

The nine types of company brands and what to do about them

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Values like integrity and teamwork mean little in a competitive environment featuring companies that most of your team would give up a limb to work for – the reason is that their culture and brand identity are aligned and have become famous.

This is according to a new article in the [Harvard Business Review](#) by the consultant Denise Lee Yohn, who argues that if you want to produce outcomes that differentiate the company, “you need to define a unique culture that cultivates the necessary kinds of employee attitudes and behaviors.”

Yohn stresses that these are not archetypes, which can aid in the development of narrative or tone but are less fundamental, less strategic, and manifest at a visible marketing level without necessarily informing the way in which the whole organisation makes decisions.

Her thesis centres this strategic definition in two core ideas: relative position in the market, the standard against which you are defined; and manner, guiding both behaviour and expression. For the nine types, Yohn sets these out as:

- **Disruptive** brands (e.g. Virgin)
Reference: category leader
Manner: rebellious, confident
- **Conscious** brands (e.g. Patagonia)
Reference: higher purpose
Manner: thoughtful, transparent
- **Service** brands (e.g. Ritz Carlton)
Reference: customer need
Manner: humble, dependable
- **Innovative** brands (e.g. Apple)
Reference: possibility
Manner: progressive, brave
- **Value** brands (e.g. IKEA)
Reference: higher priced brands
Manner: practical, straightforward
- **Performance** brands (e.g. AmEx)
Reference: performance standard
Manner: precise, reliable

- **Luxury** brands (e.g. Mercedes-Benz)
Reference: populist brands
Manner: refined, glamorous, discerning
- **Style** brands (e.g. Target)
Reference: functional brands
Manner: creative, contemporary
- **Experience** brands (e.g. Disney)
Reference: customer emotions
Manner: exciting, imaginative

Out of these two ideas, can be found core values. Yohn is vehement in her belief that the most important thing in a successful company brand is to make your culture distinct and clear, not vague and broadly progressive.

“You can achieve this whether your culture is friendly or competitive, nurturing or analytical,” she concludes, noting how, ultimately, “your company culture needs to be as distinct as your brand.”

Sourced from the Harvard Business Review