

Reinforcing Core Values and Company Purpose Through Experiences

See how the most admired companies have brought their core values to life and demonstrated purpose through experiences, and how you can too. Ultimately, if employees are bringing your company's core values and purpose to life, it's likely they are engaged and helping your business thrive.

Introduction

Actions speak louder than words.

Contradictions cause chaos, and common sense will tell you that businesses built on a foundation of ethical behavior (keyword being behavior) will prevail. A company's core values and purpose can be written, but more importantly, needs to be made part of the culture. A company's purpose is a guiding light to employees and inspires greatness within the individuals of the organization. Core values are the legs on which your business stands. If one is removed (by omission of action), your business could falter. A prime example of this is Enron. In its annual report to shareholders, Enron listed its core values as follows: ¹

- 1 Communication – We have an obligation to communicate.
- 2 Respect – We treat others as we would like to be treated.
- 3 Integrity – We work with customers and prospects openly, honestly, and sincerely.
- 4 Excellence – We are satisfied with nothing less than the very best in everything we do.

Among other issues, the lack of integrity and respect with which the business was run ultimately led to its downfall and even landed key executives in prison. While this example is extreme, customers have a hard time trusting companies; their transparency in business operations and the treatment of their employees. Case in point: the Volkswagen emission scandal.

The ease and availability of platforms to generate online reviews and share opinions regarding just about anything has afforded customers and employees the ability to do their own reference checks and voice their ideas and concerns. While it's up to the company to decide whether to listen and take action or not, the market won't allow for a questionable product to go on selling, the same way employees won't work for a company whose culture contradicts the values it says it stands for. There is only one way to build or maintain a culture that supports a company's purpose and ultimately its brand, and that's by incorporating it into every facet of the organization.

There are many benefits to this holistic and integrated approach to the idea of purpose, among them being: ²

- Drives loyalty across generations.
- Fosters customer engagement.
- Improves strategic alignment by explaining why your organization exists.
- Brings clarity surrounding decision making and judgement.
- Can be measured through employee surveys.

In fact, 83% of employees at companies with a strong sense of purpose say their organization will deliver strong growth and returns, compared to 49% of those at businesses without a strong sense of purpose. ³

Every company should have a strategy to grow its business, and communication must be integrated into that plan. If strategy is not communicated effectively, then the greatest intentions will be lost to the wind. The same goes for the purpose and core values of a company. If they are not assimilated into the fabric of the culture and communicated successfully, the extent to which the organization is able to thrive will be thwarted.

Effective communication is achieved by the absorption and understanding of the receiving party; an ideal example being: Learning. We all learn in different ways – through sight, sound or hands-on activity; however, North Carolina State University performed a study that found 100% of the participants "preferred a combination of learning methods that includes 'doing.' Most also preferred 'seeing' as a part of the combination (96.3%)." ⁴ Meetings and live events are perfect places for companies to share their purpose through seeing and doing. Face-to-face meetings build attendee camaraderie and act to foster empathy across organization lines. You'll see how events that range from the conventional to eccentric successfully reinforce core values and company purpose.



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Best in class companies are using meetings and events in order to create experiences that reinforce and exemplify their core values in action and bring their purpose to life. Even though core values and purpose should already be deep-rooted in every employee, if the company doesn't emphasize their importance or demonstrate how they can be continually applied, there is a risk for isolating employees or even worse, losing sight of the values. Likewise, if employees are unable to find their own personal purpose and align to the purpose of the company, their engagement and thereby discretionary effort will be limited. As employees nurture their individual greatness, so will the greatness of your company be nurtured.

In Action – Clif Bar & Company “Outdoor Adventure”

Clif Bar focuses on its roots and well-being of its employees as well as work/life integration.

Core Values

Sustaining our People - Working side-by-side, encouraging each other, our company is our people.⁵

Experience

“Clif is an extension of my life and my values - I'm not checking those things at the door every day and picking back up when I get off work...We pick each other up when we're down or struggling and similarly, we support each other's passions and interests and celebrate our individual and collective successes.” - Employee quote from 2014 “Great Place to Work” survey. Clif Bar & Company ranked #12 in Fortune magazine's Best Workplaces issue.

This quote exemplifies one of Clif Bar's core values, or aspirations, of sustaining people. According to the company's 2014 All Aspirations Report,⁶ the idea for the company started on a 175-mile bike ride, and the same spirit of adventure holds true to the company's identity today. Combining its unique characteristics and the values it sustains, Clif Bar & Company helps expand its employees' awareness and view of the world through travel experiences.

Backpacking through Yosemite's High Country, cycling in Northern Italy's Dolomites and trekking through the Langtang region of the Himalayas of Nepal have proven to be life-changing and awe-inspiring for employees. These challenges and adventures require intense teamwork to reach a common goal and allow for a recalibration of “body, mind and soul.” The encouragement and collaboration embraced throughout these experiences are carried out in the day-to-day actions of employees, further reinforcing the culture of the organization and inspiring employees to feed their sense of adventure.

In Action – Riot Games “Hackathon”

Impossible is our favorite kind of possible. Doing the right thing often requires disregarding the rules and upending the status quo.⁷

Core Values

We attract, develop, and cultivate entrepreneurial teams who prefer action over process and bureaucracy. We're a sports team, not a family. As a meritocracy, we value results delivered.

“We pick each other up when we're down or struggling and similarly, we support each other's passions and interests and celebrate our individual and collective successes.”



350 chosen employees are brought together to forget about their job for a few days and just innovate.

Experience

These two values listed in the Riot Manifesto come together in a three day employee-driven Hackathon. Riot Games is a video game publisher with over 1,000 employees in specialized roles located throughout the world. The Hackathon provides an opportunity to shake things up. Falling perfectly in-line with challenging convention, 350 chosen employees are brought together to forget about their job for a few days and just innovate. As a company that prefers action over process and bureaucracy, the rulebook is thrown out the window as designers become coders and programmers become animators. Employees are given a break from their normal routine (which to some is already unconventional) and a chance to achieve the “impossible.”

They have time to develop new skills and use their passions to create. At the end of the Hackathon, there is a science fair to present the work completed. The Hackathon helps employees understand what they are capable of and how quickly they can get things done. Team building and networking opportunities add value by engaging their millennial employees.

In Action – The Container Store “Leadership Conference”

Employee training and development leads to the best customer service. 263 hours of training to be exact.

Core Value

Training – Intuition does not come to an unprepared mind. You need to train before it happens.⁹

Experience

The Container Store Leadership Conference demonstrated the company’s commitment to one of its Foundation Principles – training – by creating an off-site experience that inspired its



stores and office and distribution center leaders to go back and reinvigorate their own teams. This excerpt from a blog post by a conference participant helps to explain the outcome:

“It was hands-down the most incredible and impactful event that I’ve attended in my professional career.”

“This conference left me in shock and awe, to the point where I was at a loss for words for several days. It was hands-down the most incredible and impactful event that I’ve attended in my professional career. The speakers were engaging and inspiring – you could tell their words touched all of us in a way that made us feel proud to work for an organization like ours. One of my biggest takeaways from the conference is the beauty of vulnerability and how it’s vital in all areas of your life, especially your professional life. It was then I realized that’s what I’ve been lacking this entire time! The walls I’ve built up have been so high and I haven’t truly given myself a chance to thrive because I haven’t been vulnerable.” Jimmy S., Inventory Planning & Allocation Manager, The Container Store.¹¹

Several inspiring TED-style talks from Simon Sinek, the CEO of Motley Fool, and the President of UNICEF, plus a creative group painting activity and numerous well-being exercises all combined to construct a well-thought-out plan for effectively communicating the company's vision and further bolstering its cultural focus on training. Comments from employees such as Jimmy prove the power of face-to-face interactions and the impact an experience such as a conference can have on inspiring people to reach their full potential and thrive.

In Action – Yoplait “50th Anniversary Celebration”

Together with the community, Yoplait showcases the beauty of the simple things in life for its 50th Anniversary Celebration.

Core Values

Pleasure, Naturalness, Authenticity and Family

Experience

On the footsteps of the Eiffel Tower, a four day celebration was designed with Yoplait's core values in mind to commemorate the brand's 50th anniversary. Almost an acre of space along the Seine River was turned into a temporary garden with eight interactive sculptures and a half million flowers from 100 species. The origami-inspired sculptures were meant to be engaged with by the public and represented the preservation of biodiversity and openness to the natural beauty of the world. The world-renowned artist, Gad Weil, described his garden creation as “an invitation to garden, an invitation to play, an invitation to believe in our common future.” He called the installation “Petite Fleur Folies” because Yoplait is known in France as the little flower. “Gad Weil designed an event that fit perfectly with the values held by Yoplait: pleasure, naturalness, authenticity and family,” said Olivier Faujour, president of Yoplait International. “It was the best way for us to celebrate our 50 years.”¹²

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In Action – PriceWaterhouseCoopers “Purpose Summit”

What does purpose mean to you? And how does that affect your work? PWC employees had a chance to dive deep into the power of purpose.

Core Value

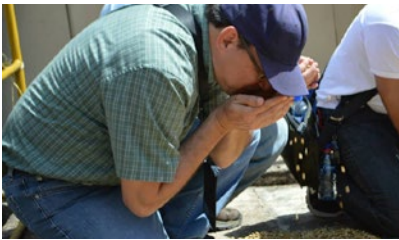
Leadership - Leading with clients, leading with people and thought leadership. Leadership demands courage, vision and integrity. Vision means seeing the bigger picture. We don't just want people with courage, we want people with vision, in other words, people with a clear idea of what they would like to achieve.¹⁴



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Experience

In January 2015, PwC employees were brought together for a first-ever Purpose Summit. Outside speakers from corporations, nonprofits and government agencies brought different insights about what “purpose” means to them. Chief Corporate Responsibility and Purpose Officer, Shannon Schuyler says, “For our people, it’s helping them to understand what their purpose is before they buy into the corporate purpose. People don’t always take the time to say, ‘what makes me unique, what compels me?’ So we want our people to have that exercise – what is purpose, and helping them align their own purpose to the firm’s purpose.”¹⁶ Company representatives acknowledge that this push for meaning probably wouldn’t have occurred ten years ago and they credit the millennial generation for the trend. The book *Firms of Endearment*,¹⁷ which is based on a fifteen year study, proved that purpose-driven organizations outperformed the S&P 500 by a ratio of 14:1. “We need to think about how we can help our people see the value that they bring – not just sitting behind a desk, but how the entire chain of events fit together and how we can help other organizations and broader society through that. That’s a much bigger story to tell and hopefully people can see that elevated meaning and derive purpose from that,” said Schuyler. The Purpose Summit was a way for PwC to bring to life what purpose means and how individuals can personally achieve it or work toward it. It also served as a conversation starter for a more comprehensive journey to find purpose personally and as it aligns to the company.



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In Action – Starbucks “Educational Experience”

From plant to cup: An opportunity for Starbucks employees to learn respect for the coffee growing process while creating brand ambassadors along the way.

Core Value

Being present, connecting with transparency, dignity and respect.¹⁸

Experience

According to its Facebook page:¹⁹ the Starbucks Origin Experience program is an immersive coffee-education trip that allows Starbucks partners to experience coffee growing origins from plant to cup, with all their senses. Not only does the trip drive the company’s commitment to socially equitable and sustainable business practices, but the once-in-a-lifetime experience also creates brand ambassadors who bring the company’s story to life in their day-to-day encounters. The trip locations range from Costa Rica to Rwanda to Nigeria and include educational activities such as learning coffee harvesting techniques and a teach-back program designed to help them bring back their experiences to their communities. Local community service projects as well as time with executive leadership usually round out the journeys. The respect they are able to build for the farmers and the human interactions that take place on the trips won’t soon be forgotten by the participants.



20,000

people are in attendance

In Action – Life is Good “Seasonal Festivals”

Optimism is contagious. And Life is Good helps to spread the word through live events and philanthropy.

Core Value

To spread the value of optimism. ²⁰

Experience

Life is Good already donates 10% of its net profits to help kids in need, but simply stating this on its website is not what helps the company spread the power of optimism. Through the actions and beliefs of employees, relationships with supplier partners and fuel from its fans, a company that does virtually no advertising has become successful in a very saturated T-shirt market through values-based marketing. “Optimism is not a strategy; it’s ingrained in who we are,” says David Oksman, head of marketing at Life is Good.²¹ The brand brings all of its talk and optimism to life through seasonal outdoor festivals. Known for its positive vibes, the festival provides the opportunity to bring together employees, customers and suppliers to celebrate life and fundraise for a good cause.²² About 20,000 people are in attendance each day of the two-day event with proceeds going to the Life is Good Playmakers foundation to benefit children in threatening situations. It’s no secret that giving back is beneficial to organizations and their employees in myriad ways, and Life is Good is a brand that has maximized this opportunity. In a 2013 press release, featured artist Jack Johnson said, “Every music festival has its own feel. All my friends that have played at the Life is Good Festival have told me that the energy that the crowd brings is like nowhere else. I can’t wait to finally experience it myself.”²³ The emotions evoked from the tens of thousands of festival goers epitomizes the purpose and efforts Life is Good aims to achieve on a daily basis and reminds employees they are not just making T-shirts, they are spreading the power of optimism.



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We do it too

At our annual employee meeting, we incorporated breakout sessions focused on well-being. When our employees are at their best they serve clients best. Helping everyone to thrive.

LOL
the healing power of laughter

30 Mindful Minutes
mindfulness techniques and guided meditation

Unplugged
a place to sit and chill

Creatively Unwind
painting, journaling and even coloring

Task Hacks
time management

Fit Flyer
fitness techniques “on the go”

Summary

Seven industry leaders understand the importance of connecting purpose and core values to their brands. In order for employees and customers to become advocates, they need to make that connection too. Creating experiences is the ideal way to bring this to life.

What you can do



Company's core values

Take a good hard look at your company's purpose and core values and make sure they are indicative of what your organization stands for and where it wants to go.



Communicate those values

Make it a focus to identify and communicate core values and purpose with your employees at every touchpoint.



Bring it to life

Bring your core values and purpose to life by creating events and experiences that help your people reach their full potential and thrive.

How we can help

We create lasting experiences that help you connect with your audience to effectively deliver your message and build your brand.

Our approach is focused on creating the most engaging and personalized participant experience. With end-to-end meeting support, we provide all the elements necessary to create a world-class meeting or event that will drive behavior to meet your goals. Our global programs and experiences reward excellence and inspire people to reach their full potential - we call it Thrivability™ - the art and science of reaching for the stars and nurturing individual greatness. For more information, contact Creative Group, Inc.

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