

Shifting from 'what' to 'why' - finding organisational purpose is critical for survival



In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, human priorities have changed. While survival is still a top priority, finding purpose is becoming more important for people as they develop awareness of their impact (or lack thereof) on the people and planet around them. It's only logical that people apply the same introspection to their careers and the companies they choose to work for. Now it's no longer about doing a job, it's about doing something that makes a difference, working for a business that has a purpose higher than profit generation. As employees, people are more productive when they're engaged and committed to an organisational purpose that aligns to their own aspirations and values. This is where the right leadership skills can make all the difference in defining and communicating organisational purpose to guide employees to embrace and embody this purpose.

Purpose just as important as profit

In 2019, the Business Roundtable Statement essentially raised stakeholder interests to the same level as shareholder interests, indicating a realignment of impact with profit. This means that the purpose of business can no longer be solely revenue-focused, as investors are increasingly attracted to ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) funds. While consumers are starting to boycott products from companies whose values do not align with their own. There has also been an increase in the number of corporate workers who feel disengaged and "lost" without a real sense of meaningful purpose to their jobs, gravitating toward companies having a clear and positive impact on the world.

Change isn't slowing down

The more advanced digital technology becomes, the easier it becomes for businesses to imitate what others are doing. The rate of change will become exponential. Driven by technology, most companies will find themselves in a position where their business is purely transactional, because their offering is

undifferentiated. Those businesses that find a way to put purpose at the heart of the way they create value for their customers, will depend on their ability to connect people to purpose.

What is organisational purpose?

An organisation's purpose is not a vision or a mission statement, but it should inspire and motivate its employees. It's not achievable by setting difficult business goals and targets, nor by personal development, but by defining and communicating the organisation's contribution to society at large. Accordingly, the purpose of an organisation is the answer to the question: "why is the work we do important?" which defines our contribution to society through work.

Connecting people to purpose

However, merely defining this purpose isn't going to magically make people more productive. So, what does it take? That purpose only really starts to work if all the people in the organisation start to act with that purpose on a day-to-day basis. This is where managers with the right leadership training can guide people to align their purpose with that of the company, helping to engage each person on an individual, purpose-driven level. However, it may be the case that an organisation's managers require renewed strategic guidance themselves. In this regard, it is therefore vital for a reputable training partner to step in to provide the management team with the necessary leadership training. This will in turn help guide employees and colleagues when aligning staff with the organisational purpose.

This is going to require a mindset shift in all human resource aspects of the organisation including employee culture. Here, companies can engage with specialist training facilities who are equipped to help guide the business and its people on their journey to finding organisational purpose and aligning the two. What is the upshot for businesses that fail to articulate their purpose? Consumers will spend their money with other brands that demonstrate the same purpose as theirs, employees will become disengaged and seek opportunity elsewhere, profits will plummet and doors will close. It's as simple as that.