



**MISSION AND
PURPOSE IN
BUSINESS**

**START A
CRUSADE**

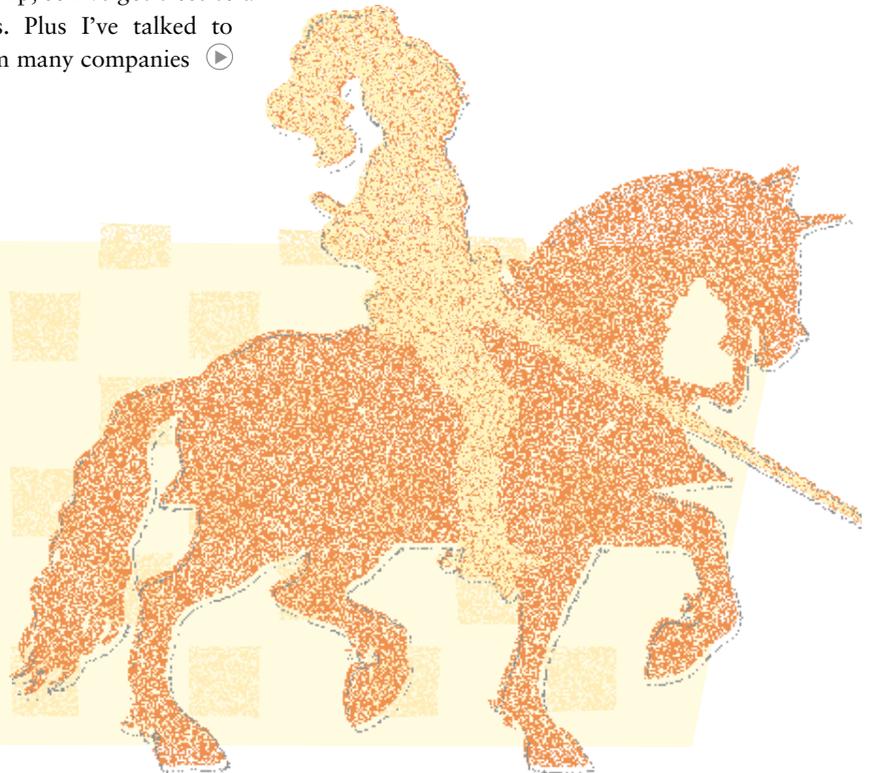
BY DICK BRUNTON

I'VE BEEN a CEO for 26 years in an industry that mostly serves other businesses. Over recent years, I've discovered a new thing about leadership and organisations, something I think is of profound importance. But first I need to set the scene and tell you the story about how I came to find this nugget.

As market researchers, we build maps or models of consumer needs – needscape we might call them. On these we overlay brands and organisations. This is the platform from which to make targeting and positioning decisions.

We found that many clients did not know how to use this information well, so we developed a workshop process to help them build their brand architectures in a systematic way. By brand architecture, I'm talking about a brand's functional properties, how it makes you look and feel, its persona or attitude, core values, brand essence, proposition and so on. In the case of service companies, of course, the brand is very often the same as the organisation.

This workshop process involves greater intimacy than a usual supplier relationship, so I've got close to a lot of businesses. Plus I've talked to many people from many companies ▶



What a company wants its customers to feel, its employees must feel first

and I have concluded that a great many organisations lack passion.

There are many brands and companies with no true vision, no mission, no purpose other than to make money, no passion, no love or respect for the customer, no drive, no point of view, no character, no integrity (in the sense of wholeness).

They are under extreme pressure to make money, often for overseas owners. They have lost the reason the brand existed. Confusion, lack of direction, disillusionment result; they don't know who they are. It is my considered opinion that we have a crisis of leadership.

So, who cares? Why is this important?

Firstly, there is a direct business cost. If you're confused on the inside, then you become confused on the outside. If you lack leadership on the inside, you lack leadership on the outside. So it is no surprise that consumers see the brand as wishy-washy and undifferentiated.

It is expensive to maintain such a brand, i.e. marketing costs are high. Brands can weaken and even die. Confusion saps energy. It results in bad briefings to suppliers. How can you make an ad without understanding what the brand or company stands for?

Secondly, there is the people cost, i.e. the wasted potential of employees who need a vision they can support and identify with. In a driving, profit-focused company, it's difficult to achieve high levels of customer satisfaction, because, as a matter of principle, what a company wants its customers to feel, its employees must feel first.

If you want your customers to feel nurtured, cared for, inspired, then employees must first feel nurtured, cared for and inspired.

Sam Walton put it this way: "It takes about two weeks for employees to treat customers the same way the employer is treating the employee."

POWER OF PURPOSE

So through the workshops I discovered the passionless business. But also through the workshops I observed the transforming power of purpose.

I think back some five years ago to company X. It tended to be a follower and we decided to be pro-active and suggested an away day and a project we called "Project 2000". The objective was straightforward: discover the categories of the future in this market and be first.

The day and processes were very successful and the company was transformed. This is a large corporate we're talking about, a serious global business. I can tell you their tails were in the air. Their new sense of purpose, of being in control of their future, was truly transforming and inspirational.

I can recall other similar types of stories.

But there is a higher place than just purpose and that's where I want to take you shortly.

I suggest to you that organisations fall into three types. The first I will call inward focused – it is concerned with what we're going to do for us. Its mission statement is couched in terms of being the biggest, the best, the leader.

I spoke to the CEO of an educational supplier recently and asked what his company's mission was. He said: "To be the biggest educational supplier in (region of New Zealand)."

So what's wrong with that? Well, they are like the companies I described earlier. There is little recognition and celebration of the human spirit, no passion, low energy levels. It's hard to get passionate about making profits for other people.

The second type is customer-focused – these companies are concerned with what we're going to do for you, the customer. These companies are striving to create a sense of contribution. They have higher energy levels. Henry Ford said: "The man who will use his skill and constructive imagination to see how

Henry Ford



much he can give for a dollar, instead of how little he can give, is bound to succeed.”

Genuine giving precedes receiving.

And this is not some game in which the marketing department is left to “dress up” the organisation while the CEO and the board get on with the real business of making money.

No. We are talking about the identity and soul of the organisation, its reason for being. And this should definitely be the business of the CEO and the board.

Perhaps our CEO earlier could have said: “We’re committed to lifting the standard of education in such and such a region of New Zealand.”

Well, genuine customer-focus sounds good. What can be beyond this?

I suggest that “purpose” alone is not enough and “customer-focus” alone is not enough. Both are necessary, but not sufficient.

MEANING-FOCUSED

So I propose a third level: the meaning-focused organisation. It is concerned with why: why we’re going to do – for you, the customer – what we’re going to do.

With this in mind, our CEO might say: “We’re committed to lifting the standard of education in such and such a region of New Zealand, so that the people in the region will know the dignity and self-esteem of work and will build a prosperous community.”

I think you know which of the three banners this organisation’s staff would most like to walk behind. And, of course, committing to this goal would likely result in this organisation becoming the best or biggest.

Most of you will have heard the story of a man who saw two workmen on a construction

site. The first worker, who looked disgruntled, when asked what he was doing, answered: “Laying bricks” – a level one response. He was working only for the money.

The second worker, who was whistling a tune, answered: “I’m building a cathedral” – a level two response. And the story usually finishes there.

But I would have a third worker, who might answer: “I’m building a cathedral where God will be glorified and His people blessed.”

Why is meaning important?

Human beings need to live with a constant sense of meaning and purpose. We are meaning seekers and meaning makers. If we attach meaning to what we do, we feel significant and connected to the organisation and our co-workers. People need to feel that who they are and what they do have significance.

Meaning unleashes energy. I would even argue that it is a responsibility of leadership to imbue their followers’ lives with meaning at work.

In short, customer-focused purpose with meaning unleashes energy, which delivers excellence.

Anita Roddick



START A CRUSADE

So, how do you turn your organisation into a meaning-focused organisation? You turn your business into a crusade.

Many successful businesses we admire are crusades. Anita Roddick created a huge global business, The Body Shop, out of a passion for the environment, not testing cosmetics on animals, etc. Henry Ford had a passion to make an automobile affordable to anyone who wanted one ... “to democratise the automobile”. Dick Hubbard has a passion for social responsibility in business and, I believe, set out to make a better kind ▶

Dick Hubbard



Purpose with meaning generates passion generates excellence

of breakfast cereal. The Warehouse's Stephen Tindall, I imagine, could have a passion like that of Walmart: "To give ordinary folk the chance to buy the same things as rich people." There are many other examples.

So how do you turn your business into a crusade? Here are four magic questions:

- What do I see in my industry that grieves me?
- What do I want to change or put right?
- Where can my organisation make a difference?
- What do I want to create?

The answers to these questions are the stuff crusades are born out of. It will be easy to see how the four examples I used of crusades could have been generated out of the answers to these questions.

For my part, I have been grieved for many years at the backroom image of the research industry and I have hated researchers leaving clients in complexity. This is behind our own brand essence of "inspiration" and tagline of "insight and inspiration".

And many of the brand essences developed in workshops could so easily be crusades. Take the

food company that makes cheap products kids like; we developed a brand essence of "happiness". The idea is that this company brings cheer to kids in low-socio-economic households and relief to their mothers.

Or the bank with a brand essence of "freedom", the utility with "simplicity", the beer brand with "camaraderie", the local body with "stewardship", and many, many others. All could so easily become crusades.

In summary, I am an advocate for the meaning-focused organisation. Purpose with meaning generates passion generates excellence. How do you imbue your organisation with meaning? Turn it into a crusade? How?

Use the magic questions.

Finally, connect your people to the crusade. Then see your organisation grow in passion and energy and excellence in serving your target market needs. Providing you observe the fundamental rules of business, then you may indeed become the biggest or best in your field, and make lots of money. Plus you will know the priceless satisfaction of having deposited something of value into the lives of others.



Stephen Tindall



Dick Brunton

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Colmar Brunton Research