

Why Are Brand and Culture Aligned?

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There is an internal business component that is critical to success. Denise Lee Yohn analyzes how the alignment of branding and culture leads to business success in her new book entitled, *FUSION: How Integrating Brand and Culture Powers the World's Greatest Companies*. According to Adam Grant, "Leaders everywhere are trying to build great brands, but few realize how powerfully brands are shaped by the cultures of their organizations." So, leaders everywhere, ask yourselves, how closely aligned are your brands with your corporate cultures?



“Corporate culture refers to the beliefs and behaviors that determine how a company's employees and management interact and handle outside business transactions. Often, corporate culture is implied, not expressly defined, and develops organically over time from the cumulative traits of the people the company hires. A company's culture will be reflected in its dress code, business hours, office setup, employee benefits, turnover, hiring decisions, treatment of clients, client satisfaction and every other aspect of operations.” (Investopedia.com)

According to Yohn, Amazon is a perfect example of what she calls a “brand-culture fusion,” which is the full integration and alignment of external brand identity and internal organization culture.” This is because all employees are singularly focused on one thing: excellence on behalf of the customer. “Amazon’s distinctive organizational culture fosters a performance-driven environment that fires up employees to innovate in pursuit of an outstanding, continuously-improving customer experience.”

TWEET THIS: Culture involves so much more than perks and parties, and brands are built by so much more than ads and public relations. ~@DeniseLeeYohn

Yohn explained that “Culture involves so much more than perks and parties, and brands are built by so much more than ads and public relations.” When you think of culture, you may think about a mission statement, a vision statement, or corporate ethics statements. But culture is much more. A leader can walk around the office and talk to employees and know everyone’s pets’ names. Employees can wear nametags with their first names. Company-wide meetings can take place monthly. The alternative can also exist: a culture can be totally nonexistent.

So how can a brand shine as a result of an inspiring culture? Think of Southwest Airlines, the low-cost, no-frills airline. Founder and former CEO Herb Kelleher explained what made Southwest stand apart, “Our competitors can get all the hardware. I mean, Boeing will sell them the planes. But it’s the software, so to speak – the people – that’s hard to imitate.” Southwest’s employees wear colorful uniforms, feature smiles as an important piece of their uniforms, and make every effort to make flying a fun experience. It doesn’t hurt that Southwest’s ads are funny too, “Bags fly free.” Can every airline brand be Southwest? The answer is a resounding NO.

According to Yohn, there are five strategies for aligning brand and culture:

- (1) Organize and Operate On-Brand.
- (2) Create Culture-Changing Employee Experiences.
- (3) Sweat the Small Stuff.
- (4) Ignite Your Transformation.
- (5) Build Your Brand from the Inside Out.

If those five strategies are implemented, you will have a culture that:

- (1) Creates continuity and consistency.
- (2) Reduces uncertainty and confusion.
- (3) Creates social meaning and order.
- (4) Builds a collective identity and commitment that binds employees together.
- (5) Produces the capability for customer experience excellence.
- (6) Makes possible your vision for the future by energizing your organization and moving it toward your goals.

Since many business experts talk about the customer experience as the key differentiator for the future, an aligned brand and culture will help to improve the overall customer experience. This will lead to an overall positive brand experience.

TWEET THIS: Employee brand engagement is achieved when employees are aligned and involved with the organization’s brand. ~@DeniseLeeYohn

So, “Do you want to align your organization with a single goal so that it is not just productive and efficient but operates with excellence? Do you want to have a truly authentic brand?” If yes, embrace the concept of brand-culture fusion and make alignment your key priority!

Click to take Denise Lee Yohn’s Brand Culture Fusion Assessment:

<http://deniseleeyohn.com/fusion-assessment/>

Click to read more about corporate culture from Inc:

<https://www.inc.com/encyclopedia/corporate-culture.html>

Click to read six components of a great corporate culture from Harvard Business Review:

<https://hbr.org/2013/05/six-components-of-culture>