

Book Review: 'Fusion: How Integrating Brand and Culture Powers the World's Greatest Companies' by Denise Lee Yohn

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Fusion: How Integrating Brand and Culture Powers the World's Greatest Companies

Denise Lee Yohn

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How to integrate brand and culture to empower an enterprise, whatever its size and nature may be

Opinions are divided — sometimes sharply divided — about what a brand is and does but most people agree with Peter Drucker that “culture eats strategy for breakfast,” especially when brand and culture are not in proper alignment.

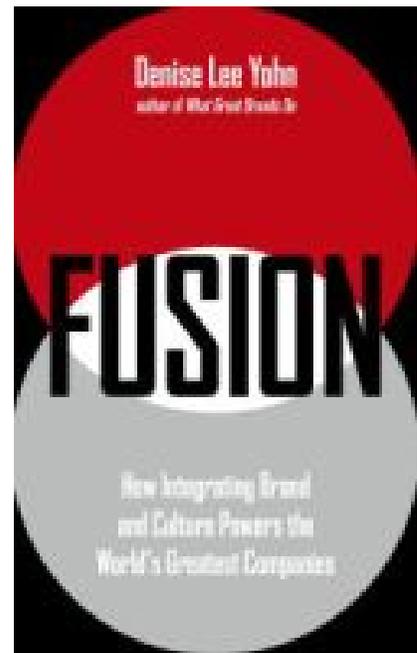
In this book, Denise Lee Yohn explains persuasively that fully integrating a brand and culture can produce meaningful, powerful results that affect an entire business. Her super use of direct address gives an inclusive reassurance to her

reader: “First, brand-culture fusion aligns your workforce, increasing the efficiency of your entire organization and the quality of your outcomes...Second, fusing together your brand and culture enables you to produce intangible value that is difficult to copy. Competitors may be able to match [begin italics] what [end italics] you offer to customers and employees, but it’s much harder for them to embody the unique [begin italics] how [end italics] and [begin italics] why [end italics] of what you do...Brand-culture also ensures the authenticity of your brand... Finally, and perhaps most important, brand-culture fusion allows you to move your organization toward its vision more successfully, since it provides a common motivation and focus for everyone in your organization.”

Yohn recommends five strategies that can help almost any organization to get brand and culture in proper alignment. They are:

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

Actually, #5 (“Build your brand from the inside-out”) makes sense only when there is no need for brand-culture fusion. Otherwise, “leverage your existing culture to define or re-define your brand identity.” That’s a key point, one that suggests other issues that Yohn also addresses.



For example, how to know when brand-culture fusion is needed. Here are a few symptoms:

- o Being outperformed by competition
- o Brand value is declining
- o High attrition of talent and loss of appeal to candidates
- o Feedback from employees and/or customers indicates specific improvement needs
- o Financial health is unstable and unpredictable

These are among the passages of greatest interest and value to me, also listed to suggest the scope and depth of Yohn's coverage:

- o The Unsung Drivers of Business (Pages xviii-xxi)
- o Core Values: Your "How" (13-24)
- o Identify Your Brand Type (30-33)
- o Determine the Values You Need (37-45)
- o Capture Your Company's Uniqueness (52-53)
- o Different Culture, Different Outcome (58-64)
- o Design Your Organization Deliberately (78-81)
- o Align Your "What" with Your "Why" and "How" (85-87)
- o Creating a Brand Touchpoint Wheel (89-92)
- o Design Your EX in Four Steps (103-112)

Note: "EX is everything an employee experiences throughout his or her connection to the organization — every employee interaction, from the first contact as a potential recruit to the last interaction after the end of employment."

- o Craft an EX That Is Right for You (112-116)
- o Give Your Culture Life Through Rituals (125-130)
- o Promoting Culture Through Policies and Procedures: Three Steps (134-140)
- o Employee Brand Engagement Creates Culture Change (146-148)
- o How to create a Multi-Dimensional Brand Engagement Experience (151-154)
- o [Why Employee Brand Engagement Is] A Worth Investment (160-161)
- o Put Your Purpose into Action (166-170)
- o Leverage Your Values to Redefine Your Brand (170-176)

Yohn makes brilliant use of two reader-friendly devices : A "Read this chapter to learn: XXXXX" section at the beginning and a "Key Takeaways from This Chapter: XXXXX" section at the conclusion of each of the eight chapters. This material will facilitate, indeed expedite frequent review of key points later. I recommend that readers keep a lined notebook near at hand while reading the book so they can record questions, comments, page references, etc.

Obviously, no brief commentary such as mine could possibly do full justice to the quality of the material that Denise Lee Yohn provides in her latest book but I hope I have at least indicated why I think so highly of her and her immense contributions to thought leadership. It is no coincidence that most of the companies annually listed among those most highly admired and best to work for are also among those annually ranked those that most profitable with the greatest cap value in their industry segment.

However different great companies may be in most respects, all of them are powered by brand-culture fusion.

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