



Innovation of the Day

CHELSEA FC

Chelsea FC, the UK football club, announced this month that it would send fans found guilty of anti-Semitic abuse to Auschwitz. The club's [charitable foundation](#) has been working to raise awareness of anti-Semitism under its Jewish owner, Roman Abramovich. Previously, the team would ban fans that were overtly racist at matches for up to three years. Under the new initiative, fans will be given the option to take educational rehabilitation courses at the concentration camp instead of being banned. As Chelsea chairman Bruce Buck explained, "If you just ban people, you will never change their behavior. This policy gives them the chance to realize what they have done, to make them want to behave better."

Okay, we know this is a powerful initiative to hit your inbox on a Monday morning. But today I'm going to abandon our usual neutral TrendWatching voice to say "Hi, I'm Lisa Feierstein your Innovation of the Day writer (feel free to say hi back at lisa@trendwatching.com :) And, in case you couldn't immediately tell from 'Feierstein' I'm also a Jew. As a Jew, am I thrilled about vocal anti-semites entering a deeply sensitive site for Jewish people? Definitely not. But do I appreciate Chelsea FC's approach? Absolutely.

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Based on my personal experience with antisemitism, I agree with Bruce's point. Shutting people out can exacerbate the problem: it can make them angrier, less willing to change, and further disconnected from the truth. Coming face-to-face with Jews and Jewish history forces them to question: Why do I believe this? Where do anti-semitic slurs come from? Are these stereotypes actually based in reality? More importantly, Chelsea FC recognizes that people often need to see to believe. Because there's nothing like having someone stand in the spot where over one million were murdered to experience where dehumanization and hatred can end up.

What will you do if some of your customers display behavior you can't support? Will you be brave enough to engage with them, as Chelsea FC is doing? Of course, we hope you never have to deal with behavior like this. The bad news is that many of you will. The good news is that many of you work in roles where you can use your influence and resources to drive positive change. It won't be easy. You might not be 100% successful. However – as we've written about at length in [TRUTHFUL CONSUMERISM](#) – tolerance is one core value that should be part of everyone's long-term strategy.