

Marketing is culture. Culture is marketing.

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August 28, 2018

Culture is the new marketing.

Marketing 3.0

Kotler, the godfather of marketing, wrote a book a while ago, titled “Marketing 3.0”. It is one of the greats. About the complete alignment of marketing with human resource management and about staff as the ultimate carrier of the brand. A true “employees first” perspective.

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

That is the topic of “Fusion: How Integrating Brand and Culture Powers the World’s Greatest Companies”. You can unleash great power when you fuse together your organisation’s two nuclei: your culture, the way the people in your organisation behave and the attitudes and beliefs that inform them (i.e., “the way we do things around here”) and your brand or brand identity, how your organisation is understood by customers and other stakeholders.

Statistics

Here are some statistics:

- Four in ten employees struggle to describe their organisation’s brand or how they think customers feel their organisation is different from competitors.
- Only 28 per cent of employees strongly agree that they know their company’s brand values, and only one in five employees strongly agree that company leaders communicate how employees should live their company’s brand values.

Culture as the new “P”

Employees shouldn’t just understand your brand and the behaviours required to deliver on it. They must be committed to doing them, and then they must actually do them. There should be no difference between the brand you want to project and your reputation, and there should be no difference between your brand and the culture of your company. Culture as the new “P” in marketing.

Culture as the ultimate business tool

Culture as the differentiator when technology commoditises everything. You can’t win on using AI and robotics, you can win on culture and authenticity. Culture as the new strategy. Culture as the backbone of organisational structures. Culture as your communication platform. Culture as your recruitment tool. Culture as reputation management tool.

Your culture is your brand

Brand-culture fusion ensures the authenticity of your brand. A disconnect between what your organisation values on the inside and how it is perceived on the outside, will damage customer relationships.

- HRM as the ultimate marketing department.
- Social capital as a marketing asset.

When it comes to building brands, leaders typically expect their marketing departments to promote awareness, create images, and send messages. The high visibility of advertising and promotions and the pervasiveness of social media channels in recent years gives them the impression that they should, indeed, elevate the brand communication function. That is old marketing.

Think

1. Don't you think organisations should be the same on the inside as they are on the outside?
2. If your brands are distinct, then shouldn't their cultures be too?
3. Culture and brand are only going to increase in importance.

Leverage your culture

You can enhance your brand by leveraging your culture. By putting your purpose into action, use your core values to shape your brand, and differentiate your brand through your culture. Great brands are built from the inside out. Which means that you should organise and operate on-brand. That you should create culture-changing and culture enhancing employee experiences. Internal UX if you like. Create stories, rituals and artefacts.

The question

Culture starts with this question. Why do we exist? What is your purpose? Followed by the guiding principles. Nike calls its "mission," the driving force behind its brand and corporate culture: "Bring inspiration and innovation to every athlete* in the world. "If you have a body, you are an athlete." Just as important, the mission—and the company's "11 Maxims," which include guiding principles such as "simplify and go" and "evolve immediately"—have served as the core of the organisation's internal culture through the years as well.

Purpose

To make brand-culture fusion happen, you must articulate a single overarching purpose and one set of core values to drive, align, and guide everything your company does internally and externally. I have found that companies find it hard to define an overarching purpose. A company's purpose is its why? Why it does what it does, why it exists. Having a meaningful

purpose or being a “purpose-driven” company has become a popular notion in business today, and with good reason. In today’s cluttered, ultracompetitive, choice-overloaded world, each company must have a clear reason for being. Read

- [The great workplace](#)
- [Loveability](#)

When articulated and implemented well, a compelling purpose shapes culture by engaging employees, even those prone to be sceptical or apathetic, and making their work more meaningful. It speeds up communication, and it makes you more antifragile. Purpose can unite even the most diverse and distributed workforce by serving as a driving force that transcends the silos and divisions that inevitably form in organisations.

Glue

Most importantly, a properly developed and implemented overarching purpose and set of core values unifies your employees, counteracting the divisions that naturally occur in work environments that are increasingly diverse, divided, and distributed.

Leadership

Most business leaders know they should promote a purpose for their organisation, but most leaders also go about it the wrong way. Traditional management theory differentiates between an organisation’s purpose (its reason for being), vision (its desired future), and mission (how it achieves its vision or fulfils its purpose). However, it’s not necessary to articulate all three of them in separate statements, which can be quite confusing to your employees. A single statement that articulates a single purpose for your business and brand works best. It’s clear, simple, and easy to remember.

Here are five ways to think about it

1. Five Whys exercise. Ask why you do what you do five times. We make.... Why? Because..... Why? Etc.
2. Think about what would be lost if your company ceased to exist—and why it’s important that it endures.
3. Think. Feel. Do. Exercise. Think about what the customer is thinking, feeling, and doing before and after they bought your product.
4. Imagine talking to your grandchildren and explaining why you were proud of working for this company.
5. Ask yourself what your employees would do if they won the lottery. Would they quit their jobs or would they continue working to fulfil your company’s purpose?

The stake in the ground

Purpose ought to be a way for you to put a stake in the ground about who you are, what you stand for, and what you’re all about. Remember that a purpose that is not worth sharing is not worth having. Don’t assume that your people know it—write it down and share it. You need to

craft a meaningful purpose statement, using it as a North Star to orient your organisation over time.

Operating instructions

The purpose of the company should inform your values and should function as the “operating instructions” of your organisation—that is, they should inform, inspire, and instruct the day-to-day mindset and behaviours of your people. A culture book if you will. For your company’s values to be unique, the words or manner in which you choose to describe them must be distinctive, and your core values should also incorporate words that are active and actionable.

Choice and pain

When correctly practised, values inflict pain. You are making a choice. Choice is pain (Tibor). The difficult decisions that values frame should lead companies to make for example to exit a profitable business because it conflicts with the company’s values or to let a top-performing sales representative go because she doesn’t conform to them.

The test

As a litmus test of whether a core value represents the unique principles that shape your internal culture and external brand, ask yourself the following question: Could another company claim this value as its own and live it out in the same way we do?

1. Do these core values capture the essence of our culture and brand?
2. Do they set us apart from companies like us?
3. Do they help our employees understand how they are expected to think and act?
4. Do they inspire behaviours that will differentiate our brand?
5. Are they credible and can they be consistently applied?
6. Do our employees want to be true to them?
7. Will they want to stay true to them as our organisation grows and markets change?

Stay consistent

Once you’ve set your core values, it is not enough to simply espouse them, that is, claim or speak about them. You must also enact them.

Setting aspirational values is okay, but you must be careful to set values that are believable and achievable. There are three types of inconsistencies.

- Action inconsistency. Your company says it values one thing but doesn’t support it with actions.
- Symbolic inconsistency. Your company promotes a value externally but doesn’t appear to authentically live it internally.
- Ideological inconsistency. Your company claims to take an ideological stand on an issue but then behaves contrary to that stand.

Transparency

The bad or good news (dependent on your perspective) is that social media will make these inconsistencies entirely and utterly transparent. You cannot fake this. By adopting a single, central set of core values that you consistently live out, you increase the likelihood of operating in a way that is consistent with the image you want to project and, ultimately, be esteemed in today's business context which rewards authenticity and transparency.

Brand types

To build your own great organisation, you must have that same clarity about your brand aspiration and how to align your organisational culture to that. Starting with determining your brand type. There are only nine general brand types:

1. Disruptive brands challenge the current ways of doing things and introduce new concepts that substantively change the market.
2. Conscious brands are on a mission to make a positive social or environmental impact or enhance people's quality of life.
3. Service brands routinely deliver high-quality customer care and service.
4. Innovative brands consistently introduce advanced
5. Value brands offer lower prices for basic quality products or services.
6. Performance brands produce products or services that deliver superior performance
7. Luxury brands offer higher quality at a higher price.
8. Style brands are differentiated by the way their products or services look
9. Experience brands are differentiated by the experiences they provide,

Each of the nine brands types are distinguished by two main characteristics. The first one is its point of reference, that is, the standard the brand is positioned relative to. The second one is its tone and manner—how the brand usually behaves or expresses itself. Which one are you?

Culture audit

That is followed by a culture audit to fully understand the existing state of the organisational culture. That means doing an anthropological study, walking around the offices and taking note of what you see and hear. Observe how people interact with each other and their environment. Collect materials from all areas of the business and analyse them, applying semiotics, the study of signs and symbols, to uncover hidden meanings. Discuss our findings with employees to get their take on the culture.

Things to look out for:

1. Communications. What, when, where, why, and how your organisation communicates to employees, other stakeholders, and customers reveals a great deal about your culture and values.
2. Employee policies and procedures. Consider the policies and procedures that dictate employee behaviours in every area. What are the policies for:
 1. Your dress code (is the dress code more professional or casual?)
 2. The use of technology and social media (are they more restrictive or open?)

3. Taking vacation, sick, and personal leave (are they more flexible or strict?)
4. Safety (are they more proactive or free-handed?)
3. Compensation, benefits, and retirement packages. How you pay and reward your employees illuminates whether your company values an individual's performance over team or company performance, outcomes vs effort, tenure vs merit, and more.
4. Office location, architecture, design, and layout. Elements of the physical workplace plus everything else that employees see, hear, touch, taste, or smell.
5. The tools, the technology and other instruments or materials that employees use.
6. The intangibles—elements that impact the way employees think and feel, including communications, leadership styles, and policies.

Think about

1. Letting staff answer “What It Means to Work Here.” What answers do you have and what answers do you want?
2. The recruiting experience now and what you want it to be.
3. The on-boarding experience now and what you want it to be.
4. The training experience now and what you want it to be.
5. The engagement experience now and what you want it to be.
6. The performance review experience now and what you want it to be.
7. The compensation experience now and what you want it to be.
8. The office hours experience now and what you want it to be.
9. The workplace Environment experience now and what you want it to be.

Look at

1. Rituals. Organizational rituals are ceremonies, rites, and other regularly occurring events and activities such as annual awards or weekly meetings. What new rituals could you introduce?
2. Artefacts. The objects that your organisation creates, keeps, and distributes, such as awards, tchotchkes, pictures, and devices, also symbolise what is important in your culture. What artefacts do you want to see?

Alignment

The next area is the extent to which your employee experience and your customer experience are aligned and integrated. Which means that you need to find out:

1. Whether your company's brand identity and positioning have been clearly articulated to everyone within your organisation.
2. Whether the key stakeholders at your organisation consistently agree about what's “on brand” and what's not.
3. Whether employees act as brand ambassadors, sharing positive information about your company with their friends, families, and communities and recommending it to them.
4. Whether employees feel an emotional connection to your company and your brand.
5. Whether your company's overarching purpose makes employees feel their job is

important.

6. Whether employees understand what makes your brand different and special from a customer perspective.
7. Whether all employees—even those who don't have direct customer contact—understand how they contribute to a great customer experience.

Communication

Great leaders, the ones praised in history books, admired by colleagues, and followed by many, know that leadership is the practice of going first and setting an example.

Communication is responsible for transmitting the DNA of the company's culture. The author outlines three levels in which leaders communicate their vision.

1. The first level involves communicating ideas and information, the stuff of day-to-day business operations.
2. The second level involves communicating emotions—empathising with and inspiring others.
3. The third level involves communicating with concrete behaviours—practising what you preach, walking the talk, and delivering on your promises.

Bad communication

Most business leaders don't communicate well. At least that's what their employees say.

- 61 per cent of managers said that actions by leaders were the most likely to influence the behaviour of others in the organisation.
- According to talent management firm Aon Hewitt, only 46 per cent of employees feel management communicates effectively.
- Human resources firm Towers Perrin has found that just over half (51 per cent) of employees believed that their leaders generally tell them the truth.

Good communication

Purpose only matters if it is implemented in conjunction with a clear, concise direction from top management and in such a way that the middle layer within the firm is fully bought in.

Research in neuroscience suggests that people are more likely to act their way into believing something than they are to think their way into acting. Make them believe. Through good communication.

Putting stories to work

Good communication needs consistency. When it comes to cultivating your desired culture and weaving it into the daily ethos at your company, you must first consistently and relentlessly communicate your company's overarching purpose and core values and why they're important. It needs simplicity. Strive to make your communications simple and accessible. Keep your communication as simple and straightforward as possible. You need to be able to tell a story. Illustrate your message with engaging stories. Giving examples and telling stories helps

people relate to abstract ideas like culture and values. And you need to make it relevant. Make your communications relevant to your organisation's overarching purpose and core values.

Read "[Putting stories to work](#)"

Operationalise culture

You need to operationalise your culture throughout your organisational design.

1. How does your purpose stretch your organisation?
2. What operational changes are needed to enable employees to live your values?
3. How do your people need to work together differently?
4. What must your organisation start or stop doing to make your purpose and values a core part of the way you do business?

Culture should inform your organisational design. Read "[Reinventing organisations](#)". Set up your company to act differently by changing your organisational design and operations. Make it fit your company purpose. Design the spans of control and layers of management to reflect your strategy, desired differentiation, and vision. Other design building blocks include

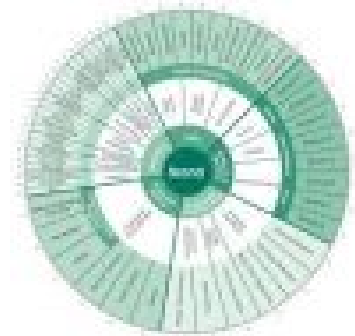
- information flows (how the organization processes and shares data and knowledge)
- decision rights and accountabilities (who makes what decisions and who has what responsibilities)
- networks (how people connect and work together outside the formal organization chart)
- norms (what behaviours and actions are expected).

Brand touchpoints

You also need to examine all your brand touchpoint (always a good exercise).

There are four steps to creating your brand touchpoint wheel.

1. Step one, audit. Conduct an audit of all the ways your company communicates with the outside world and all the experiences you provide customers and other external stakeholders.
2. Step two, organise. Organize your touchpoints by following one of these approaches:
 1. Classify them according to the stages in your customer experience journey, e.g., pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase touchpoints.
 2. Organize your touchpoints into three groups: objects (e.g., advertising or packaging), people (e.g., call centres or salespeople), and interactions or experiences (e.g., social media or websites).
 3. Group touchpoints according to those the company controls or owns (e.g., service request forms, coupons, and employee interactions with customers), those it shares responsibility for (e.g., delivery service and sponsorships), and those that it



merely influences (e.g., review sites and employee word of mouth).

3. Step three, map. For each touchpoint, list the internal departments, groups, or people who develop or deliver it, and identify the processes or practices they use to do so. Then map out the areas where you find commonalities or overlaps so you can group them together into layers of people or processes.
4. Step four, arrange: Arrange the touchpoints, people, and processes into a visual wheel, with your brand in the centre, all of the touchpoints on the rim, and the different groups or processes from step three as spokes radiating out to them.

Segmenting

Then segment employees into discrete groups.

1. By the role that work plays in employees' lives.
2. By the value that employees contribute to the organisation.
3. By how aligned employees are with the company's strategy and goals.
4. By interaction
 1. Weak links—low intellectual and low emotional
 2. Bystanders—high intellectual and low emotional
 3. Loose cannons—low intellectual and high emotional
 4. Champions—high intellectual and high emotional
5. By the degree to which employees adopt strategic change.

Design the staff experience

Then design experiences that support your desired culture. Focus on creating an experience for a single high-priority interaction and designate it a "signature experience." A signature experience is the most "visible, distinctive" experience of an organisation's overall EX. For example, every company can—and probably should—celebrate people's birthdays to affirm its commitment to employees.

Immerse

You need to immerse your employees in your brand—what it stands for; why it's important; what it entails; and how they are to nurture, reinforce, and interpret. Your employees must internalise your brand. Your staff are the ultimate carriers of your brand. Marketing 3.0.

Here is why you should do all the above

- Research shows that organizations that invested most heavily in employee experience were included 11.5 times as often in Glassdoor's Best Places to Work.
- 4.4 times as often in LinkedIn's list of North America's Most In-Demand Employers.
- They were also 28 times more often listed among Fast Company's Most Innovative Companies.
- 2.1 times as often on the Forbes list of the World's Most Innovative Companies.
- Twice as often in the American Customer Satisfaction Index.
- Experiential organisations have more than four times the average profit and more than

two times the average revenue.

- They were also almost 25 per cent smaller, which suggests higher levels of productivity and innovation.

Leadership is culture management.