Living the brand
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This booklet is a very brief summary of the book, ‘Living the Brand’. In a few pages it tries to demonstrate that successful brands are built by the commitment and involvement of employees and that marketers must face two ways at once: outwards to understand the value a brand can add to the life of a customer and inwards to understand how the members of an organization can contribute towards that value.
Brands are about people

Employee driven / customer connected / value delivering.
It is employees through their assumptions and actions that communicate the brand and build relationships with customers and consumers. It is employees that drive the loyalty which secures future cash flows.

This indicates that employees need to understand what the organisation stands for and be capable of delivering it in their everyday work. This is the goal of the concept of living the brand: to inspire individuals to identify and internalise the brand; to become committed to delivering value so that customers and consumers can enjoy a seemingly seamless experience that lives up to (and exceeds) their expectations.
How ‘living the brand’: six key principles

| 01 | Align with business objectives |
| 02 | Generate high levels of participation |
| 03 | Demonstrate leadership commitment over time |
| 04 | Develop a brand definition that is engaging |
| 05 | Promote a supportive culture and the tools to enable self discovery |
| 06 | Measure the things that matter |

Bringing the brand to life in the Unicef Offices

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**Quick links**
- Mastering your brand and group strategies
- Need information about a particular brand? Use the 'Our brands' menu above.
- Brand identity and implementation overview - contact brand manager.
- Tele-basic changes
  - Brand changes we are introducing may alter the way you need to address the telephone. [Click here to find out what you should do.](#)
Consistency / Participation / Tension / Fulfilment
Bringing the brand to life

Chip Bell: freestyle frisbee champion, surfing instructor and sportswear brand, Patagonia's receptionist, exemplifies the principles of Living the Brand – read the story in chapter one of the book.
Bringing the brand to life

‘Companies that do the best job of living up to their values and developing ethical employees, including managers, recognise that the real cause of success — or failure — is always the people, not the words’

Goldsmith and Morgan — Study of 11000 managers in eight major corporations (2004)

The importance of process

There is a view that the articulation of the brand needs to be a top management exercise and that wider employee engagement in the process leads to consensus-seeking blandness. The top down approach may be easier and quicker and more prevalent, but it probably reflects the preferences of CEOs and their advisors rather than the most effective method.

Brand definition exercises should concentrate on the process itself as a means of building employee identification rather than worrying overly about synonyms. More participative approaches have the advantage of a) inclusivity: ensuring that all departments and divisions can use the brand; b) credibility: that the brand reflects the reality of the organisation and c) comprehension: that by the very process of discussion people come to understand and engage with the brand.
01 Balance current reality and future aspiration 02 Be ethical 03 Demonstrate courage 04 Requires simple and appropriate language 05 And confidence that the right ideas will emerge out of a well designed process 06 Most important of all, a brand needs tension, because the definition must be capable of driving the organisation forward. Static definitions that only reinforce the current way of doing things, do not work.

Volvo’s two core values of ‘safety’ and ‘excitement’ contain both a reinforcement of what has traditionally been a strength of Volvo and an idea that pushes the brand. It is in the dialogue, created by the tension of these two values, that discoveries are made.

This is what the writer Umberto Eco calls encyclopaedic knowledge: where the meaning of a word emerges and grows through usage – which in turn suggests the importance of knowledge capture and sharing. Indeed we might argue that brand definitions are not really definitions at all until they acquire contextual meaning.
01 Leaders need to demonstrate their commitment to the brand through symbolic acts that demonstrate the connection between the brand and business performance 02 Inspire people through brand aligned communications 03 Develop the mechanisms to explain and engage.

NB This is only the beginning of the process
There is a tendency to believe that when a set of values is launched then the job is done. Yet in reality this is just the beginning of the process. For the values to have relevance they have to impact on behaviour. This cannot be imposed on people. The organisation cannot tell employees to be more ‘creative’ or ‘quality-focused’ and expect an instant transformation. People need to come to understand how the values can be valuable in their day-to-day work.

The role of the organisation here is to help the process of self discovery and fulfillment by creating a positive communications culture and the appropriate mechanisms. These include networks of brand champions, workshop programmes, online brand centres, the incorporation of the values into HR processes and the inspiration of stories.

Informational
Downward communication is a necessary first step

Participative
Upward flows begin to build participation

Beyond politics
Cross-functional action creates synergies
Stories and myths... reaffirm the organisation’s picture of itself, its own theory of how to get things done and how to handle internal relationships.’

Edgar Schein

— Bring identity to life
— Motivate and enthuse employees
— Build identification with organisational goals
— Link the past to the future
— Help deliver a consistent experience to stakeholders

Norway is sparsely populated – especially in the North where the Sami (Lapps) live. Extending mobile coverage there does not always make economic sense. However there are other issues such as reputation and social responsibility that are important for telecommunications company, Telenor. In the Sami community of Hellemobotn a single phone box served 150 inhabitants. When the phone rang (there was an external bell) two boys had the job of running to answer it and then running from house to house or searching the woods to find the person.

Telenor’s Head of Coverage was invited to meet the community and when he saw their needs decided to prioritise them. The agreement for mobile coverage was signed with the President of the Sami government (Ting) in the phone box. The story not only distinguishes Telenor from its competitors but it fits well with its brand which is built on the vision of ‘we’re here to help’ (the idea that Telenor help customers get the best out of communications in their daily lives) and a set of values: make it easy, keep promises, be inspiring and be respectful.
To read more about living the brand, order the book online at amazon or contact me at nind@equilibriumconsulting.com

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Design
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