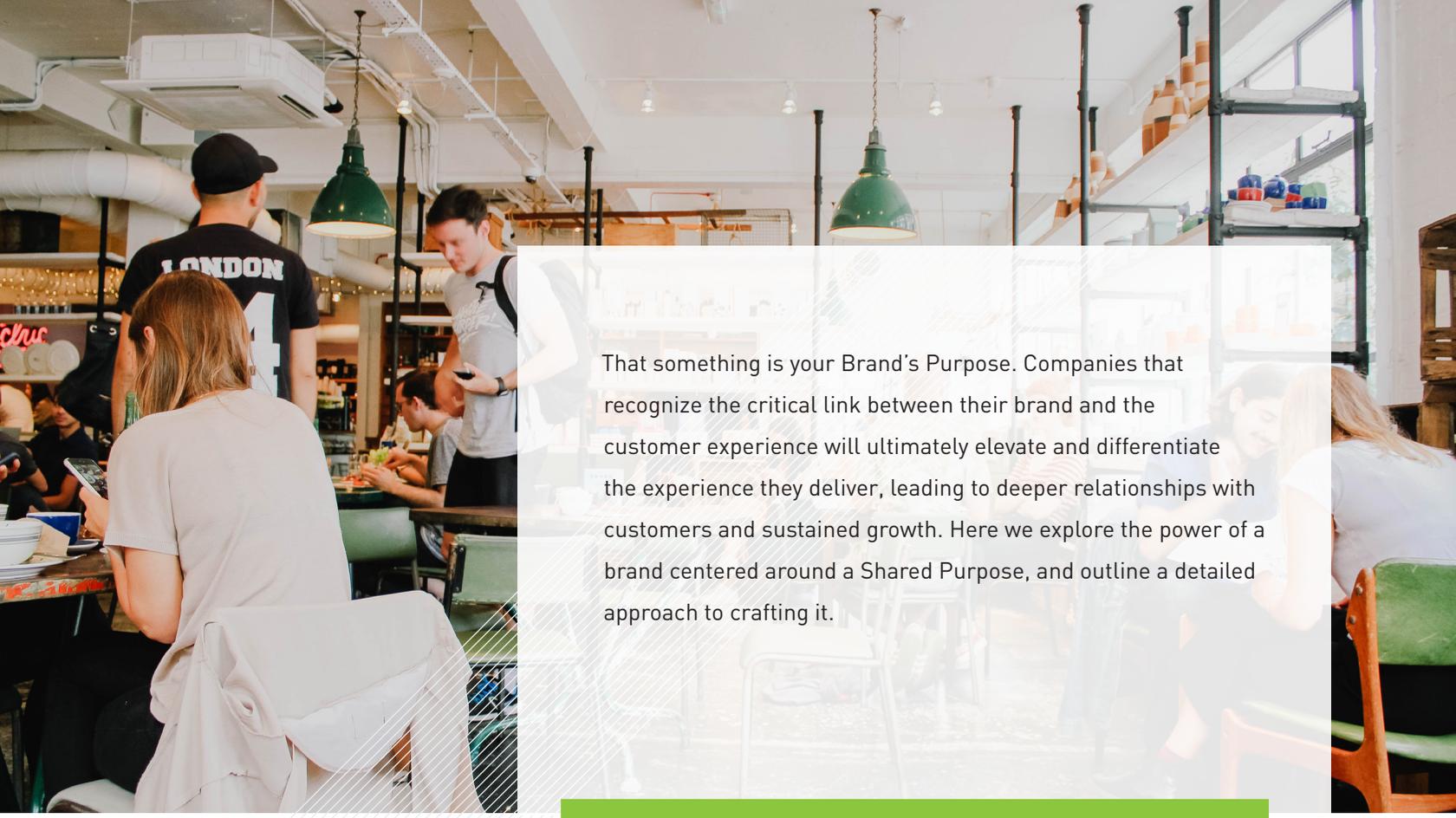


THE PURPOSEFUL BRAND



THE PURPOSEFUL BRAND: THE PATH TO MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCES

As competition rises, companies are focusing more and more on Customer Experience (CX)– not as a siloed function, but as a disciplined ethos that permeates every area of their business. But there has to be something at the core that continually inspires that discipline and unifies the organization. Something more human.



That something is your Brand's Purpose. Companies that recognize the critical link between their brand and the customer experience will ultimately elevate and differentiate the experience they deliver, leading to deeper relationships with customers and sustained growth. Here we explore the power of a brand centered around a Shared Purpose, and outline a detailed approach to crafting it.

Key Takeaways

Brands need to define their Shared Purpose - something that drives higher-level value beyond transactions.

Customers, especially Millennials, expect more from brands today. They want to know that if they buy into a brand, they are contributing to the achievement of that brand's vision.

The ability to fulfill that Shared Purpose at every turn is key to success.

A brand's purpose sets the bar for your customer's expectations. It should guide the full experience you intend to create, going far beyond traditional marketing initiatives – into product innovation, packaging, the call center, and even the bill a customer receives in the mail.

Brands who make their Shared Purpose the focal point that drives all other initiatives will rise to the top.

Having a Shared Purpose that guides all other experiences will set your company apart from the rest, ultimately resulting in financial success – even when financial goals are not the primary objective.



WALKING WITH PURPOSE

What happens when you put on a pair of shoes – shoes you may have had for a decade, that tell a story of your life, where you've been, and let you freely express who you are? Imagine that same pair of shoes was made by a company that builds skate parks in urban areas so kids can get outside and be active. What if buying that pair of shoes brought music to the world, helping to build pop-up recording studios where struggling musicians can record a demo they couldn't have afforded otherwise? You might feel like every step you take in those shoes makes an impact. You feel pride in wearing them and inspired by the company that makes them.

Or why is it that you can feel completely comfortable in a stranger's home in a faraway town and feel a sense of belonging in his or her community? What if the company that helped you travel to that town also sent you \$10 to go out and make a difference in someone's life in your hometown? What do you feel in these examples and hundreds of others you've experienced?

You feel a human connection.
You feel trust and inspiration.
You feel a sense of purpose.

Converse and AirBNB have built wildly successful brands by starting with a defined purpose – something more important than products or profits. Something bigger



than themselves. Converse is about enabling self-expression. AirBNB is about instilling a sense of community and belonging. Everything the brands stand for, everything they do, every experience they create, is working towards improving and enriching lives and the world in some way. And the financial success they've enjoyed is the result – not the objective.

The concept of a brand's purpose is not new. Many companies have been contributing to the betterment of society for years, through charitable donations, volunteerism and corporate social responsibility. They lauded their own efforts through external communication and PR efforts, receiving well-deserved praise and elevating their brand image. Most of these efforts originated from what the company, and the company alone, wanted to achieve.

But things have changed. Designing your purpose around the company's world view and needs alone isn't enough.



GROWING THROUGH PURPOSE

Purpose goes much deeper and needs to be multi-faceted in today's complex world. Companies can no longer define their purpose based on their own intentions and desires. Customers, especially Millennials, are looking to connect with brands that uphold the same values, standards and vision of our world as they do. They want to know that if they buy into a brand, they are contributing to the achievement of that brand's vision.

"The median return of the 40 publicly traded stocks on [Fortune's Change the World] list has been 16.6%—edging out the S&P 500 (16.5%) and handily beating the MSCI World Index (11.3%)...[This list identifies] 50 companies across the globe that are tackling major societal problems—reducing damage to the environment, strengthening communities, serving the underserved, and significantly improving lives as a function of their business model—and whose good works contribute to their bottom lines¹."

Every company must define a Shared Purpose with their audience. Something that drives higher-level value beyond the transactional benefits of your products or services. Value not just for your customers, but your employees and the community.

¹ Leaf, C. (2016, August 23). How Fortune's 'Change the World' Companies Profit From Doing Good. Retrieved May 01, 2017, from http://fortune.com/2016/08/18/change-world-companies-profit/?iid=recirc_ctwlanding-zone2

As humans, we strive for purpose. We want to be a part of something – to belong to a movement, to influence change in the world, and to co-create with brands.

It's not enough that we feel good about your brand's purpose, we want it to be our purpose too. Purpose needs to be mutually relevant, meaningful, and shared with your customers.

Furthermore, companies can no longer build their brand awareness and equity solely through marketing and communications. Customers are, and expect to be, involved at every point. Digital media has given them an ear and a voice in every conversation...real time. Any company misstep or negative customer experience is immediate fodder on social media. Customers expect transparency – and if they don't get it, they create it. They are savvy and they know how to navigate brands and quickly weed out those that are inauthentic based on the actual experiences they have with the brand. Like often in life, actions speak louder than words.

Brands that identify and share their authentic purpose with customers will rise to the top. In fact, the book *Firms of Endearment* is based on a 15-year study that proved purpose-driven organizations outperformed the S&P 500 by a ratio of 14:1². Focusing on reaching a purpose-driven goal can be far more impactful to your stakeholders than pure financial goals.

Shared Purpose drives benefits across a broad set of stakeholders:

- **Company**
Unites company leadership, drives decision making and motivates our employees to give more of their mind, heart and time to the organization.
- **Customers**
Drives richer brand experiences that delight customers and provides a sense that the company is supporting fulfillment of their shared goals.
- **Employees**
Provides an inspiring and collaborative culture that ignites passion for, and commitment to, the meaningful work they do every day.
- **Community**
Engages those in our local or digital communities to be a part of improving the world around us. Ultimately making a deeper impact on our community.

What makes a strong brand purpose?

It should be clear, inspirational and action-oriented. It should be human.

(e.g. Starbucks' "To inspire and nurture the human spirit one person, one cup, and one neighborhood at a time")

It goes beyond pure financial success.

(e.g. Always' "Boosting girls' self-esteem")

It is bigger than any leader, product, service, team or technology that exists in your organization today, because it's holistic and evergreen.

(e.g. L'oreal's "Offering Beauty for All")

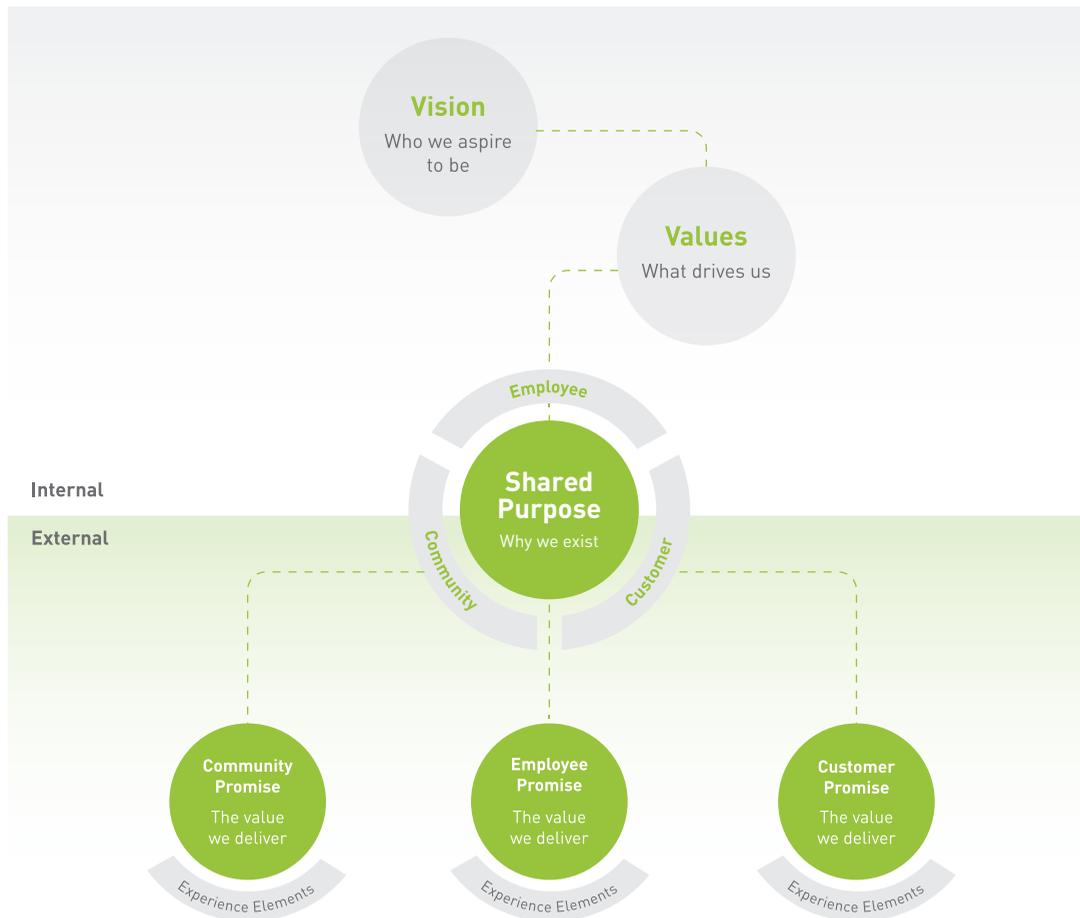
² Sisodia, R., Sheth, J. N., & Wolfe, D. B. (2014). *Firms of endearment: how world-class companies profit from passion and purpose*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

EXPERIENCING AUTHENTIC PURPOSE

When grounded in purpose, a brand becomes much deeper than a logo or a color palette. It sets the bar for your customer’s expectations and guides the full experience you intend to create. It radiates from places beyond traditional marketing elements – into product innovation, packaging, the call center, and even the bill a customer receives in the mail. Customers assign value to every interaction they have with a brand, so we need to deliberately consider the visual and verbal cues, as well as the environmental and cultural influences that impact that experience.

The key to a successful brand is the company’s ability to fulfill that Shared Purpose at every turn. The goal is for our intended brand to match how the customer experiences it.

But how do you design the right interactions for your brand experience? Ones that align with your brand and Shared Purpose, and ultimately create a differentiated experience for customers?



PURPOSE TO EXPERIENCE APPROACH



1. Define

If you haven't done so already, you must first establish a clear and concise brand platform. Grounded in customer insight, the platform includes the typical components of a company vision and values and articulates the promise you'll make to key audiences and benefits they'll derive from it. Radiating from the center of it all, is your Shared Purpose.

To define a Shared Purpose, we start by articulating the vision for how we want to impact our people, our community, our world. We understand what our customers and employees need, what they expect, what they value. And we find the intersection between the two. This becomes the Shared Purpose that ignites our brand. Everything we do, every product or service we provide, every experience we create, should intentionally fulfill that Shared Purpose and elevate our brand. In short, purpose becomes the filter for all decision making.

Next, translate your purpose into Brand Experience Principles that drive experience design. They serve as guideposts as you assess your current experience and build towards the future.

We mentioned Converse earlier and their clear and intentional Shared Purpose: 'inspire and enable self-expression... It will change the world.' But they didn't create that lofty goal and then let it float off into the land of theoretical and undelivered promises. They took it, acted on it and translated it into four principles that drive every aspect of the business, motivate every employee and determine every interaction they have with customers and their community.

Converse Guiding Principles:

1. Celebrate our audience, not ourselves
2. Bring cultures together
3. Own, don't rent
4. Be useful

In a moment, we'll explain how Converse turned principles into action.

2. Assess

Create a framework to map the stages of the journey across audiences and detail each touchpoint and micro-touchpoint. Then determine which of these moments matter most to your audience - and why.

- Which interactions have the most impact?
- How is your brand perceived at each touchpoint?
- What value derived?
- What emotional responses are we eliciting? (both positive and negative)

Tools such as personas (representative customer portraits brought to life through narrative and visuals) and empathy maps (collaborative tool teams use to understand how customers experience your products and services) can be very helpful in generating insights about what your customers might be feeling, thinking, seeing and doing. Gathering these insights will help drive more consistent, positive experiences in the future and help you further define the brand.

3. Design

Delivering a series of signature moments that are completely unique to your brand and driven by your Brand Experience Principles is critical. These experiences not only communicate the right message to your customers, but they engage the senses and tap into emotion. Bringing the brand to life through environmental, social, cultural and digital touchpoints creates a more immersive experience that will help elicit a powerful emotional response from your customers.

Once Converse set their Principles in stone³, they used them to inspire and guide the design of every interaction, every experience. They make them real through tangible pillars of Art, Skating and Music. And they connected through their customers to the world.

Principle: “Celebrate our audience, not ourselves”
Experience: Drove the design of a campaign to

³ Rodney Rambo, VP Global Marketing, Converse, Keynote Speech, The Gathering Conference, February 2016

have customers mail in an old pair of Chucks - complete with the dirt, grime, wear and tear of life - and tell the story of where the shoes had been. Pictures of the shoes, coupled with the story, became their advertising campaign. It connected with, and creatively celebrated, the expressed individuality of their customers.

Principle: “Bring cultures together”

Experience: This manifested through the development of urban skate parks that brought diverse communities together.

Principle: “Be useful”

Experience: This came to life through pop-up demo studios giving struggling musicians the chance to finally be heard and heralded.

4. Develop & Test

For a brand experience to be truly successful and align with its Shared Purpose, it must be delivered through all disciplines of the organization, not just at the final moment of interaction with the customer.

Challenge cross-functional leaders in your organization (from operations to product development to sales) to rethink how they impact the full brand experience and purposefully infuse the brand into what they do. Remember that these experiences need to be scalable, repeatable, and customer-centric.

Continually monitor the brand experience and use what you learn to pilot, test and perfect the highest impact signature moments that truly reflect the core of our brand’s purpose.

PARTNERING FOR PURPOSE

Customers are highly attuned to the brands they associate with – and not because of perceived brand status or luxury – but because of authenticity, connection and social impact.

Meaningful brands have outperformed the stock market by 206% over the last 10 years⁴.

The companies that shift their mindset to focus on a Shared Purpose will ultimately make a bigger impact on their customers, their employees, and the community, as well as their quarterly financial goals.

Understanding the link between your brand and the customer experience, and then purposefully building experiences to reflect your brand strategy requires alignment across your entire organization.

The best results often come when a fresh lens is applied. It can be incredibly valuable to bring a partner into your organization to help define your Shared Purpose. A team of cross-functional experts in brand, customer experience, and organizational readiness that can not only establish the connection between your purpose and the experience you promise to provide, but help you seamlessly deliver it.

Ultimately, you must walk with purpose hand in hand with your customer before you run as an organization.

⁴ Meaningful Brands. (n.d.). Retrieved May 01, 2017, from <http://www.meaningful-brands.com/en>

Through our Brand and Marketing Strategy Practice, we help clients optimize their brand portfolios by delivering purpose-driven brands that align with their customers' lifestyles and motivations. Grounded in research and insights, we help clients formulate their Shared Purpose and bring their brands to life through experience design, brand expression and marketing strategy.

AUTHORS



Joanne Lee

Co-Lead –
Brand & Marketing Strategy
Practice

Joanne.Lee@sparksgrove.com



Kim Osborn

Co-Lead –
Brand & Marketing Strategy
Practice

Kim.Osborn@sparksgrove.com

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