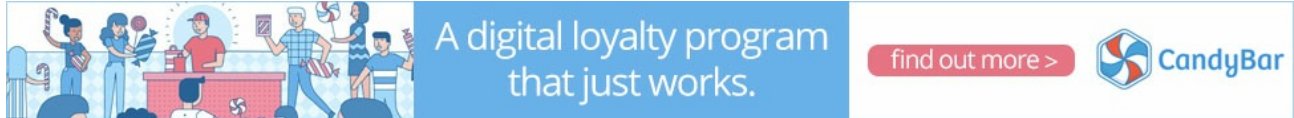


Is your culture your brand?

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Discussion



Photo: Box

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by Guest contributor

Knowledge@Wharton staff

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In her new book, “Fusion: How Integrating Brand and Culture Powers the World’s Greatest Companies,” Denise Lee Yohn said companies typically delegate brand-building to marketing and culture-building to human resources, “and never the two shall meet. That creates a big gap between how a company wants to be perceived and how it really is.”

“I think a lot of companies realize that culture-building is important, but they waste a lot of time and money and effort buying foosball tables for their break rooms and offering free beer on Fridays,” added Ms. Lee Yohn on the *Knowledge@Wharton* show on Sirius XM. “Those things are fine. They might make your employees happy, but they’re not necessarily going to make your employees produce the results that you want.”

Indeed, she wrote the book because she found more rhetoric in the marketplace than instruction on culture-building.

To support the foundation for a strong culture, an organization needs an over-arching purpose, a single set of core values and buy-in from business leaders.

The business then needs to take five steps:

1. **Organize and operate on brand:** Said Ms. Lee Yohn, “Use your organizational design and your operational processes to cultivate your cultural priorities.”
2. **Create culture-changing employee experiences:** She said, “Just as you want to deliberately design customer experience, you want to deliberately design your employee experience so that your employees experience the culture that you’re planning.”
3. **Sweat the small stuff:** Said Ms. Lee Yohn, “Your policies, your procedures, your rituals, artifacts — all the little things can add up to make a big impact on your culture.”
4. **Ignite your transformation through employee-brand engagement:** She emphasized, “Not just general employee engagement, but really engaging employees with your brand.”
5. **Build your brand from the inside out:** Said Ms. Lee Yohn, “Look for ways that you can use your culture to differentiate and define your brand.”

One essential aspect to understand is that culture can’t be mandated. Ms. Lee Yohn said, “You can’t force your employees to work in a certain way. But you can set up the environment through organizational design, through your employee experience, through all these things that cultivate the certain kind of culture that you want.”

Is Your Culture Your Brand? –Knowledge@Wharton

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Do you agree on the need for companies to fuse culture and brand? Why do brand communications often vary from an organization’s internal cultural messages? What advice do you have for companies looking to fuse culture and brand?

Please practice [The RetailWire Golden Rule](#) when submitting your comments.

Braintrust

"In this era of transparency, companies who are trying to sell a lifestyle to consumers had better live and breathe that lifestyle."

Nikki BairdVP of Retail Innovation, Aptos
