BRAND TYPES AND ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES FROM
FUSION:
How Integrating Brand and Culture
Powers the World's Greatest Companies

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To successfully fuse your culture and brand, start by identifying the brand type that your brand falls into. If you know the general type of your brand, you'll then be able to isolate the kinds of organizational values that are needed to support it.
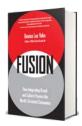
Brand types are categories of brands that share the same strategic approach or take similar stances to shape their positioning. They differ from brand archetypes, which are concepts that classify brands according to storytelling character types like the Hero, the Joker, and the Innocent. While brand archetypes can be helpful particularly in creating a narrative and tone of voice to use in advertising campaigns and other communications, the brand types I'm referring to identify the various ways that brands compete and are positioned relative to each other. For example, while the Apple and Nike brands target different customers, offer different benefits, and express different personalities, both fall into the "innovative brand" type because they are characterized by their relentless pursuit and introduction of new products. Likewise, Ritz-Carlton and USAA are both "service brands" because they consistently deliver superior service, but their identities and competitive brand strategies couldn't be more different.

Having worked on a broad range of brands for over 25 years—large and small, local and international, B2C and B2B, start-ups and well-established enterprises—I've concluded that there is a finite number of brand types or ways that brands compete and are positioned. Although no two brands share the exact same brand identity, there are only nine general brand types.

Each of the nine brands types are distinguished by two main characteristics:

- Its **point of reference**, that is, the standard the brand is positioned relative to.
- Its **tone and manner**—how the brand usually behaves or expresses itself.

On the next page is a list of the nine brand types and a description, point of reference, and tone and manner of each. I've also included some examples of each brand type, although I recognize that there's an element of subjectivity when determining the brand type of brands that are not your own.
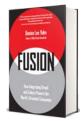
Consider what type your own brand falls under:

Brand Character: *what characterizes the brand*	Description:	Point of Reference: *what the brand is positioned relative to*	Tone and Manner: *how the brand usually behaves and communicates*	Examples:
Disruptive Brand	Challenges the current ways of doing things and introduces new concepts that substantively change the market	Category leader	Rebellious, confident, daring	Virgin, Airbnb, Dr. Pepper
Conscious Brand	Is on a mission to make a positive social or environmental impact or enhance people's quality of life	Higher purpose	Inspiring, thoughtful, transparent	Seventh Generation, SoulCycle, Patagonia
Service Brand	Routinely delivers high-quality customer care and service	Customer need	Humble, predictable, friendly	Nordstrom, USAA, Ritz Carlton
Innovative Brand	Consistently introduces advanced and breakthrough products and technologies	Possibility	Risk-taking, imaginative, progressive	Apple, Nike, Amazon
Value Brand	Offers lower prices for basic quality products or services	Higher priced brands	Down-to-earth, practical, straightforward	Walmart, IKEA, Subway
Performance Brand	Produces products or services that deliver superior performance and dependability	Performance standard	Precise, competent, reliable	BMW, FedEx, American Express
Luxury Brand	Offers higher quality at higher price	Populist brand	Discriminating, refined, glamorous	Tiffany, Mercedes-Benz, Hermes
Style Brand	Is differentiated by the way its products or services look and feel, as much as or more than by what they do	Functional brand	Creative, stylish, contemporary	Target, JetBlue, Mini Cooper
Experience Brand	Is differentiated by the experience it offers, as much as or more than by the product or service	Customer emotion	Exciting, energetic, imaginative	Disney, American Girl, Wegmans

After going through this exercise, you might find that, while your brand currently fits under one brand type, you aspire for your brand to be another type. If that's the case, your aspirations for brand transformation should be realistic. It's unlikely that a value brand which offers low prices for basic quality will become a luxury brand that delivers higher quality at higher prices, for example. But if you chose to make a sensible shift from one brand type to another, success is entirely possible if you make changes to your values and culture.

Each brand type requires a specific organizational culture to thrive. If you want to be an innovative brand, for example, then your culture must encourage a test-and-learn mentality among your employees. If you've set your sights on being a style brand, then you need to infuse your culture with design and creativity.

Core values are the are the cornerstones of your organizational culture. They reflect what's important to your organization, they shape your people's attitudes and actions, and they drive how your organization shows up and operates in the world. If you know the types of core values you need to deliver on your particular brand type, you can design the other aspects of your culture to align with, build on, and reinforce them. In short, you have a starting point for designing your desired culture.

To identity the core values that you should cultivate as the foundation of your desired culture, take a look at the chart below and find your brand type. Next to your brand type you'll find a list of the three top values that are most likely to help it thrive.

Brand Type: *what characterizes the brand*	Top Organizational Core Values: *what shapes the way the people in the company think & behavior*
Disruptive Brand Challenges the current ways of doing things and introduces new concepts that substantively change the market	Competition, standing out, risk-taking
Conscious Brand Is on a mission to make a positive social or environmental impact or enhance people's quality of life	Purposefulness, high commitment, transparency
Service Brand Routinely delivers high-quality customer care and service	Caring, humility, empathy
Innovative Brand Consistently introduces advanced and breakthrough products and technologies	Inventiveness, experimentation, continuous improvement
Value Brand Offers lower prices for basic quality products or services	Accessibility, fairness, pragmatism
Performance Brand Produces products that deliver superior performance and dependability	Achievement, excellence, consistency
Luxury Brand Offers higher quality at higher price	Sophistication, distinction, status

Brand Type: *what characterizes the brand*	Top Organizational Core Values: *what shapes the way the people in the company think & behavior*
Style Brand Is differentiated by the way its products/services look and feel as much as or more than by what they do	Design, discernment, creativity
Experience Brand Is differentiated by the experience it offers as much as or more than by the product or service	Entertainment, enjoyment, originality

The list is, I admit, a generic collection of fairly broad values. Every company should have values that are distinct to it or at least expressed in a unique way. But offering a more comprehensive or nuanced list of values would be impossible, given that the possibilities for unique values are endless. My hope is that you'll use the list as springboard, and that you'll see your unique values represented here by some of these general ones. Also, as is the case with brand types, you might find many of these values in your organization, but you should focus on the degree to which are the three most salient and influential ones your organization should embrace.

You can also use the core values of your organization to identify the brand type(s) that would be most compatible with them.

The following are the 27 organizational values and a brief description of each, along with the general brand type that each typically corresponds to. Find the top three values that characterize your culture:

Core Value	Description	Corresponding Brand Type
Accessibility	People at your company make themselves easy to understand and engage with, regardless of rank or role.	Value
Achievement	People at your company focus on the successful attainment of goals typically by effort, courage, or skill.	Performance
Caring	People at your company consistently display kindness and concern for others.	Service
Competition	People at your company strive to win or be more successful than others.	Disruptive
Consistency	People at your company adhere steadfastly to the same principles, course, or form.	Performance
Continuous Improvement	People at your company engage in ongoing efforts to improve products, services, or processes.	Innovation
Creativity	People at your company rely on imagination or foster original ideas.	Style
Design	People at your company focus on the look, style, or fashion of everything they do or produce.	Style

Core Value	Description	Corresponding Brand Type
Discernment	People at your company emphasize using acute judgment and discretion.	Style
Distinction	People at your company like to set it apart from the competition clearly and deliberately.	Luxury
Empathy	People at your company try to put themselves in other people's shoes—especially those of other employees and customers.	Service
Enjoyment	People at your company go out of their way to have fun and seek out delight.	Experience
Entertainment	People at your company emphasize amusement or celebration.	Experience
Excellence	People at your company try to be outstanding or to meet the highest standards.	Performance
Experimentation	People at your company experiment with new methods and approaches, knowing some will fail.	Innovation
Fairness	People at your company go out of their way to act without bias or partiality.	Value
Sophistication	People at your company rely on social or esthetic standards to discriminate between options.	Luxury
High Commitment	People at your company believe in acting with intense and iron-clad dedication to a purpose.	Conscious
Humility	People at your company believe in adopting a modest or low view of one's own importance.	Service
Inventiveness	People at your company like to create new things with imagination.	Innovation
Originality	People at your company champion independence, creativity, and fresh perspectives.	Experience
Pragmatism	People at your company deal with things sensibly and realistically and try to find the most practical way to do things.	Value
Purposefulness	People at your company pursue its goals with intention and determination.	Conscious
Risk-taking	People at your company engage in activities that involve danger or risk in order to achieve a goal.	Disruptive
Standing Out	People at your company attract attention to it by being particularly noticeable or different.	Disruptive
Status	People at your company care about the relative social standing of someone or something.	Luxury
Transparency	People at your company do things openly and in a straightforward way.	Conscious

Once you identify the brand type that corresponds to your existing core values, use it as a springboard to develop a unique and definitive brand identity.

More information about brand types and core values or about the fusion of brand an d culture can be found in my book, FUSION: How Integrating Brand and Culture Powers the World's Greatest Companies.

I've also developed an online tool, the Brand-Culture Fusion Assessment, to guide you through the process of identifying your brand type and corresponding organizational values, as well as examining how well your culture and brand are aligned and integrated today and diagnosing where the biggest disconnects are so you know which areas of culture-building you should focus on.