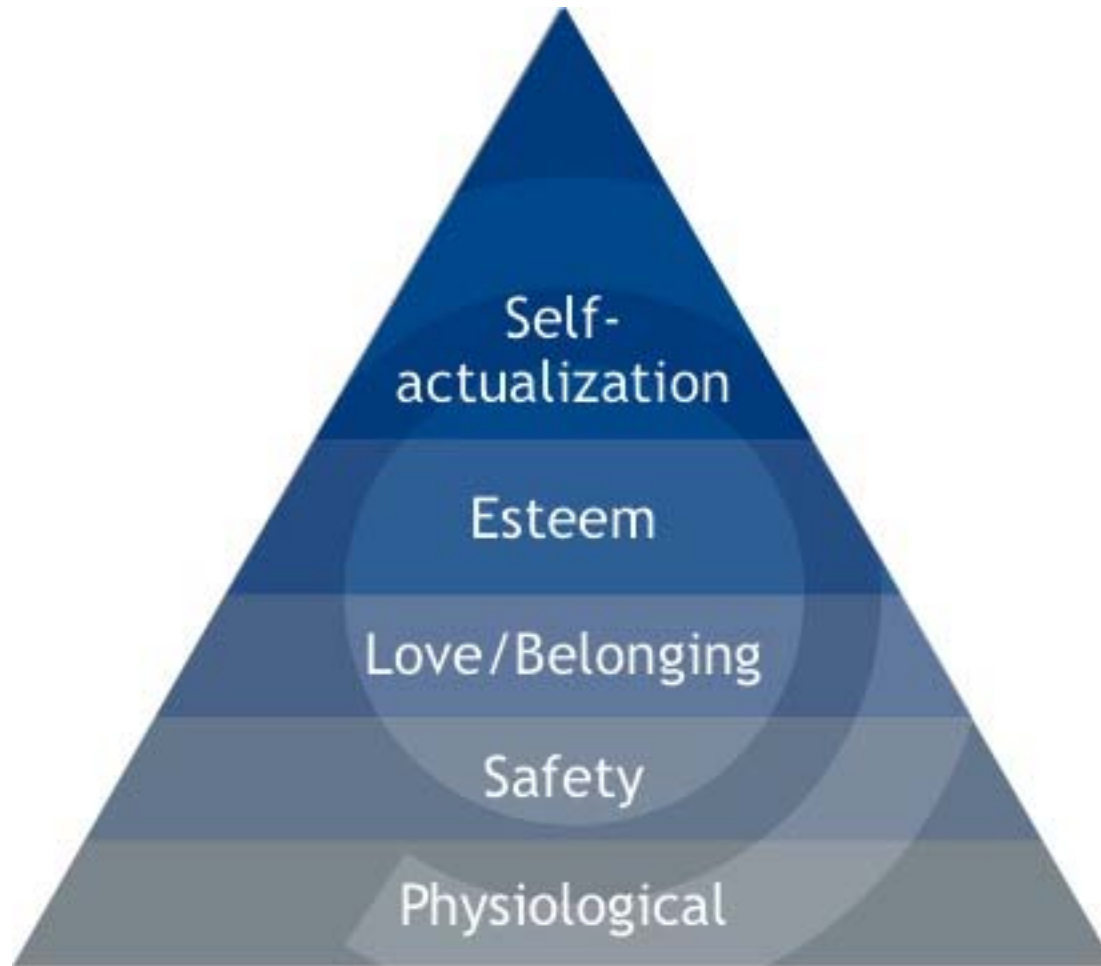
“

In the past, people shared at lunch with their girlfriends when they saw someone with something cool. We still share things when it's relevant... we just share more and online.

- Ethnography participant, female

”

Sharing is not new, it's human nature



What's changed?

We now live in the Information Age

We share
MORE
content

From
MORE
sources

With
MORE
people

MORE
often

MORE
quickly

“

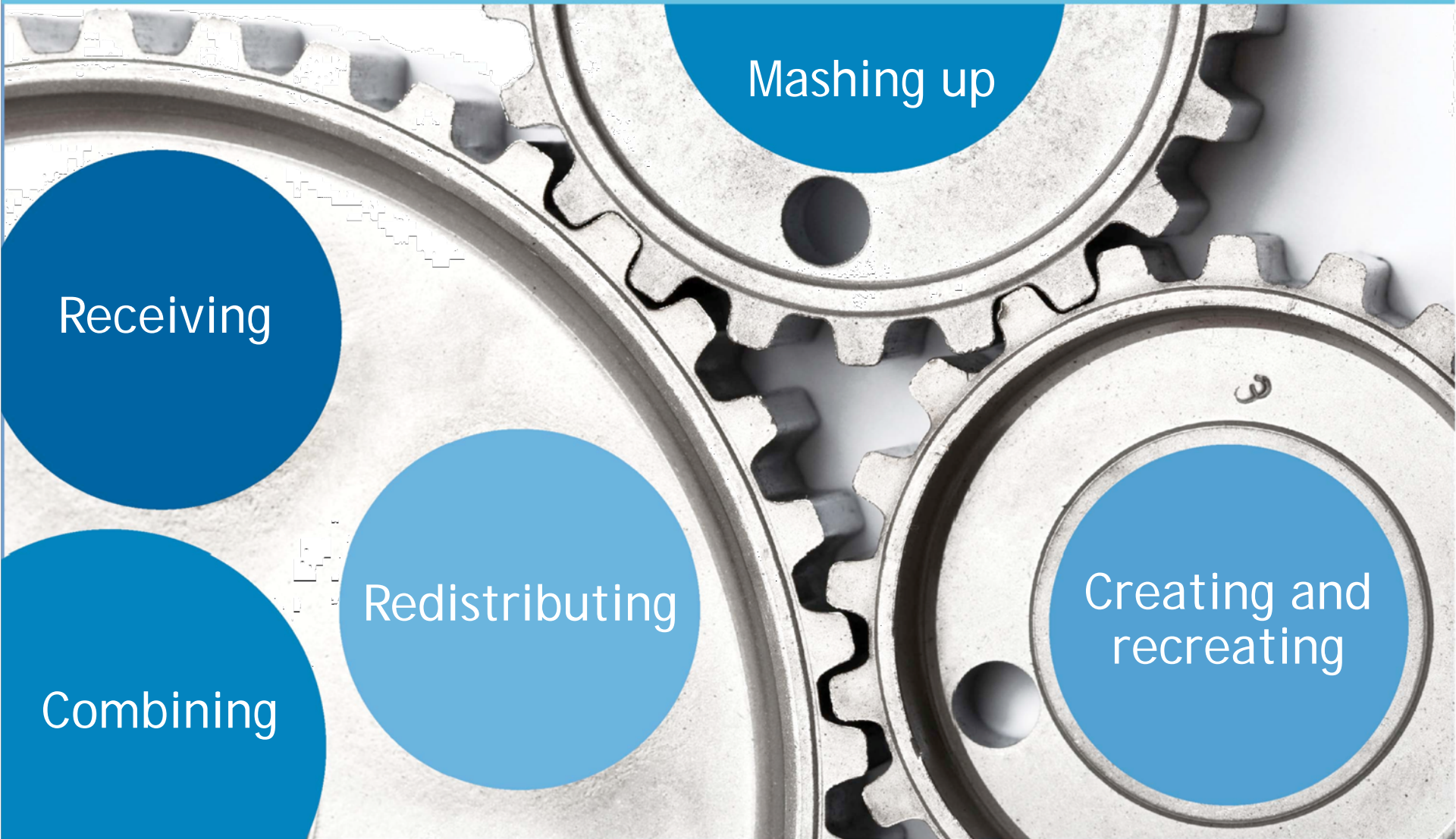
I have a hard time imagining how much more to-the-minute information can become. With twitter, instant FB updates, e-mail updates, what would have been considered fast even five years ago is obsolete.

- Deprivation participant, female

”



From Broadcasters to Sharecasters



Sharing acts as “information management”

73%

say they process information more deeply, thoroughly and thoughtfully when they share it

85%

say reading other people’s responses helps them understand and process information and events

“

Sharing information helps me do my job. I remember products and information sources better when I share them and am more likely to use them.

- Deprivation participant, male

”



🌀 MOTIVATIONS FOR SHARING 🌀





To bring valuable and entertaining content to others



49%
say sharing allows
them to inform
others of products
they care about and
potentially change
opinions or
encourage action


94%
carefully consider
how the
information they
share will be useful
to the recipient

“
[I share] to enrich
the lives of those
around me.
- Immersion
participant, female

”



To define ourselves to others



68%
share to give
people a better
sense of who they
are and what
they care about

“
I try to share only
information that will reinforce
the image I'd like to present:
thoughtful, reasoned, kind,
interested and passionate
about certain things.

- Deprivation participant, male

”

To grow and nourish our relationships

78%

share information online because it lets them stay connected to people they may not otherwise stay in touch with

73%

share information because it helps them connect with others who share their interests

“

I miss the companionship and conversations on Facebook. I feel like I'm probably missing out on some things without the connection.

- Deprivation participant, male

”



Self-fulfillment

69%
share
information
because it allows
them to feel more
involved in the world

“

I enjoy getting comments
that I sent great information
and that my friends will forward
it to their friends because
it's so helpful. It
makes me feel valuable.

- Ethnography participant, female

”



To get the word out about causes or brands

“

I forwarded an article about Proposition B to Everyone in my union. I wanted them to learn about the issue and rally against it.

- Ethnography participant, male

”

84%

share because it is a way to support causes or issues they care about



Sharing is all about relationships

1

To bring valuable and entertaining content to others

2

To define ourselves to others

3

To grow and nourish our relationships

4

Self-fulfillment

5

To get the word out about causes or brands



6 PERSONAS OF SHARERS





Six personas of online sharers

1
Altruists

3
Hipsters

5
Connectors

2
Careerists

4
Boomerangs

6
Selectives

SEGMENTS ARE
DEFINED BY:

- Emotional motivations
- Desired presentation of self
- Role of sharing in life
- Value of being first to share

“

I sent a couple of articles on nutrition and wellness to a friend with health issues. She e-mailed me to thank me; she appreciated that I had been thinking about her.

- Ethnography participant, female

”



HELPFUL

RELIABLE

E-MAIL

THOUGHTFUL

CONNECTED

ALTRUISTS



“

I share [things related to] business interests and exchange ideas on how to improve our company's offerings to our customers.

- Immersion participant, male

”



LINKEDIN

VALUABLE

INTELLIGENT

NETWORK

CAREERISTS



“

Sharing is actually part of who I am.
- Deprivation participant, male

”



LESS LIKELY TO E-MAIL
CUTTING EDGE
CREATIVE
IDENTITY
YOUNG
POPULAR

HIPSTERS



“

When I post controversial things, it makes me look engaged and provocative, and I want to be perceived that way. If I don't get a response then I know I've missed my mark.

- Ethnography participant, male

”



BOOMERANGS

REACTION

VALIDATION

EMPOWERED

TWITTER

FACEBOOK





“

I got a deal to the bar at the Gansevoort Hotel e-mailed to me. I forwarded it to a bunch of friends and we turned it into a girls night out.

- Ethnography participant, female

”





CONNECTORS

CREATIVE

RELAXED

THOUGHTFUL

MAKING PLANS

E-MAIL

FACEBOOK

“

I only share things with someone specific if I think they will enjoy it. If they aren't relevant to the material, there is no point in sharing it with them.

- Immersion participant, male

”





RESOURCEFUL

CAREFUL

THOUGHTFUL

INFORMATIVE

E-MAIL

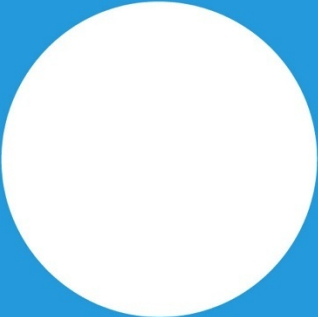
SELECTIVES



❁ KEY GUIDELINES FOR GETTING ❁
CONTENT SHARED



Key factors to influence sharing



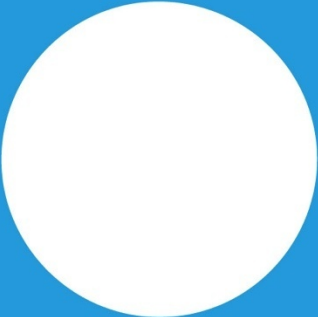
Appeal to consumers' motivation to connect with each other – not just with your brand



1



Key factors to influence sharing



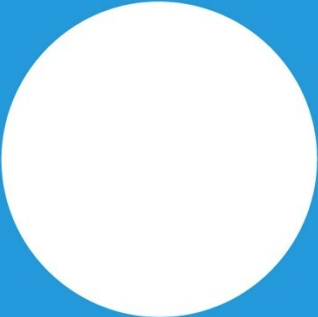
Trust is the
cost of entry for
getting shared



2



Key factors to influence sharing




Keep it simple...
and it will get
shared... and it
won't get muddled



3



Key factors to influence sharing



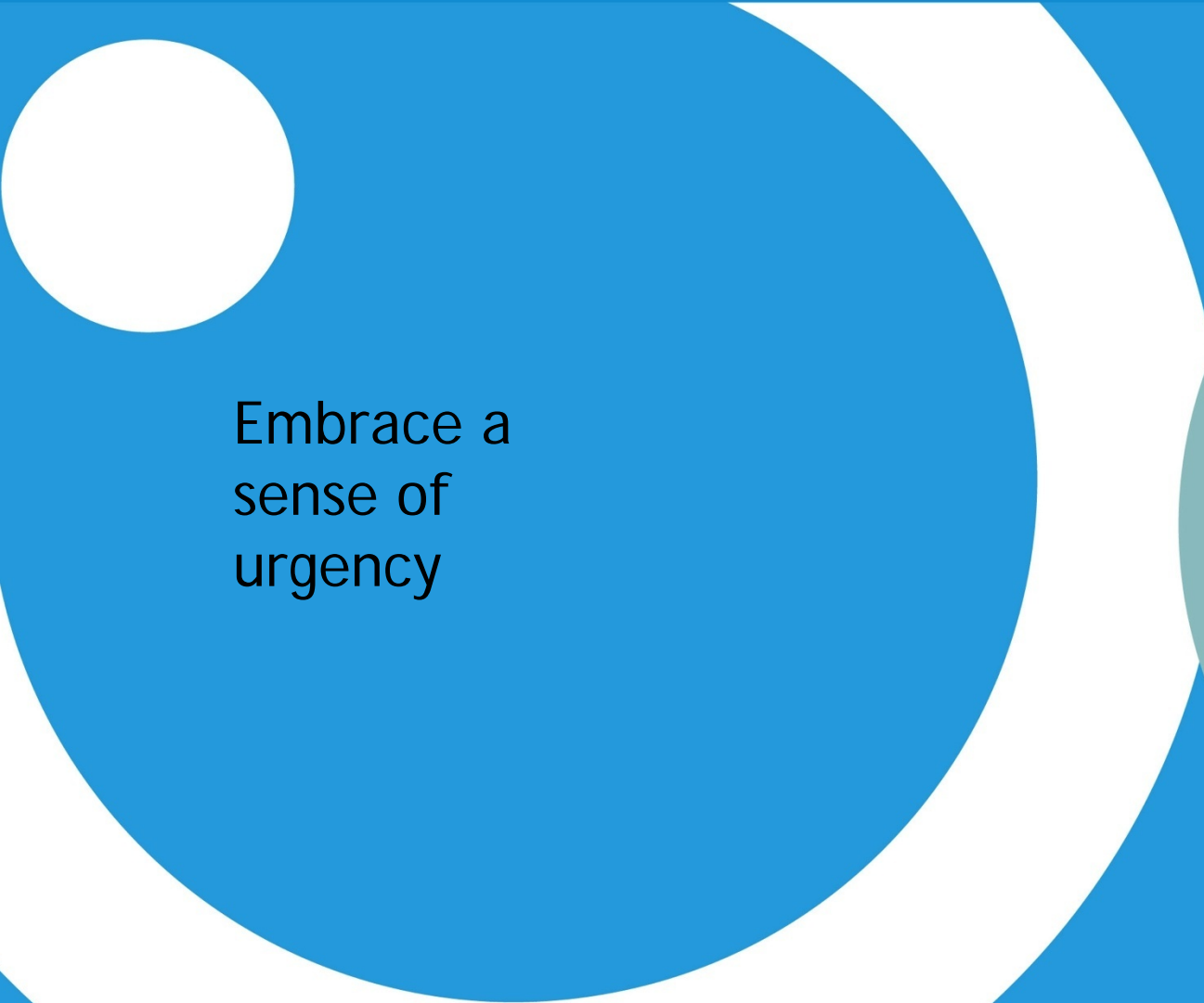
Appeal to their
sense of humor



4



Key factors to influence sharing



Embrace a
sense of
urgency



5

Key factors to influence sharing

Getting your content shared is just the beginning

6

Get shared

Get shared again

Listen

Get credit for responding

Respond



Key factors to influence sharing



E-mail is still #1



7

❁ CATEGORY SEGMENTATION ❁





For more information on this study and how it impacts your brand, please contact Brian Brett:
brian.brett@nytimes.com.