

9 Best Practices of Purpose-Driven Brands

POSITIVE
BRAND



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BRAND

Have You Hugged Your Purpose Today?



Over the past few decades, businesses and consumers alike have placed more and more importance on the notion that brands should serve a purpose.

It matters to people. It matters to brands. Consider the following statistics:

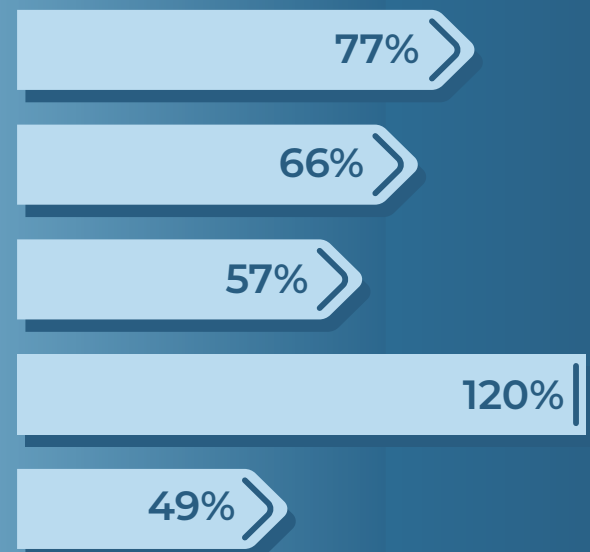
77% of consumers say they have stronger emotional bonds to Purpose-driven companies*

66% of consumers are willing to switch from a known brand to a Purpose-driven brand*

57% are willing to pay more for an equivalent product from a Purpose-driven brand*

Brands set on improving our quality of life outperform the stock market by 120%*

According to Deloitte, purpose-driven brands have 49% higher employee retention



Many companies see the value of becoming a purpose-driven brand. But many are uncertain of how to get there.

While there is no one single, right way to do it, we've identified 9 Best Practices that are common among brands that successfully identify, promote, and live their purpose.

We've gathered them here and invite you to follow them in creating a purpose you can love.



*SOURCE: Cone/Porter Novelli Purpose Study



#1 First, know why you exist.

COMPANIES EXIST TO MAKE A PROFIT.
PRODUCTS EXIST TO FILL A NEED.
BRANDS EXIST TO SERVE A PURPOSE.

You exist for a purpose.

Your purpose isn't about profits or products. It's something bigger than that. You exist to bring something of value to the lives of your customers, society, and the world as a whole.

There is no one single, correct purpose. Your purpose can revolve around social, economic, or environmental issues. It can revolve around issues that are crucial to your industry. It can be dedicated to bettering the lives of your customers, elevating your community, or drawing awareness to a worthwhile cause. But whatever it is, it should do one or more of these things:

- benefit your customers and/or society
- resonate on an emotional level
- help others achieve balance, simplicity, empowerment, or well-being
- be something you can demonstrate through action
- continue to be relevant in the years ahead

Your brand purpose is larger than your company and its products. It's the motivating, emotional, aspirational reason why people rally around your brand — both today and in the years ahead.

So... now all you have to do is define what it is.

BEST PRACTICE

Make it a corporate priority to isolate and define the underlying purpose of your brand.





#2 Enunciate your purpose in clear, simple, concise terms.

What is the single most common mistake that companies make when they attempt to communicate their purpose?

They use too many words.

Many companies attempt to express their purpose by developing a Mission Statement, a Vision Statement, a list of five or six Core Values that guide everything they do, a tagline, and a brand messaging document.

The result is a lot of words — but little communication.

If you want a purpose that people will understand and embrace, remember that sometimes less really is more. Be succinct. Be clear. And, in the process, be heard.

BEST PRACTICE

Keep it simple. State your purpose -- in 20 words or less.



#3 Reach high but be honest.



When you define your purpose, you can be literal. Or aspirational. Or emotional. Or rational. Or specific. Or general. You can be lofty and esoteric. There's a wide range of flexibility.

But one thing is not flexible: Your purpose must be rooted in truth.

Don't overstate. Don't engage in hyperbole. Don't try to market or engage in inflated self-importance. Don't stand for something that isn't achievable, or that you can't make a tangible contribution to.

Case in point: There are brands that claim their purpose is to expand the limits of human possibilities, or help all people realize their full potential. Sounds nice — if you don't mind a purpose that you can't actually deliver.

Don't get us wrong. It's okay to be aspirational and esoteric — as long as you are also honest and realistic.

Like Tesla, who is here to accelerate the world's transition to sustainable energy. Or Airbnb, who wants to create a world where anyone can belong anywhere.

So, go ahead and reach for the stars. But make sure your feet are planted firmly on the ground. Be lofty, large, and aspirational. But above all, be honest.

BEST PRACTICE

Make your purpose aspirational, achievable, and honest.





#4 Bring your purpose to life and rally the support of others.

Your purpose needs to extend beyond your boardroom and C-suite. Your employees should be able to embrace it, make it their own, and bring it to life. Your customers should be able to support it and feel good about it.

Here's a company that has illustrated both the right and wrong ways to do this: Starbucks. They see themselves as an enlightened brand that wants to be a force for positive change.

When they support "Fair Trade" coffee growers, their employees and customers feel good about it.

When they set up programs to pay college tuition for employees, their employees and customers love it.

When they ask their employees to engage customers in a conversation about race... they both respectfully decline.

It illustrates one simple point: Your purpose isn't about what you want the world to be. It's about what you, your employees, and your customers want the world to be.

Sometimes, there's a big difference.

BEST PRACTICE

Bring your purpose to life in a way that your employees and customers can love.



#5

Be
consistent.



As you build your purpose and your brand, be consistent.

Here's a recent case in point. For generations, Budweiser was guided by a sense of purpose: A celebration of the American everyman and his favorite pastimes. It was voiced through Clydesdales, dogs, games, sports sponsorships, and even humorous commercials of guys simply acting like guys and yelling, "Whassup!"

In 2023, they decided to branch out and embrace purposes that were a total departure from who they'd always been. The result was an immediate 20% decline in sales.

When the backlash hit, Bud Lite immediately backtracked. They launched commercials with pickups, horses, and American flags. In the process, they revealed how disingenuous their latest experiment was – and even called into question who they really were.

There are hundreds of potential purposes, causes, viewpoints, missions, and charities out there that you can embrace. But you can't embrace them all. Find the purpose that is authentic to your brand and stick with it.

BEST PRACTICE

Do not get distracted. Be consistent in your purpose.





#6 Make sure your purpose is aligned with your strategy.

Your purpose should be a key element in shaping every area of operations: Business strategy. New product development. Advertising. Acquisitions. Alliances. Hiring. Training.

Some companies do this exceptionally well. A few cases:

- For the last two decades, Benetton has furthered a message of diversity and inclusion. It's "United Colors of Benetton" campaign furthers that purpose – while being totally relevant to their product and their brand.
- Another clothing brand, Patagonia, stresses sustainability and love of the environment – both in their purpose, and in their clothing lines. Their CEO made billions by creating sustainable, outdoor-friendly clothes. Then he donated most of his earnings to supporting sustainable, outdoor-friendly causes.
- Warby Parker's "Buy a pair, give a pair" initiative is a prime example of a very direct, immediate purpose-driven strategy: By simply buying a pair of their glasses, you're a part of it. You give the gift of better eye sight to some one in need.

A purpose isn't a sentence on a plaque. It's who you are. It's what you stand for. It's what you do.

BEST PRACTICE

Operationalize your purpose. Incorporate it into your business strategy and make it part of "business as usual."





#7 Give back in ways that are relevant to your purpose.

Charity is a virtue. Giving back is good. And philanthropy has always been a part of business.

Studies show that people feel good about brands that give back, and that employees are more loyal to companies that give back. It particularly makes them happy when they give to a cause that improves the lives of other people, whether it's St. Jude, the American Heart Association, Wounded Warrior, or Make A Wish Foundation.

There are 1001 worthwhile causes out there. That being said, smart companies give back in ways that are aligned with their purpose. Or, simply put, in ways that make sense. For example:

HomeDepot could support any cause. But supporting Habitat For Humanity makes sense.

BestBuy could give to anyone. But building Teen Tech Centers makes sense.

General Foods could fund anything. But funding efforts that promote food security, nutrition education, and agricultural sustainability makes sense.

If you choose to express your purpose through philanthropy, you'll find no shortage of willing recipients. Your job is to find the ones that enable you to bring your purpose to life.

BEST PRACTICE

Giving back in a way that helps you, your people and your customers live your purpose.





#8 Be shameless in promoting your purpose.

A few pages ago, we threw out several stats about the growing emphasis on doing business with brands that have a purpose: People are more likely to switch to, try, give positive reviews, or speak favorably of brands with a purpose.

However, another study suggested something troubling:

50% of consumers were hard pressed to identify a purpose-driven brand.

This illustrates a simple truth: If you want your purpose to be known, it's up to you to promote it.

Fortunately, you don't have to purchase SuperBowl airtime to do it. There are a lot of very affordable options. Here are just a few examples: Social media. Customer emails. Prospect emails. Loyal program communications. Apps. Help wanted ads. Employee training and orientation. Product packaging. Website. Blogs. Videos and vBlogs. Sales presentations. Traditional advertising. On-hold messages. Sales materials. Invoices and other mailings. Industry speaking events. Lobby signage. Organized employee volunteer efforts.

Okay, we said a few examples, and we're up to 19. We could go on. But you get the picture.

BEST PRACTICE

Be loud. Be proud. Don't make your purpose a well-kept secret. Promote it. Everywhere.



#9 Hire an agency that understands Best Practices 1-9.

If you want to be a purpose-driven brand, you should choose an agency that understands the importance, realities and benefits of being one.

Not all agencies do.

At Positive Brand, we take a research-based approach to helping purpose-driven brands achieve measurable results.

We want to help you grow in stature, awareness, prestige – and sales. And we believe that it is a lot easier to do all of those things once you've identified a purpose that your stakeholders, employees and customers can embrace.

The journey towards being a Purpose-Driven Brand begins with a single step. Contact Positive Brand. Our purpose is helping you find yours. Our methodical Brand Discovery process is how we get it done.

BEST PRACTICE

Talk to an agency that knows the value of being a purpose-driven brand. Contact Positive Brand today.

Our Purpose Is Helping You Find Yours

Positive Brand takes a research-based approach to helping Purpose Driven Brands achieve tangible results.

To learn more about what we can do for you, visit us online at PositiveBrand.com or contact us via email at hello@positivebrand.com.

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