

Delivering brand promise through human resources

 By [Carla Enslin](#)

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If the statement still seems arguable, there is now a large groundswell of opinion that brand building is no mere function of marketing or communication, but rather a primary activity that engages the entire business value chain, from service or product ideation to the design and construction of business systems.

There is a key strategic challenge to this approach. For every dimension of the value chain and all points of contact with stakeholder groups depend on the input and performance of employees, the people of the brand. The conclusion is clear: internal brand building is an absolute imperative for business performance.

The internal brand building models developed by brand consultancy firms such as Brand Union and Second-To-None show that employees firstly need to be aware of and understand the purpose of a brand in order to design and deliver cohesive contact experiences. Employees need to understand the uniqueness of the brand purpose and how their daily actions and behaviours can support this purpose.

Awareness is only a starting point

However, awareness, or an intellectual understanding of the brand, is merely a necessary starting point. To ensure that employees attain the individual confidence and desire to deliver the brand purpose at all contact points, they actually need to believe in it. This goal is not successfully achieved through internal brand awareness campaigns only. Employees cannot simply be reasoned into believing in the brand. To achieve genuine commitment to the brand, employees need to experience a culture of truth, an internal brand environment genuinely based on what the brand stands for.

This line of reasoning is two-fold. Firstly, an internal culture that genuinely embodies the brand purpose is led by individuals that set the example. Where the leadership and management of an organisation genuinely uphold the brand purpose in every decision and action, they build an organisation and internal culture truthfully based on the brand. The people of the brand are thus naturally guided and supported in their understanding of the brand's uniqueness and are given convincing reasons to believe that the brand actually matters. The cohesive delivery of the unique value of the brand across points of contact becomes an attainable goal.

Brand leaders and managers must set the example

Secondly, the role of human resource management is repositioned. The aim is to recruit people who through their attitude and drive are able to align themselves with the brand purpose and to build an internal environment and culture that in turn offers support to excel in building the brand. For example, one cannot present the external world with a brand promise of innovation and collaboration while employees have to combat with top-down organisational systems and autocratic decision-making. Not only does such conflict between promise and delivery constrain employees in their daily performance, it stimulates an internal culture of cynics and non-brand believers.

The leaders and managers of brands set the example. Where their decisions and actions are clearly and naturally guided by the brand purpose there is genuine reason to believe in the brand. Once Human Resource Management turns its focus to employing people who embody the brand purpose, offer guidance and support to managers and departments towards building an internal organisational culture that is true to the brand, employees will have reason and motivation enough to perform on-brand. Leading and building the internal brand efficiently, with integrity, should be key performance measures for all leaders, managers and human resource personnel.

ABOUT CARLA ENSLIN

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