Meeting 1 Purpose Communications Accelerate Community: Employee and Frontline Worker
Communications
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Key Takeaways

1. Corporate purpose is not just a statement that is written and left alone – it must be the organizing principle for your company, the yardstick by which you measure progress, and the lens through which you communicate internally and externally. Corporate purpose is most effective when it is **significant, authentic, profitable,** and **serious.**

2. 2020 was the collision of a new pandemic and old issues (Covid-19 and racial inequities). **Companies were communicating with employees more regularly and with more compassion**, recognizing the need to take care of their workforce and meet their immediate needs.

3. The series of **deaths of Black and Brown people** by police across the US, **combined with the data showing that the pandemic was negatively impacting poor communities of color at a higher rate** than wealthier areas, sparked demonstrations in cities around the world. The **death of George Floyd ignited the anger that had already been simmering**, resulting in larger demonstrations and greater social conversation and commentary. **Companies reacted at varying speeds**, but many recognized that they needed to speak up: 87 of the 100 S&P companies responded with a statement about racial injustice.

4. How can companies continue communicating and working with employees to make progress against racial inequity? **Be intentional and sensitive to the experiences of employees of color** – they may be exhausted by the simple act of coming to work and being a minority in the work place so asking them to lead the organization on a path to cultural and racial sensitivity could be overwhelming. Ask for input but companies need to take the lead.

5. Covid has reinvigorated CSR, shown inequalities, and made these issues top of mind for consumers. Improving diversity requires knowing **your why** and being **intentional** about **improving communication.** For many consumers, it isn't enough to issue a statement/hashtag/one-time donation. They want to know that the brands they support embody a purpose that reflects their own.

What is Corporate Purpose?

- A company's reason for being, why a company exists, but these days it is not just how is the company making widgets, but how is it solving societies problems?
- Create measurable value for company and society
- Needs to be integrated into strategy, ops, and people
- "Deeply held common values"

- Most effective when it is **significant, authentic, profitable, and serious.**

Steps to living a corporate purpose
- Size up where you are, including vulnerabilities, competitors: baseline/test from stakeholders' (including internally—staff, board) perspectives. Do you live up to it or is there work to do?
- Clarify how your purpose connects with the organization's "superpower"—unique ability to make progress on a societal issue (supporting points)
- Organize with purpose in mind: routinely reflect on your purpose (build it in to jobs), assess the office culture
- How can you deliver on your purpose, including its measurement, management, and communication:
    - What data and evidence are critical to understanding your impact? What is not currently being measured?
    - How can you align your business and societal goals?
    - Live and die by purpose: core team is ambassador, repeat it as often as you can, stay true to who you are/be authentic

LaTricia Woods—Reinventing Purpose Communications
- 2020 was the collision of a new pandemic and old issues (Covid and race)
- Covid changed how we moved, worked, learned, cohabitated, socialized, and lives. There was no longer a way to walk away, go to work, go to school, etc. This upending of normal personal and professional lives, followed by the racial incidents, led to a shift unlike any before.
- With the death of George Floyd, we saw companies take one of three approaches:
    1. Rushed to respond, have to show we are aware, standing with people, etc
    2. We are going to take our time, go through the steps, and come up with a statement and actions at a different pace
    3. Done neither- it doesn't really impact us, so we are not going to make a statement
- 87 of the S&P 100 issued statements after George Floyd death
- Many companies created a task force to address these issues
- For companies that did create task forces or held listening tours, what were the results?
    1. In small group conversations, trauma and frustration were expressed. Had to recognize the imposition of asking black colleagues to provide support in addressing these issues. This is something they live and breathe every day, a lived experience, not a movement or a job
    2. Many black employees felt companies should know how to create these avenues and resources without us having to tell you how to do it. They are emotionally drained, please don't ask them to do anything else.
    3. This played out in affinity groups or in silence.
    4. Town halls are great to roll things out, but when trying to get at how an impacted group feels, small groups are more effective because they feel safe and empowered to share without feeling it will be used against them down the road (i.e., not on a zoom call speaking to 500 people)

- Some affinity groups are tapped specific times of the year (Black history month, pride month, etc.). There's a need to utilize and empower 365 days a year.
- Hiring practices: "we cannot find diverse professionals in the place"
  1. Grow employees (strategic internships in colleges)
  2. Pilfer (see strong talent and take from another company)
  3. Partner (work with orgs that have the diversity to guide you where you need to go)
- Just words? Is there authenticity and substance to the statements or is it just words?
  1. Adidas came out with a statement about their racism stance, but employees came forward to say that may be an external stance, but it's not their lived internal one, and as a result the head of HR resigned.
- Consider History
  1. What does your company's history say? Is there something you need to atone for?
  2. EX: Nascar
     - Came out stating they banned the confederate flag, which enraged some longtime Nascar fans.
  3. Purpose statement may have to say, "We recognize we had discriminatory practices and this is why and how we are making a stance now"
  4. Show why you changed and how you got there, or it doesn't seem authentic
- Improving diversity requires knowing **your why** and being **intentional** about **improving communication**
  1. Build your purpose statement from that "Why"
- D&I means people want to be heard and they want to be valued **as they are**
- "Diversity is being asked *to the* dance, inclusion is being asked *to* dance, engagement is being asked to be *on the dance committee* and helping plan the whole thing"
- "Effective communication is 20% what you know and 80% how you feel about what you know" -Jim Rohn
- Communication without emotion is inauthentic
- For many consumers, it isn't enough to issue a statement/hashtag/one-time donation. They want to know that the brands they support embody a purpose that reflects their own.
- Covid has reinvigorated CSR, shown inequalities, and made these issues top of mind for consumers
- Purpose statements can be used to provide that assurance and give people the means to hold you accountable for it
- Brands that stay silent to avoid controversy or to maintain neutrality are often under fire for being seen as complicit by cause-focused consumers
- "If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor"
- Your employees are your baseline; they will let you know if you are walking the walk. Make your employees feel like they are involved every step of the way.