



The Purpose-Driven Organisation

Organisations need a big idea, something that goes beyond marketing and makes people want to come to work every day to do their best.

Dawn Murden find out how leaders can create a sense of purpose



There's no shortage of tech companies in Silicon Valley that state their goal is to change the world. Some want to bring people together by creating global communities, revolutionise healthcare or, in the case of Elon Musk, establish a colony on Mars.

Businesses need a big idea – something to galvanise people, get them excited and allow them to dream. But it can be difficult to identify those ideas and how they relate to the regular, daily reality of the workplace.

Yetunde Hofmann, Non-executive Director at the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), says that leaders need a razor sharp focus when it comes to purpose. "The blueprint has to start from the top and then you need a thorough sense-check and enrolment programme," she says.

"This can be done through one-to-one sessions, small groups, feedback, video interviews and conversations – there have to be multiple touchpoints. Instant feedback will be important so [staff] know it's up-to-date. For it to last and be part of the fabric of the business, you must invest time and energy into it."

There has to be a personal connection, something that goes beyond edicts issued by the board and channelled through marketing. **Colin Hatfield**, Founder of Visible Leaders, says: "The danger is that we end up in a land of what I would call 'purpose-wash', where we have a lot of good intentions and interesting ideas, but do they show up in the workplace? No."

While direction and buy-in from the top team are vital, so too is the involvement

of various stakeholders. "We've seen this in the past as a very top-down process. We've got the purpose and now we're going to cascade it through the organisation. I think that is over and a sure-fire way to drive disengagement," **Colin** continues. "Instead, find ways to give people a voice, harness the views and really involve them."

It's especially important to involve middle management, **Colin** notes. "This is where it starts to get really exciting," he says. "They feel valued because they are part of the solution, and they start to have good and engaging conversations with their people."

"It is critical to get them on side; find a way to make their role meaningful and have [middle management] perform the engagement themselves, rather than it cascading from on high."

Cause and Effect

Romana Abdin, CEO of diversified healthcare company Simplyhealth, explains that a lot of time and effort has been spent on ensuring its core focus is clear.

"Health is one of the world's greatest challenges," she says. "We are the people with a purpose. We're the company that for the last 144 years has been helping people fund and access everyday healthcare. Our ambition is to help people lead the lives that they want, without limit."

Perhaps one of the best known examples of organisational purpose is Unilever.

Stephen Pain, the company's Vice President for Sustainable Business and Communications, says: "It's essential that

in this turbulent world there is a constant, which guides the behaviours in the organisation and what it is striving for.

"We've got a very clear ambition to decouple growth from our environmental footprint while increasing our positive social impact."

Unless the effects are monitored and measured, it's easy for this to be a naval-gazing, box-ticking exercise. "Go out there and look at the impact of the purpose when it is executed well," comments **Andrew Minton**, Managing Director at Criticleye. "What good things are happening that you can be proud of as a result of the company doing a great job?" ■

Many of these views were shared on the Criticleye Global Conference Call, [Leading in a Purpose-Driven Environment](#)

Featuring Commentary From:



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