

Forum:[Hack Forums](#)

Thread: [Why the Popularity System is Obsolete \(and Dangerous\)](#)

jcole - March 27, 2026, 7:12 pm

Update 3/30:

First off, I want to thank everyone for the high quality debate so far on this thread. Everyone has made some valid points. In this suggestion we've moved past the idea of "removing" Popularity (because it deserves a place here forever) and are now focusing on a UI/UX optimization that separates Social Standing from Marketplace Credibility.

Option 1: Social Blue (#0080FF)

This is the universal social language of the internet (Facebook, X, Discord, LinkedIn). It immediately signals to the user's brain: "This is a profile/social metric, not a business one." It creates the strongest visual speed bump against the Marketplace Green.

Option 2: Community Purple (#9933FF)

It feels like an intentional design choice rather than a low effort hot fix. It looks like the site meant for Popularity to be a distinct high status community metric.

Changing the color of popularity on a profile solves the "Trust vs. Likability" confusion dealt with by new and old users relating to our marketplace.

Green says: "This member fulfills their contracts."

Blue/Purple says: "This member is a pillar of the community."

The Result: If a user has 0 Green but +5,000 Blue/Purple, a buyer will think: "I'd love to grab a beer with this guy or chat in convo, but I should probably use a MM since he has no business history." That is exactly the outcome we want. The only outcome is to prevent members from getting scammed.

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The current state of the Reputation/Popularity system has become a liability for the marketplace. While it was originally intended to show community standing, it is now being weaponized by bad actors to bypass the safety measures we already have in place.

Here is why it's time to phase out Popularity in favor of the Contracts/Credibility system:

1. The "Giveaway to Exit-Scam" Pipeline

We've seen a recurring pattern that puts members at risk:

Setup: A new member joins and hosts a series of low-cost or "junk" giveaways.

Inflation: In exchange for entry, they "ask" (or implicitly require) Max Popularity.

Illusion: Within a week a brand-new user has +50 or +100 Rep making them look like a pillar of the community to an unsuspecting buyer.

Exit: They open a high-value sales thread, collect funds based on their "high rep," and exit-scam.

2. Popularity is not professionalism

Popularity is a measure of likability, not reliability. It's easy to farm by being funny in the Lounge or giving away \$5 gift cards. In a marketplace environment, "likes" shouldn't be the metric we use to judge whether someone is safe to send \$500 in crypto.

3. Credibility > Popularity

We already have a robust Credibility/Contract system that is significantly harder to game:
Proof of business: It requires an actual transaction to occur.

Two-sided accountability: Both parties are linked to a specific agreement.

Paper trail: If a contract goes bad there is documentation and a dispute can be filed.

Meaningful growth: 500+ completed contracts actually represent 500 successful business interactions while +500 popularity could just mean someone is good at posting memes.

4. Reducing Profile Inflation

By removing the Popularity system, we force members to look at the metrics that actually matter. If a user has +100 Popularity but 0 Contracts, they are a socialite, not a vendor. Removing the "green apples" would force buyers to do proper due diligence via HF contracts for the marketplace.

Conclusion:

The Popularity system has become a tool for social engineering rather than a badge of honor. To protect the integrity of the marketplace and prevent "pump and dump" profiles we should move toward a model where Credibility is earned through successful HF contracts not popularity requested through giveaways.

What are your thoughts, is popularity clinging on to nostalgia of the days of reputation or is it time to archive popularity entirely?

P??sonl?af - March 28, 2026, 4:10 am

You make some very good points and I totally agree that the popularity system is being abused.

The "Giveaway to Exit-Scam" Pipeline is a real problem. Imho I do believe both systems popularity & credibility/contract have a place here on Hackforums. That said a more simple solution can be put in place. Ban asking for +rep in a giveaway & +rep given related to a giveaway.

If you want to give something away it has to be because you... well want to give something away and not because you want to get +rep in return.

Omniscient - March 28, 2026, 9:52 am

You're not wrong but unless the suggestion has enough community support, I don't see why I would remove Popularity.

?inimalist - March 28, 2026, 10:06 am

I've often seen members in the dispute section say that they make deals based on popularity rather than credibility.

Bullup - March 28, 2026, 10:07 am

Yeah i stand behind this for sure, there's no point in the popularity system anyways, it kinda makes credibility lesser valueable as well

Omniscient - March 28, 2026, 11:41 am

Please note that removing this as a site feature will effect the Group Prestige once it's released. It was one of the parameters.

Immortal - March 28, 2026, 4:18 pm

Wouldn't the better solution be to disallow sales of products on hackforums? People consistently scam and get banned and then ban evade to scam again, using all sorts of parameters to do so: Rep, B Rating, Account Age, User Group, Awards, ect.

Rather then fighting just disallow sales of products. You can talk about products, work on making them, but as soon as it come to selling them nope.

jcole - March 28, 2026, 4:24 pm

(Mar 28, 2026 04:18 PM)Immortal Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Wouldn't the better solution be to disallow sales of products on hackforums? People consistently scam and get banned and then ban evade to scam again, using all sorts of parameters to do so: Rep, B Rating, Account Age, User Group, Awards, ect.

Rather then fighting just disallow sales of products. You can talk about products, work on making them, but as soon as it come to selling them nope.

This entire forum was built off a marketplace. Most people who are active on this site are here to buy/sell services.

Fiber - March 28, 2026, 5:22 pm

I agree with all your points; however,

If you are not the person to do your due diligence, with loads of factors and warnings from the website, and you STILL don't have a look at someone's reputation based on the comment/feedback (small or large) to gather whether it's a genuine reputation and not just some inflated basic reputation, you often see it's just a number, really.

We lost the ability to even type a custom message and had to pick from a list. While it was used, everyone disliked it. The site lost a lot of its personality back when people were scared of being "rep fucked" or targeted because they posted a controversial thing or some kind of dramatic event occured.

It seems crazy to think, given your points, that I would prefer keeping it.

Vince - March 28, 2026, 7:02 pm

(Mar 28, 2026 04:24 PM)jcole Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) This entire forum was built off a marketplace. Most people who are active on this site are here to buy/sell services.

Negative, could care less for the marketplace here. Few deals I did do ended up either getting scammed or was just tiny little deals.

Popularity is useless yes, but still a cool "thing" to collect for those who dont care for marketplace.

jcole - March 28, 2026, 7:08 pm

(Mar 28, 2026 07:02 PM)Vince Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Negative, could care less for the marketplace here. Few deals I did do ended up either getting scammed or was just tiny little deals.

Popularity is useless yes, but still a cool "thing" to collect for those who dont care for marketplace. I understand your perspective, but to be fair you have made four posts within the last six months.

Edit: I know better than anybody what it means to care about popularity. It was a mission of mine for years on end, but it's not doing anything positive for the community. It has just become a way for

people to inflate their profile, and end up scamming new unsuspecting members. I don't really care if it stays or goes. It doesn't have a place for the marketplace, but it is hard for new members to differentiate between popularity and credibility. Some users just correlate a high number of popularity as trusted.

Biggy - March 28, 2026, 7:10 pm

It literally says POPULARITY.

At what point do you stop blaming the website and start blaming the user for not doing their own due diligence?

I mean come on now. If I sign up for a website, I'm going a ton of research on a user before I attempt to make a transaction with them. And seeing popularity vs. credibility will easily stand out to me.

You can never fully prevent scams. They will always be there no matter what you do. And I don't think removing an entire site feature will have the effect that you think it will.

jcole - March 28, 2026, 7:17 pm

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You can never fully prevent scams. They will always be there no matter what you do. And I don't think removing an entire site feature will have the effect that you think it will.

You aren't wrong. User due diligence is the ultimate line of defense. If someone sees +100 Popularity and 0 Contracts and still sends \$500 to a "Newbie" account, that's a failure of common sense.

However, the argument isn't just about blaming the site; it's about UI/UX signaling.

The Green Apple effect is a real. It's happened before, and it's going to continue to happen. New users infiltrate the website. Hang out in HF convo, build rapport with veterans, host giveaways, join groups, and coast towards an exit scam. Even for experienced users seeing a high green number next to a name creates an immediate subconscious level of "trust" before they even click the profile. Scammers know this and they aren't trying to trick the veterans, but they're hunting the 5% of users who are in a rush and let their guard down because a profile looks green and shiny.

Systemic Inflation: When a system can be "farmed" via \$10 giveaways, it loses its objective value. If a metric doesn't accurately represent what it claims to (trustworthiness), then it's just noise.

Scams will always exist, you're 100% right. But why maintain a "Popularity" metric that actively helps scammers build a fake level of activity in 48 hours? If we want a professional marketplace, we should move toward professional metrics.

At what point does "nostalgia" for the old Rep system start costing the community more than it's worth?

M?tt - March 28, 2026, 8:06 pm

I can see both sides of Popularity being good and not good. I personally don't care about the Popularity since it doesn't change my activity nor limit contributions. I definitely do come here mostly for the Marketplace if I need anything, but I post from time to time. Popularity doesn't really drive interactions with certain people. I will say that it's obvious when Popularity trading is present or members do things to build their Popularity, but it doesn't bother me.

Exit scamming I think is not preventable so using that as a driving factor for any decision isn't valid. If someone is going to build up their credibility and then run off with some large deal, they're going to find a way.

Excellent points though jcole. I'm interested to see how this pans out.

Cooligan - March 28, 2026, 10:33 pm

(Mar 28, 2026 09:52 AM)Omniscient Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) You're not wrong but unless the suggestion has enough community support, I don't see why I would remove Popularity.

This basically. After almost 2 decades of HF being the most popular clearnet hacking forum (potentially darkweb as well depending on what you consider to be a "legacy forum"). Since we've always had rep/popularity, the site would feel like it's missing one of its core features. It's not meant as a trust score as we all know, but it is a sign of forum activity, that the member is indeed an active part of the community.

Reputation and now Popularity have been a part of HF since its inception, same with any other forum board. Most users understand that a "Popularity" score is not a trustability score. Of course there's some that don't understand this, however those people are most likely going to have a bad experience due to a multitude of reasons if they're basing someone's trust factor off of a non-marketplace related number, and HF clearly states that.

I haven't seen anyone "pumping & dumping" their Popularity to a point where they can scam easier. Most exit scams I see, or scams in general, are 90% of the time from either low-Popularity L33t or Ub3r (or other forums' cheapest tiered account upgrade option, usually \$20 or less) accounts or non-upgraded accounts—not high-Popularity Ub3r or V3ndor accounts. It definitely happens of course, but not nearly as much as low-Popularity L33t & Ub3r accounts from what I've seen.

Proof - March 28, 2026, 11:05 pm

Site pop wipe / disable feature ? I'm all for it.

Half the people in here saying no have farmed rep and are attached to point in a time which no longer exists.

Rep is useless, people are too sensitive and cry over it and then you have morons who use it as a trust ranking when it sure as shit isn't.

Nuke it or a/b test the site with it turned off for a month.

StuffSneak - March 29, 2026, 12:22 am

Changing the color seems the most appropriate solution I think. Removing it? I am not so sure.

Null State - March 29, 2026, 12:51 am

Let's just go back to the old way where you couldn't ask for it lol, and bring back repfucks too.

Vince - March 29, 2026, 6:12 am

(Mar 28, 2026 07:17 PM)jcole Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) You aren't wrong. User due diligence is the ultimate line

of defense. If someone sees +100 Popularity and 0 Contracts and still sends \$500 to a "Newbie" account, that's a failure of common sense.

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Viewable posts yes, I mainly post within group subforums now because honestly, the site doesn't offer what it once did. It became a huge shift towards the Marketplace because of the money that was being made. On top of a lot of the old friends I had made here ending up banned for either the dumb shit they did or pissing off Omni. Regardless, it's been a core feature for awhile, no reason to remove it because idiots can't do the required research themselves before making deals and then cry when they are scammed by some rando on the internet on a forum called "HackForums" because they did zero research about the person first. Or did not follow the guidelines here when making deals as well.

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(Mar 29, 2026 12:51 AM)Null State Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Let's just go back to the old way where you couldn't ask for it lol, and bring back repfucks too.

Or just fuck the rep system to begin with and disable!

Has nothing to do with HF these days. POP is bought and paid for and the goal award is easily attainable through groups.

Pointless.

(Mar 29, 2026 06:12 AM)Vince Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Viewable posts yes, I mainly post within group subforums now because honestly, the site doesn't offer what it once did. It became a huge shift towards the Marketplace because of the money that was being made. On top of a lot of the old friends I had made here ending up banned for either the dumb shit they did or pissing off Omni. Regardless, it's been a core feature for awhile, no reason to remove it because idiots can't do the required research themselves before making deals and then cry when they are scammed by some rando on the internet on a forum called "HackForums" because they did zero research about the person first. Or did not follow the guidelines here when making deals as well.

Huge shift toward marketplace therefore contracts are the only relevant thing.

I agree. So, further showing no need for pop.

Bullup - March 29, 2026, 9:44 am

(Mar 28, 2026 07:10 PM)Biggy Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) It literally says POPULARITY.

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I mean come on now. If I sign up for a website, I'm going a ton of research on a user before I attempt to make a transaction with them. And seeing popularity vs. credibility will easily stand out to me.

You can never fully prevent scams. They will always be there no matter what you do. And I don't think removing an entire site feature will have the effect that you think it will.

It's the entire problem that it says POPULARITY.... those points have 0 to do with popularity and make a brand new user look POPULAR when he throws around \$5 perhaps you don't know what popular means but the definition of popular:

Quote:liked or admired by many people or by a particular person or group.

It gotta be renamed to Fun Points or something like that instead of popularity, as that makes a lot more sense. People with lots of POPULARITY on HF aren't POPULAR on HF it's 100% misleading new members, and a misleading name in general.

Or just remove it as we already have Posts, Threads, Game XP, Bytes, and Credibility, that's plenty, the feature is rather pointless at this time and age, and misleading as well due to its name.

There are only cons keeping this points sytem, with that specific name. Nobody can name any good reason to keep it.

Natha - March 29, 2026, 11:26 am

Some good points there. Reputation use to carry so much weight back in the day.

perm - March 29, 2026, 1:06 pm

I don't support removing it entirely. Maybe just rename it to something like "Apples" or something which clearly shows it is not related to the marketplace.

P??sonl?af - March 29, 2026, 1:49 pm

I def would support the change of the color of reputation to a blue so it's more clear it is not related to the marketplace.

Vince - March 29, 2026, 2:16 pm

(Mar 29, 2026 09:06 AM)Proof Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Or just fuck the rep system to begin with and disable!

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I agree. So, further showing no need for pop.

To you and others who use the marketplace maybe, but to others, we could give zero fucks about contracts. If someone is basing deals off of popularity even then others were warned that popularity has zero correlation to marketplace, then they are an idiot.

Biggy_Asian - March 29, 2026, 3:32 pm

(Mar 29, 2026 02:16 PM)Vince Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) To you and others who use the marketplace maybe, but to others, we could give zero fucks about contracts. If someone is basing deals off of popularity

even then others were warned that popularity has zero correlation to marketplace, then they are an idiot.

I have to agree, as someone who does not use the marketplace contracts literally don't mean shit to me unless I am wanting to deal with that specific person. Rep might be useless but contracts are just as useless outside of its respective context.

Omniscient - March 29, 2026, 5:09 pm

(Mar 29, 2026 01:06 PM)perm Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) I don't support removing it entirely. Maybe just rename it to something like "Apples" or something which clearly shows it is not related to the marketplace.

It's already imho appropriately named. So is Credibility.

When you click on these imho it's very clear what each one is. Even before you click them.

I can't make people smarter and I'm not going to just keep dunning-down the site for the lowest of IQ's.

jcole - March 29, 2026, 5:22 pm

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I agree that the name shouldn't be changed at all. Renaming Popularity to Apples sound dumb anyways, and looks childish. This is an adult forum with a mature audience, but I would like to see what your thoughts are to changing the profile color for Popularity green to a more social blue

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Are you implying that because the Popularity number is green that people believe it's Marketplace related? And that if it was a blue that would fix the issue?

jcole - March 29, 2026, 6:01 pm

(Mar 29, 2026 05:46 PM)Omniscient Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Are you implying that because the Popularity number is green that people believe it's Marketplace related? And that if it was a blue that would fix the issue?

Yes sir. On most forums and marketplaces green is synonymous with vouched, trusted, or reputable. By shifting it to a social blue, it separates a user's reputation for being likable or helpful from their financial credibility in the marketplace. It helps define the 'Popularity' metric as a social standing rather than a business one.

Omniscient - March 29, 2026, 6:02 pm

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Then sure, I'll do some adjusting to the color. LOL

xadamxk - March 29, 2026, 6:07 pm

Reputation and Popularity have been around for 15 years.
I don't think this is a problem for new members.

The suggestions lately are wild.

jcole - March 29, 2026, 6:10 pm

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(Mar 29, 2026 06:02 PM)Omniscient Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Then sure, I'll do some adjusting to the color. LOL
I appreciate the open-mindedness on this, Omni. I think this is the perfect middle ground.

By moving Popularity to a social blue we keep the site's history intact while giving the Credibility/Contract system the 'Green' exclusivity it deserves. It makes the distinction between a helpful community member and a proven business partner clear at a glance. This is a huge step for marketplace safety.

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I respect the history of the system, but the marketplace landscape today is very different than it was a decade ago. We're seeing 'popularity farming' used as a specific tool for social engineering. Changing the color doesn't erase that history, it just differentiates it. It helps new members distinguish at a glance between someone who is community famous and someone who is contract proven.

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I don't follow the marketplace so I could be ignorant here, but do you have any examples of this?
If this was an issue I feel like it would have happened or been in a problem in the last 15 years?

jcole - March 29, 2026, 6:28 pm

(Mar 29, 2026 06:16 PM)xadamxk Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) I don't follow the marketplace so I could be ignorant here, but do you have any examples of this?

If this was an issue I feel like it would have happened or been in a problem in the last 15 years?

You can take a look at [Member Contests](#) and see how often threads are posted with requirements for max popularity to enter. When both metrics are green, it creates a visual overlap that confuses users to do their due diligence. A color shift preserves the site's history of the social system while giving the Marketplace (Contracts/Credibility) its own dedicated 'trust' color.

Here are some recent threads in the section:

<https://hackforums.net/showthread.php?tid=6322587>

<https://hackforums.net/showthread.php?tid=6320490>

<https://hackforums.net/showthread.php?tid=6321150> (This user is banned currently for not fulfilling the contest.)

<https://hackforums.net/showthread.php?tid=6315151>

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Okay I do see what you mean now.

If the color was changed to blue for positive rep count, do you think that would remove the confusion?

jcole - March 29, 2026, 6:39 pm

(Mar 29, 2026 06:34 PM)xadamxk Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Okay I do see what you mean now.

If the color was changed to blue for positive rep count, do you think that would remove the confusion?

I think it's the most effective low effort solution that can be implemented.

It won't stop every scam, but it removes the visual halo effect. Currently, a buyer's brain just sees Green = Good. By splitting the colors we force a moment of cognitive friction. When a user sees +100 Blue (Social) but 0 Green (Business), it's an obvious visual red flag that they are dealing with a Socialite and not a Vendor.

It aligns with how modern platforms handle this, separating likes/followers from verified merchant status. It keeps the legacy of Popularity alive while finally giving the Marketplace its own dedicated 'Trust' identity.

Omniscient - March 29, 2026, 6:41 pm

(Mar 29, 2026 06:10 PM)jcole Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) I appreciate the open-mindedness on this, Omni. I think this is the perfect middle ground.

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? loading encrypted image...

Do I have to change all the colors there too or just in the postbit? Is there a social blue color hex you recommend?

jcole - March 29, 2026, 6:47 pm

(Mar 29, 2026 06:41 PM)Omniscient Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) ? loading encrypted image...

Do I have to change all the colors there too or just in the postbit? Is there a social blue color hex you recommend?

#0080FF (Deep Sky Blue / Azure)

HEX: #0080FF

RGB: rgb(0, 128, 255)

HSL: 210°, 100%, 50%

Why this specific blue works,

Contrast: It pops perfectly against the dark grey/black background of the forum, making it just as readable as the current green.

Meaning: This shade is associated with "social" platforms (like Twitter or Facebook), which subconsciously reinforces your point that Popularity is a social metric.

Differentiation: It is far enough away from the Credibility Green (#32CD32 or similar) that there is zero chance of a user confusing the two at a quick glance.

I don't believe that you need to change the underlying metrics or the sitewide dynamics (like the Positives/Negatives table you showed). Those are fine as they are. The fix is strictly changing the hex color of the Popularity number on the profile. Since a user's profile is the first thing a buyer looks at when checking a seller's stats, just having that one number be blue creates the visual distinction needed. It separates 'Social Rep' from 'Marketplace Credibility' without requiring you to recode the entire popularity system or its summary tables.

Cooligan - March 29, 2026, 10:52 pm

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The suggestions lately are wild.

Some of them lately do feel like suggesting changes just to make changes with no actual long-term benefit behind it. It's often something that changes the way HF feels for a niche group of members, rather than how it operates for everyone.

This thread is a good example. A member suggests a change, the change isn't necessarily controversial (the color change) but is something that will now effectively alter the very well-liked and preferred aesthetic of Popularity (hacker green that has always fit HF perfectly) that has been in place since 2007. That's the downside for other members — I would've liked to have seen a poll-vote on this thread to get an actual idea of what members think of the color change from green to blue. cc [Omniscient](#)

If I thought this would have a huge effect on new members not getting scammed, I'd totally be behind the color change as well. However, after over 12 years of MM'ing on this forum and many others, it's very rare that a client reports to me that they were scammed by someone because "they fell for their amount of reputation as a fake trust metric." or anything like that. It's almost always the actual behavior and social engineering/manipulation skill that allows these scammers to do what they do; not pixels on a screen that represent what is essentially our online non-marketplace, popularity/social XP.

(Mar 29, 2026 06:39 PM)jcole Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) By splitting the colors we force a moment of cognitive friction. When a user sees +100 Blue (Social) but 0 Green (Business), it's an obvious visual red flag that they are dealing with a Socialite and not a Vendor.

It also breaks the smooth flow of users profiles in posts and profiles by adding a random blue color, when quite literally every other text-related element of HF is the green or neon green. Profile elements like Online status and Popularity/Credibility amounts, any text you hover turns neon green, the HF cursor itself is neon green, etc. The blue just feels out of place and like a low-effort change that won't really have the outcome I think you're expecting. (see my reply to adam above)

(Mar 29, 2026 06:39 PM)jcole Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) It aligns with how modern platforms handle this, separating likes/followers from verified merchant status. It keeps the legacy of Popularity alive while finally giving the Marketplace its own dedicated 'Trust' identity.

Also, HF isn't a social media website with "likes and followers" to warrant a blue color change. In this context it feels out of place and forced.

(Mar 29, 2026 06:39 PM)jcole Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) When a user sees +100 Blue (Social) but 0 Green (Business), it's an obvious visual red flag that they are dealing with a Socialite and not a Vendor.

This is a slippery slope IMHO. We don't want to demonize a member solely because they're more active in the HF community than the marketplace. For example, I've escrowed tons of deals with members who have under 10 Credibility, but over 1,000 Popularity.

It shouldn't be a "red flag" that a member doesn't have a high Credibility score. Not only were we all new members with 0 Credibility at one point, but also some members simply only use the marketplace when needed and are still great members to deal with onsite, even with a low Credibility score. If all members operated with that "low Credibility/high Popularity red flag" mentality, I fear much fewer deals would be conducted.

Yakless - March 29, 2026, 11:28 pm

(Mar 29, 2026 10:52 PM)Cooligan Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Some of them lately do feel like suggesting changes just to make changes with no actual long-term benefit behind it. It's often something that changes the way HF feels for a niche group of members, rather than how it operates for everyone.

This thread is a good example. A member suggests a change, the change isn't necessarily controversial (the color change) but is something that will now effectively alter the very well-liked and preferred aesthetic of Popularity (hacker green that has always fit HF perfectly) that has been in place since 2007. That's the downside for other members — I would've liked to have seen a poll-vote on this thread to get an actual idea of what members think of the color change from green to blue. cc [Omniscient](#)

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Jamika - March 30, 2026, 3:58 am

In my humble opinion, I believe it would be better to focus on adding new features, rewards, or even games to encourage member activity within the forum.

I don't think we need to change the color to distinguish between the two; anyone who is easily confused or unable to tell the difference will remain so, even if we change the color to purple or white.

(Mar 29, 2026 06:41 PM)Omniscient Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) ? loading encrypted image...

Do I have to change all the colors there too or just in the postbit? Is there a social blue color hex you recommend?

Make the 'Neutral' orange so it looks like a traffic light, lol

Motusora - March 30, 2026, 5:26 am

or how about change the popularity color to this?

jcole - March 30, 2026, 5:31 am

(Mar 30, 2026 05:26 AM)Motusora Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) or how about change the popularity color to this?

I'm not at home, and that's why I haven't sent a detailed reply to [Cooligan](#) but this is where I'm at

with this suggestion now, not to advocate for a deletion of a site feature that has been around since the creation, but a simple color change on a profile.

I don't know what color will work best. I liked the sky blue I sent to Omni, but I think that is something that can easily be voted on by the community in a poll. Ultimately [Omniscient](#) makes the decisions for anything, I can suggest something, but he is the deciding factor that can implement change.

Proof - March 30, 2026, 5:57 am

(Mar 29, 2026 02:16 PM)Vince Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) To you and others who use the marketplace maybe, but to others, we could give zero fucks about contracts. If someone is basing deals off of popularity even then others were warned that popularity has zero correlation to marketplace, then they are an idiot.

if someone does a deal based on pop then that is entirely their problem however it pans out.

I just think pop, given you can register then join a group and get to 1k inside a few days— makes it rather pointless.

Same thing with hosting a “member contest” or whatever they are called these days. Pop and ql are easily bought and paid for/ farmable.

Pop does seem to get people worked up, it is quite funny.

Would be interesting to see it disabled for a month and see how that works out.

(Mar 29, 2026 11:28 PM)Yakless Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) I completely agree with this response. There is no legitimate reason to start changing colors and changing systems, or mess with Popularity, which is clearly different than Credibility already.

Yeah, just get rid of it. Has absolutely zero use.

Cooligan - March 30, 2026, 9:32 am

(Mar 30, 2026 05:31 AM)jcole Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) I'm not at home, and that's why I haven't sent a detailed reply to [Cooligan](#) but this is where I'm at with this suggestion now, not to advocate for a deletion of a site feature that has been around since the creation, but a simple color change on a profile.

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For sure, I'm curious what counterpoints you have regarding the points I brought up.

As for your update to the OP regarding the color change suggestion, I addressed all of that in my post already. Not sure if you've read it yet but it touches on all of that, but in short I'm against the color change due to the reasons in my post above.

Here's a screenshot from my post of my points directly addressing the color change suggestion:
? loading encrypted image...

cc <https://hackforums.net/showthread.php?tid=6322825&pid=62936754#pid62936754>

(Mar 30, 2026 05:57 AM)Proof Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Yeah, just get rid of it. Has absolutely zero use. Not sure if you noticed, but I think you replied to the wrong post by accident here. ^

[Yakless](#) was saying not to mess with it; not to mess with it.

Omniscient - March 30, 2026, 10:35 am

Sounds like this still needs to be sorted out.

I do like the gold color a bit better than a blue but jcole seemed to indicate that Social Blue was some form of already perceived by the overall internet as being a benign social score.

JoshAllen - March 30, 2026, 11:44 am

(Mar 30, 2026 05:57 AM)Proof Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Yeah, just get rid of it. Has absolutely zero use. I think popularity is important to many users. Look at how many new users will make posts being mad at getting negative pop, or how thankful some are when getting positive pop.

It is a good indicator of active/hq members around the forum, and not just in the marketplace.

I feel removing it, will make the forum look more marketplace focused.

Fiber - March 30, 2026, 3:42 pm

(Mar 30, 2026 10:35 AM)Omniscient Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Sounds like this still needs to be sorted out.

I do like the gold color a bit better than a blue but jcole seemed to indicate that Social Blue was some form of already perceived by the overall internet as being a benign social score.

I don't really see why EVERYONE needs to be pleased with a feature, I get and understand all the points above but half of it just seems like something ChatGPT would recommend doing.

The system has seen enough iterations to tell you what people like, and use. Change the color sure, but c'mon really? these idiots will get scammed whether its blue, orange, red you name it. It's a color. You can't FIX stupid.

Jamika - March 30, 2026, 4:01 pm

(Mar 30, 2026 03:42 PM)Fiber Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) I don't really see why EVERYONE needs to be pleased with a feature, I get and understand all the points above but half of it just seems like something ChatGPT would recommend doing.

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Totally agree , changing colour don't raise IQ

Proof - March 30, 2026, 4:55 pm

(Mar 30, 2026 09:32 AM)Cooligan Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) For sure, I'm curious what counterpoints you have regarding the points I brought up.

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Not sure if you noticed, but I think you replied to the wrong post by accident here. ^

[Yakless](#) was saying not to mess with it; not to mess with it.

I know lol but you could also view it as no need to change color and then get rid of it :)

Pop is useless

(Mar 30, 2026 11:44 AM)JoshAllen Wrote: [CITE](#) I think popularity is important to many users. Look at how many new users will make posts being mad at getting negative pop, or how thankful some are when getting positive pop.

It is a good indicator of active/hq members around the forum, and not just in the marketplace.

I feel removing it, will make the forum look more marketplace focused.
Sends the wrong message to new users that pop is even relevant.

B-rating is all that matters here. Can't see how pop + b-rating serves any other purpose than vanity. Except this causes confuses and people conflate pop with trustworthiness.

Groups can take a new member up to 1k with their +10-12s pretty quickly. I'm just saying, it's a meaningless metric now. Also bought and paid for easily.

Can still QL the new members when they post something of value. Maybe expand on QL idk. Just saying pop is useless.

jcoble - March 30, 2026, 5:12 pm

(Mar 29, 2026 10:52 PM)Cooligan Wrote: [CITE](#) Some of them lately do feel like suggesting changes just to make changes with no actual long-term benefit behind it. It's often something that changes the way HF feels for a niche group of members, rather than how it operates for everyone.

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This is a slippery slope IMHO. We don't want to demonize a member solely because they're more active in the HF community than the marketplace. For example, I've escrowed tons of deals with members who have under 10 Credibility, but over 1,000 Popularity.

It shouldn't be a "red flag" that a member doesn't have a high Credibility score. Not only were we all new members with 0 Credibility at one point, but also some members simply only use the marketplace when needed and are still great members to deal with onsite, even with a low Credibility score. If all members operated with that "low Credibility/high Popularity red flag" mentality, I fear much fewer deals would be conducted.

I appreciate the detailed feedback. You have been around a long time, and you make some valid points regarding the site's aesthetic. I think there's a misunderstanding of the goal here.

Hacker Green:

I love the HF look as much as anyone, but when 'Hacker Green' is used for every single metric, it creates a wall of green where nothing stands out. In a marketplace, the most important information shouldn't be camouflaged. By making Popularity blue (or any distinct social color), we aren't breaking the flow, we are creating a visual distinction. It allows the Contracts/Credibility to actually pop as the primary trust metric for deals in the marketplace.

Demonizing Members:

My goal with this suggestion isn't to make a high-popularity/low credibility member look 'bad'. There are fantastic members in this community who don't buy/sell services, but are here to enjoy the community they grew up in. The 'red flag' only applies when that person is trying to sell a \$500 service while claiming their +500 Popularity is proof of business reliability. A member with 0 Credibility isn't a 'red flag' person; they are just an unproven vendor. There's a big difference.

On Social Engineering:

You're right that scammers are skilled at manipulation, but they use pixels on a screen to fuel that manipulation. If a scammer can point to a high green number and say "Look at my popularity, you go first I'm trusted" and a new user doesn't know the difference between Pop and Cred, the system is inadvertently helping the scammer.

A color shift isn't a 'low-effort change' it's a high impact low effort UI adjustment. It forces the buyer to ask: "Why is his social score high but his business score zero?" That one question saves users from exit scams.

(Mar 30, 2026 03:58 AM)Jamika Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) In my humble opinion, I believe it would be better to focus on adding new features, rewards, or even games to encourage member activity within the forum.

I don't think we need to change the color to distinguish between the two; anyone who is easily confused or unable to tell the difference will remain so, even if we change the color to purple or white.

Make the 'Neutral' orange so it looks like a traffic light, lol

I agree that adding new features and rewards is always a plus for the community. However, I don't think it has to be an either/or situation.

While a color change might not stop a completely reckless user, good UI design is about reducing 'cognitive load' for everyone. Right now, we have two completely different metrics. One for social likability and one for business reliability sharing the exact same visual identity.

Even for experienced members, having a distinct social color and a business color creates a better visual hierarchy. It's the same reason a stoplight uses Red and Green instead of just different shades of the same color. It's not about fixing people who are confused, it's about making the forum's most important data points (Credibility and Contracts) stand out as the primary trust metrics they are meant to be.

(Mar 30, 2026 05:26 AM)Motusora Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) or how about change the popularity color to this?

(Mar 30, 2026 10:35 AM)Omniscient Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Sounds like this still needs to be sorted out.

I do like the gold color a bit better than a blue but jcole seemed to indicate that Social Blue was some form of already perceived by the overall internet as being a benign social score.

I like seeing other colors suggested too. but gold just doesn't carry the same psychological weight as blue. In UI design, colors act as a language and gold usually signals something very different than social. If you change Popularity to gold, it looks like a "High Score" or a trophy. It doesn't solve the problem of people farming it. It might make it look more valuable to a new user searching for a purchase in our marketplace.

In UI design, gold is the universal color for rewards, trophies, and premium status. If you change Popularity to gold, you are essentially turning it into a shiny badge or accolade similar to our awards system. Blue is the utility color of the internet (Twitter, LinkedIn, Discord, Facebook). It signals community standing, identity, and social presence.

(Mar 30, 2026 11:44 AM)JoshAllen Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) I think popularity is important to many users. Look at how many new users will make posts being mad at getting negative pop, or how thankful some are when getting positive pop.

It is a good indicator of active/hq members around the forum, and not just in the marketplace.

I feel removing it, will make the forum look more marketplace focused.I agree with you wholeheartedly. As I've mentioned before, there are not many others who have cared about their popularity more than me. Popularity is a massive part of the HF culture and it should definitely stay. It's exactly why many of us value our standing here.

My proposal isn't to remove it, but to give it its own identity. By changing the color you are giving each Popularity and Credibility their own identity in our forum ecosystem. It tells members of the board, "This member is an active, HQ, and likable member of the forum." That's a badge of honor in itself. It doesn't make the forum marketplace focused. It distinctly labels what is Social and what is Commercial. It allows both systems to coexist without one being used to fake the other.

(Mar 30, 2026 03:42 PM)Fiber Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) I don't really see why EVERYONE needs to be pleased with a feature, I get and understand all the points above but half of it just seems like something ChatGPT would recommend doing.

The system has seen enough iterations to tell you what people like, and use. Change the color sure, but c'mon really? these idiots will get scammed whether its blue, orange, red you name it. It's a color. You can't FIX stupid.

Scammers will always find a way to manipulate people. That doesn't mean we should leave a visual loophole wide open. My goal with this suggestion isn't to fix everyone, but it's to modernize the interface. Even if it only stops 10% of the low effort 'giveaway to exit scams' by making a buyer pause for a split second, then the 5 minutes it takes to change a CSS hex code was worth it.

It's less about pleasing everyone and more about making the forum's data as clear as possible. Whether a user is smart or stupid, a blue number for social status and a green number for business history is objectively better organization than having everything in one big green bucket.

(Mar 30, 2026 11:44 AM)JoshAllen Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) It is a good indicator of active/hq members around the forum, and not just in the marketplace.

I feel removing it, will make the forum look more marketplace focused.

As far as it being a good indicator for HQ members, I disagree. I think it's more associated with how active members are. Those with higher reputation tend to have a higher posts per day and / or have been here for a long time.

I definitely like your point on the forum looking more marketplace focused in the event of removing Popularity. That's a factor I didn't consider and it makes a lot of sense. Excellent point!

Hackers - March 30, 2026, 6:26 pm

I don't disagree with most key points, they are valid. I know some people still want to remove pop or don't understand why we need it, so here are some thoughts... Even though it's abused...

technically popularity is a barrier to entry. If you take it away then we go from having scammers sneaking into the pop club to having no indicators of trust/respect/popularity outside of the marketplace. It's theoretically easier for them in that case because we already have contract logs and b ratings, so if you take out popularity, it's not going to suddenly cause buyers to become smart & vet the seller & use a MM & use a contract. It may result in them looking at post count for community trust levels and we could regret not having a non-business method of rating another user.

My vote goes to keeping Pop because not everyone here is trying to buy/sell. People just need to stop giving +8-12 to ppl with 2 months on their account and 30 posts and 5 products being sold.

Maybe a more accurate depiction would be to show the average rating per user instead of total pop. So if you get 10 pops and 5 are negative, you are at ~0~ (assuming all are equal, they cancel each other out because $0/10 = 0$). If you had +10 pop total from 2 people and -6 from 2 other people then your total is 4 pop from 4 people, for an average rating of 1 per user.

using an average pop per user could be a unique way to help w/ this problem (avoid popularity bloat by +8-12 spammers) while also keeping a workable system in place.

js js, that's my 2 cents

Omniscient - March 30, 2026, 7:28 pm

This just seems like the creation of busy work for me.

JoshAllen - March 30, 2026, 7:43 pm

(Mar 30, 2026 07:28 PM)Omniscient Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) This just seems like the creation of busy work for me.

This isn't a problem to worry to much about. At most change the color.

I really don't think many people are getting scammed based off popularity, and the ones that blame that reason, should learn to take some responsibility.

Omniscient - March 30, 2026, 7:55 pm

Changed to suggested #0080FF. I may have missed some spots and if so, just LMK.

I think it looks like total shit.

Note: I separated the CSS so future changes will be easier and they are no longer linked (Credibility

and Popularity CSS).

Cooligan - March 30, 2026, 8:39 pm

(Mar 30, 2026 07:55 PM)Omniscient Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Changed to suggested #0080FF. I may have missed some spots and if so, just LMK.

I think it looks like total shit.

Note: I separated the CSS so future changes will be easier and they are no longer linked (Credibility and Popularity CSS).

Agreed. It looks terrible IMHO.

It completely breaks the smooth flow of the hacker green color aesthetic we have across the entire forum. Not just in bolded texts like Popularity and Credibility, but also every bit of clickable text you hover is green, the HF cursor is green, the Convo & PM icons are green, so the profile/post stats being the same green they always have been for nearing two decades, just makes the most sense.

That and like you said, from what I've seen so far, this is nothing but extra work for you for a change that not really anyone seems to want. It was brought up, so people will discuss it, but is it actually something that's going to prevent scams (the entire point of this thread) - absolutely not. I touch on every point why I don't think so in one of my previous posts on this thread.

I heavily vote to revert to the green and then keep it as is and simple. The blue/white/gold colors I've seen all look soo out of place and random and just...bad. :/

Omniscient - March 30, 2026, 9:10 pm

I had to change that Blue. It was too much like Ub3r. I softened it to #83B3E2.

Cap - March 30, 2026, 9:12 pm

Just my two cents. I'm debating if I like the color swap or not now. I get the point of trying to make it have its own identity, but there's only so much we can do on here to prevent scams. We have contracts, strongly encourage members to use a middleman when dealing on here, and constantly reiterating to users that the marketplace is at your own risk. It's the user's responsibility to figure out who to deal with and who to stay away from.

Back in the day, rep carried some heavy value and people did everything they could to get it. The renaming to popularity is very fitting for it and unfortunately no matter what precautions are taken, people are still going to be scammed.

I do know a lot of new members farm popularity to get some traction on site and then end up scamming members. I don't necessarily agree with removing popularity all together either, even though it really doesn't mean anything or hold any true value. If we are worried about popularity farming, I've seen it brought up a couple times in this thread, but if anything I suggest we just revert to the old ways and disallow asking for it or even hinting at it - strictly removing it as a requirement for contests/giveaways.

Cooligan - March 30, 2026, 9:22 pm

I think at this point the easiest solution to all of this is revert back to the green color, and if we're really wanting to hold new members hands this much, we could add a board message that loads on every members Popularity page saying something like:

"Popularity is not meant to reflect Marketplace ratings, do not interpret them as such. See this users Credibility score for Marketplace ratings."

And you'd be able to click "Credibility score" which would then take you to their Market Profile.

Simple, easy, no change required, nobodies unhappy about a new color, and those who support this idea can feel better knowing new members have another hand-holding assist for their potential marketplace journey.

P??sonl?af - March 30, 2026, 11:43 pm

(Mar 30, 2026 09:12 PM)Cap Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) If we are worried about popularity farming, I've seen it brought up a couple times in this thread, but if anything I suggest we just revert to the old ways and disallow asking for it or even hinting at it - strictly removing it as a requirement for contests/giveaways.

This! But I'm also for a color change to social blue to (further) separate it from Cred.

Proof - March 31, 2026, 12:23 am

(Mar 30, 2026 11:43 PM)P??sonl?af Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) This! But I'm also for a color change to social blue to (further) separate it from Cred.

Too late for what cap said, you'd need a rep wipe on top of it. In today's HF, people would be back to 1k in under a day with +10s-12s.

Can make it blue, white or orange won't matter still just as useless.

Still think you just disable it entirely.

Jamika - March 31, 2026, 12:47 am

Uhh , its white for me , or for everyone?

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Cooligan - March 31, 2026, 3:55 am

(Mar 31, 2026 12:47 AM)Jamika Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Uhh , its white for me , or for everyone?

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CTRL + F5 if you're on PC.

Clear your cache if you're on mobile then reload the site.

Currently it's the same color as the Staff username it seems. Started as a change to Ub3r blue, now Staff blue. Either way, still blue, so I still don't like it.

#Revert to green or riot ???

P??sonl?af - March 31, 2026, 4:06 am

(Mar 31, 2026 12:23 AM)Proof Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Too late for what cap said, you'd need a rep wipe on top of it. In today's HF, people would be back to 1k in under a day with +10s-12s.

Can make it blue, white or orange won't matter still just as useless.

Still think you just disable it entirely.

How would people (potential exit scam accounts) be at 1k under a day when farming/asking for +rep in giveaways?

jcole - March 31, 2026, 4:12 am

(Mar 31, 2026 04:06 AM)P??sonl?af Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) How would people (potential exit scam accounts) be at 1k under a day when farming/asking for +rep in giveaways?

I just got into my work truck, and am heading to work. Here is a post I made on this thread the other

day regarding this issue.

"You can take a look at [Member Contests](#) and see how often threads are posted with requirements for max popularity to enter. When both metrics are green, it creates a visual overlap that confuses users to do their due diligence. A color shift preserves the site's history of the social system while giving the Marketplace (Contracts/Credibility) its own dedicated 'trust' color.

Here are some recent threads in the section:

<https://hackforums.net/showthread.php?tid=6322587>

<https://hackforums.net/showthread.php?tid=6320490>

<https://hackforums.net/showthread.php?tid=6321150> (This user is banned currently for not fulfilling the contest.)

<https://hackforums.net/showthread.php?tid=6315151>

<https://hackforums.net/showthread.php?tid=6320839> (This user is closed for not fulfilling the contest.)

<https://hackforums.net/showthread.php?tid=6317682>

<https://hackforums.net/showthread.php?tid=6315782> (This user is closed for not fulfilling the contest.)

<https://hackforums.net/showthread.php?tid=6314584>

<https://hackforums.net/showthread.php?tid=6313911> (This user is banned for ban evasion, and not able to fulfill the contest. Just another multi manipulating the system to gain popularity points and a reputable profile.)"

P??sonl?af - March 31, 2026, 4:28 am

Sorry Jcole, I was eating and forgot to finish my sentence. I mean when farming/asking for +rep is banned.

Jamika - March 31, 2026, 7:12 am

(Mar 31, 2026 03:55 AM)Cooligan Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) CTRL + F5 if you're on PC.

Clear your cache if you're on mobile then reload the site.

Currently it's the same color as the Staff username it seems. Started as a change to Ub3r blue, now Staff blue. Either way, still blue, so I still don't like it.

#Revert to green or riot ???

Thanx for your answer

I use mobile and can't clear cache , i will suffer to login again

jcole - March 31, 2026, 7:43 am

(Mar 31, 2026 07:12 AM)Jamika Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Thanx for your answer

I use mobile and can't clear cache , i will suffer to login again

You can clear your browser history for the last 15 minutes like this here shown on Google Chrome.
? loading encrypted image...

RangoWorld - March 31, 2026, 9:50 am

I agree and while we are discussing on the psychology of colors and what popularity represents. How about orange as color for popularity?

Omniscient - March 31, 2026, 12:00 pm

HF just had a member create a \$500 contest and one of his contest requirements is a Pop. I already have the funds in escrow so it's not a fake contest.

I don't think depriving the community of potential prizes from members wanting to make a splash on HF is the way to go.

I already began requiring I hold in escrow the funds of contests.

The real problem is scammers, they are going to scam. You can always say, "oh but this helps the scammers", and the moment I make a change, they'll change too. I can't run HF based on "stopping scammers" all day. I may as well close the site if you really want me to stop them.

This thread is done. I did what [jcole](#) asked.