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Every organization should integrate and align its external brand identity and internal workplace culture.

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DENISE LEE YOHN

Each organization is different but all companies share the need to create a mutually reinforcing relationship between their brand and culture.



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All Types of Organizations Need Brand-Culture Fusion

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Every organization should integrate and align its external brand identity and internal workplace culture. The nexus between the brand and culture enables companies to improve their competitiveness, accelerate their growth, and inoculate themselves from many of the issues that threaten businesses today, such as the deterioration of customer trust, as well as those on the horizon, including the escalating war for talent.

Brand-culture fusion -- the integration and alignment of brand and culture -- is critical to all organizations, regardless of their size or type, whether it's:

- improving workforce alignment in *large* organizations -- or helping *small businesses* get greater clarity on their priorities and navigate the countless new ideas and ventures that regularly arise;
- engaging employees effectively in *B2B* organizations where they are usually highly involved with customers during the sales process and beyond -- or ensuring *B2C* companies live up to the claims they make in their ads
- or even helping align the needs of and value provided to the many stakeholders of non-profits.



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Results from the [Brand-Culture Fusion Assessment](#) that I introduced in my new book [FUSION: How Integrating Brand and Culture Powers the World's Greatest](#)

[Companies](#) show how different types of organizations have different brand-culture fusion challenges. (The assessment is a free online tool that asks businesspeople to rate their organization on 45 different statements describing different aspects of the relationship between brand and culture. The numbers below report the percentage of people who rated their organization in the “top two box” – a “4” or “5” on a 5-point scale.”

Not For Profit (including religious/arts/social assistance non-profits, government institutions, health care organizations, education providers, etc.)

All organizations struggle with many aspects of brand-culture fusion. For example, only 28% of all respondents indicated “Our brand identity and positioning have been clearly articulated to everyone inside our organization.” The answer doesn’t differ much between for profit companies (30%) and not for profits (24%).

Same goes for ratings on the statement “The key stakeholders at our organization consistently agree about what’s ‘on brand’ and what’s not.” – 34% for profit; 28% not for profit.

But not for profit organizations were rated significantly lower on some aspects:

- Only 31% of not for profits agreed “Most employees clearly understand their role within our company and the impact they have on making the brand successful.” That’s 14 percentage points (ppts.) lower than for profits.
- The biggest differences between not for profits and for profits were on the statements “Managers treat employees in ways that are consistent with how they expect employees to treat customers;” (18 ppts. different) and “Our company leaders usually act, make decisions, and communicate in ways that are consistent with our company’s purpose and core values” (16 ppts.)
- Add to those numbers the surprising finding that only 59% of not for profits agreed “Most employees would say the purpose of our company makes them feel their job is important,” and it’s clear that, generally speaking, the leaders of not for profit organizations are not engaging their employees effectively.

Not for profit organization leaders need to connect the dots for employees, showing them the importance of their roles, and to engage them in the ways they expect them to engage customers (or whomever they serve). They also should ensure they regularly use their organization’s purpose and values as decision-making filters.

B2B (business to business organizations vs. “B2C” business to consumer)

I sometimes hear from people from B2B organizations that “brand” doesn’t apply to their business model, and therefore the integration of brand and culture isn’t relevant to them. But [according to Forrester](#), emotion the #1 driver of customer loyalty and growth in virtually



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every business category, including B2B, so an organization's ability to connect authentically – with customers is as critical in B2B as B2C. What's more, in many B2B companies, employees are highly involved with customers during the sales process and throughout the product service and support cycle, so culture is perhaps even more important.

Compared to B2C companies, B2Bs are challenged with brand-culture fusion in particular as follows:

- Only 29% of people from B2B organizations reported “We have translated our purpose and values into differentiators that distinguish our brand from competitors and create value for customers.” That’s 14 pts. below B2C.
- B2Bs were also rated 14 pts. lower than B2C on “People at our company tend to make decisions by thinking about what’s right for our brand in the long-term instead of what’s likely to produce short-term results” (27% vs. 41%).
- The biggest difference between B2B and B2C (19 pts.) was on “Most employees would say the purpose of our company makes them feel their job is important,” with only about half (48%) of B2Bs agreeing.
- And there was a 16 pts. diff on “Most employees act as brand ambassadors, sharing positive information about our company with their friends, families, and communities, and recommending it to them.”

It seems B2B companies would benefit from a more differentiating, more inspiring purpose - and connecting their employees to it. The leaders of B2Bs should also exercise more discipline in making decisions that will impact their brands more positively in the long run.

Small Businesses (1-49 employees)

Given that small business leaders often say they struggle to attend to brand- and culture-building because of limited resources and bandwidth, I was pleasantly surprised to see that ratings for organizations with fewer than 50 employees were higher than larger ones across the board.

Of course, small businesses still report low ratings on fusion aspects such as:

- “Our people have appropriate access to tools and data about how our brand is perceived in the marketplace relative to our competitors,” and
- “Our company engages employees through rites, ritual, and symbols that reflect and bring to life our purpose and core values” -- 25% and 27% respectively.

But they’re no worse off than larger organizations on these and other statements.

That’s important because there are two primary ways brand-culture fusion is of particular value to small business owners and leaders. First, the limited resources that constrain most small businesses require that everything they do be more productive. When an

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organization's culture and brand are aligned and integrated, a single effort—a piece of communication such as a newsletter or a special event like a community-service activity—can produce results inside and out.

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And second, brand-culture fusion can provide greater clarity on priorities and help leaders navigate the countless new ideas and ventures that inevitably present themselves to small-businesspeople. By using the integration of brand and culture as a north star, instead of simply reacting to challenges or opportunities that rise unexpectedly, small businesses can drive more sustainable growth.

Each organization is different but all companies share the need to create a mutually reinforcing relationship between their brand and culture. Every organization should be on the inside what they say they are on the outside -- and use what they do on the inside to increase the value of what they do on the outside.

There are lots of other juicy findings from the assessment. So if you'd like to learn more and/or if the topic of brand and culture interests you, please click the subscribe button at the top of this post to get regular updates when new content in this Brand+Culture Series is released. Also check out previous posts:

- [Welcome to the Brand+Culture Series](#)
 - [How to Cultivate Brand-Culture Fusion](#)
 - [The State of Brand-Culture Fusion](#)
 - [Cultivate Culture Through Employee Experience](#)
-
- [Leaders Must Go Beyond Giving Lip Service to Culture](#)

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James Souttar · 2nd

6mo ...

Brand strategist, communication designer and writer.

If, after careful listening, the marketing messages are made to reflect the way people in the organisation think and speak about what they are doing, then yes, of course.

But if people in the organisation are expected to try to 'live' some half-baked idea dreamt up on an agency white-board in a two hour brainstorm, then this is the most Dilbertish kind of nightmare to inflict on anyone.

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