

Brand-Culture Fusion: Are You Who You Say You Are?

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IT WOULD SEEM that it would go without saying that your culture and your brand should be one and the same. Individually, who you are on the inside should be who you are on the outside.

In *Fusion*, Denise Lee Yohn makes the case that “you can unleash great power when you fuse together your organization’s two nuclei: your culture—the way the people in your organization behave and the attitudes and belief that inform them (i.e., “the way we do things around here”) —and your brand or brand identity, how your organization is understood by customers and other stakeholders.”

She notes that often a company creates a mission statement that states what they want the business to do to create value for their stakeholders and a separate and different brand statement about what they want to be known for. This makes no sense. They should be the same.

It simply doesn't make sense to specify the values through which you engage your employees if those aren't linked to the way you want your employees to engage customers. Instead, you should bridge the gulf between organizational and brand values by using one set of core values to describe the unique way you do things on the inside and the outside. Your values should function as the “operating instructions” of your organization—that is, they should inform, inspire, and instruct the day-to-day mindset and behaviors of your people.

Denise identifies **nine brand types**: Disruptive, conscious, service, innovative, value, performance, luxury, style, and experience brands. She recommends that you first identify your main brand type that your organization falls into and then identify the kind of culture required to

deliver on it. Do the values that currently exist in your organization align with those that correspond to your brand type? Are you who you say you are? Your communications, policies and procedures, compensation, environment, and rituals, should reflect the values that exist in your organization. Denise offers a number of ways to do that.

It is difficult to transform your culture to define your brand. It's easier to define your brand by your culture.

In some situations, you're actually better off allowing your culture to lead your brand. If your convictions are so strong that you are more committed to promoting your purpose and values than achieving a particular business or brand goal, then you should prioritize your culture as the driver of your brand identity. Or if you operate in the public sector or yours is an institution such as a science or faith-based organization where a well-defined brand was not needed in the past, you can shape a more authentic brand identity through the inherent values of your people than through an external or contrived aspiration. So long as your culture is not fundamentally toxic or dysfunctional, you can use it to shape your brand.

Whatever the case, the goal remains the same—**achieve brand-culture fusion by infusing your culture into your brand.**

Take the FUSION Assessment to determine your “desired culture”—the culture you ought to cultivate to support and advance your brand identity, or the brand identity you’d like to evolve to. You’ll also have an opportunity to assess how far off you are from your desired culture and to pinpoint where you need to make changes in your brand or culture (or both) to fuse them together.



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