

The Future of Purpose-Driven Branding

Signature Programs that Impact & Inspire
Both Business and Society

by **David Aaker**



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THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

The world is facing massive challenges as we speak. Climate change, poverty, energy insecurity, education, and inequality are a few of the many issues waiting to see their resolutions. Companies must be more serious about driving change instead of simply ticking their CSR responsibility box.

The Future of Purpose-Driven Branding: Signature Programs that Impact & Inspire Both Business and Society helps offers a wealth of strategies to bridge the gap between organizations’ need to drive change and making this change a reality. The book places signature social programs as the centerpiece of the purpose-driven branding model. Since signature social programs are more long-term, focused, and guided by a brand, they have the power to truly impact society.

Author David Aaker explains how purpose and profit can co-exist by leveraging signature social programs through innovative strategies and case studies. Aaker also offers a solid framework for organizations to craft campaigns that will benefit both the business and society.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- The three strategic thrusts to bring a new purpose-driven revolution in business.
- What a company needs to create purpose-driven branding.
- How to create signature social programs that inspire, impact, and thrive.
- How to integrate signature social programs into the business.

Introduction

Chapter 1: The Future of Purpose-Driven Branding

From “pledging to save the environment” to “creating insanely great products” – Purpose can be relevant for both business strategy and societal efforts.

The “future of purpose-driven branding” deploys robust efforts to address societal challenges like inequality, climate change, and more. An organization can have one or multiple signature programs. Aside from creating a signature social program, an organization must also integrate it into its business.

Finally, for the creation and integration of your social program to work, a business must also build a strong signature social brand that will provide guidance, clarity, credibility, visibility, and inspiration.

Part 1: Purpose-Driven Branding – The Context

Chapter 2: Unilever – A Heritage of Addressing Society Needs

Unilever is a great example of purpose-driven branding.

In 1894, soap maker William Hesketh Lever introduced Lifebuoy Soap. The mission of this brand was to combat cholera in Victorian England and make health and hygiene accessible to everyone.

The company also constructed a Unilever Sustainable Living Plan (USLP) which involved a ten-year journey toward sustainable growth. This was followed by a second ten-year commitment called Unilever Compass. USLP today is organized into three thrusts that focus on:

- Improving the health of the planet.
- Improving health, confidence, and well-being.
- Contributing to a fairer and more inclusive world.

In 1955, Unilever introduced the Dove “beauty bar.” As Dove expanded to 80 countries, the brand introduced a new social mission – to redefine real beauty and help women view their body image positively.

Unilever’s heavily integrated business strategy and signature social programs propelled the organization to successfully address society’s challenges while supporting its business models.

Chapter 3: Salesforce: A Social Program Pioneer

In 1999, Marc Benioff decided to break away from Oracle and start Salesforce to introduce “software as a service.” The big idea was to have Salesforce software reside not in a firm’s computers but on the “cloud.” But what truly made Salesforce revolutionize the software industry? Its mission to bring companies and customers together in a new way.

What’s more, Salesforce developed the 1-1-1 system where the organization gave 1% of employees’ time annually, 1% of its product annually, and 1% of its equity towards social efforts. The company invested heavily in non-profits by offering free or discounted Salesforce tech to help nonprofit organizations to be more effective. A few of the many platforms created by Salesforce to bring societal change include the Nonprofit Success Pack, the Nonprofit Cloud, Education Cloud, Sustainability Cloud, and Philanthropy Cloud.

Chapter 4: Five Drivers of Social Effort Momentum

Today, creating societal purpose (or mission) is a “must-do” for a surging number of firms. But what are the elements that will push your social programs to reach a difference-making impact? The answer lies in the Five Drivers of Social Effort Momentum.

1. The Stakeholder Paradigm is winning. The stakeholder model has been replaced by the stakeholder model where multiple stakeholders deserve to be served by a capitalistic business in addition to just the shareholders.
2. Employees and other stakeholders demand it. There is pressure on organizations to make meaningful progress on societal problems from many sources. The most relevant sources include the employees, customers, and investors. Additional sources include governmental agencies, the general public, and social advocates.
3. The seriousness and visibility of societal problems. Companies today can no longer sideline the high visibility of societal problems represented by events, trends, and stories, and magnified by social media. In a highly globalized world of ours, businesses can only progress if they take steps to contribute to society and the environment.
4. Businesses with resources, insights, and agility can. Business firms have management competence, knowledge, agility, offerings partially at fault, and

a willingness to take risks. A combination of these resources brings societal change.

5. Business brands need social program energy and lessons from historians. The equation here is simple: unless brands succeed in deploying signature social programs, they risk weakening their ties with customers and becoming vulnerable to a “fresh face” brand image.

Part 2: Signature Social Programs that Inspire, Impact, & Thrive

Chapter 5: Purpose/Mission and Culture that Enable and Inspire Social Programs

Successful businesses carry a mission or purpose that is inextricably linked with resolving societal concerns. Tesla’s mission, for example, aims “to accelerate the world’s transition to sustainable energy.”

A single statement of purpose or mission is enough to enable high-performing social programs. Creating a separate social purpose becomes critical for business missions that cannot be stretched to cover societal needs. Ben and Jerry’s, for instance, has three missions: product mission, economic mission, and social mission.

Regardless of the type of signature social programs a company creates, it is important for these programs to find their way within the organizational culture.

Chapter 6: The Signature Social Program

Simply put, signature social programs have two jobs that require their signature status. Job 1 is to make a meaningful, convincing impact on a challenging societal problem by providing inspiration and guidance. Job 2 is to enhance a business by creating a strong connection with employees and other stakeholders, energy, and an image lift.

A signature social program and its associated social brand will have a powerful ability to break through information overload, media clutter, and perceived “sameness and puffery.” In other words, this program comes armed with unique “proof points” that add credibility to the business’s societal effort and its commitment to making a difference.

Finding the right programs, integrating them into a business, and building a strong brand are the cornerstones of making a signature social program effective.

Chapter 7: Find Signature Social Programs that Inspire, Impact, and Fit

Start by reviewing the major issues, needs, and problems facing society like inequality, climate change, health, and education. The initiative a business chooses can then help attract individuals willing to volunteer or donate to the cause. In addition, there will also be several nonprofits that can either become a business’s external signature social program or an internal program’s partner. There are three criteria that can help screen and evaluate the right program.

1. Inspire (answers the “why” question): First, your programs need to matter and inspire not only to attract employees and partners but also to accentuate potential to help the image of the sponsoring business brands.
2. Be credible (answers the “how” question): The program concept must have an innovative and unique approach. There needs to be access to assets, skills, and resources needed to make a difference and create a valuable commitment by stakeholders.
3. Fit the sponsoring business. If the program is integrated with a business, the chances of long-term success increase. Integration can be made easier if the program fits with the sponsoring business or firm, is consistent with its values, people, and culture, and enhances visibility, loyalty, and brand image.

Part 3: Integrating the Signature Social Program into the Business

Chapter 8: Integration: The Signature Social Program Job 2: Enhance a Business

Integrating a signature program into a business provides a supportive home, protecting the program from the risks and vulnerabilities of being by itself.

A signature social program boosts brand visibility and energy. A brand that is visible is more likely to be considered when the organization has an application for which the brand should be relevant. The program also fosters a positive brand image, grows brand loyalty, provides growth and credibility, makes the brand more memorable, and combats negative publicity.

Chapter 9: Integration – The Business Supports the Signature Program

The nature and strength with which a program is linked to the business brand is critical. Without this link, even the best program will not provide any value to a business. The more it is linked visually, logically, strategically, and organizationally, the more likely the values and reputation of the signature social brand will benefit from the endorsement and therefore enhance the business.

Part 4: Putting Signature Social Brands on Steroids – Five Branding “must dos”

Chapter 11: Must-Do 1 – Creating a North Star Direction to Clarify, Guide & Inspire

After the societal challenge is identified, the next strategic task would be to create a signature social brand for the program. The four conceptual tools (the North Star Direction) to create a successful program include:

- Purpose (or mission) statement that provides a compact expression of the essence of the program.
- Brand vision (or brand identity), which creates principles that will serve to deliver credibility, points of differentiation, and inspiration.
- Brand positioning (or framing) that reflects what elements of the brand vision will communicate priorities to the various stakeholders.
- Tagline (or slogan) that intrigues, inspires, informs, and anchors the external communication.

It's important to remember that when programs evolve and change, the North Star must adapt to accommodate that change as well.

Chapter 12: Must-Do 2 – Create Brand Communities

A brand community is a group of people or organizations with shared involvement or even passion in some activity, goal, or interest area connected to a brand, a community that provides self-expressive benefits, a sense of belonging, usable information, social benefits, and engagement opportunities.

But what makes a brand community so important? These five massive benefits do:

- Self-expressive benefits that help you communicate the empathetic giving side of your business.

- A feeling of belonging within the brand community that provides a core circle of friends that are reliable, always there, and always interested.
- Informational benefits such as having a website that will answer questions, provide information, give suggestions, and list out community events, and relevant books that are relevant for both the community and the business.
- Social benefits delivered by a brand community help connect with people that have similar interests and values. The result? More sources of ideas, better job performance, and even better jobs.
- Engagement opportunities to cultivate a deeper and more active passion and commitment to the brand's societal programs

Chapter 13: Must-Do 3 – Find and Employ Signature Stories

Stories work where facts and descriptions do not. Blend a story with facts and the narrative becomes extremely powerful. Signature stories are a “once upon a time...” narratives that are authentic, attention-grabbing, involving, and illustrating a strategic message. These stories energize and allow the audience to “discover the message,” and the facts within the story distract them from counter-arguing. Stories also engender liking and respect and enhance loyalty.

Stories can come from different sources. Recipients or clients of a signature social program are often rich targets because of the emotional impact of their stories. Masking their identities can encourage more individuals to share stories. You can also deploy “heritage stories” about the hows and whys of the program's beginnings. Another option would be a story about its program's operation, including a difficult challenge and how it was overcome.

Chapter 14: Must-Do 4 – Find & Fire Your Silver Bullet Brands

As with all brands, all signature impact programs need differentiation, energy, and credibility. A great way to gain these brand attributes would be to create branded differentiators, energizers, or sources of credibility. All may be candidates to be silver bullet brands.

Both experience and research confirm the value of differentiation. Creating an ownable point of difference set the campaign apart from what came before it.

Brands that are energetic offer their audience “a sense of

moving forward.” Dove’s “Free Being Me” self-confidence program became a potential silver bullet brand with energy generated by interactive and fun activities that taught kids and young people the value of appreciating their own bodies.

Credibility is the main ingredient of every successful signature social program. It offers reassurance in a tangible and substantial way by using proof points.

Chapter 15: Must-Do 5 – Scale Your Signature Social Program

Scaling helps brands change lives beyond just their local communities or geographies. Start with understanding and explaining what you do. Develop a process to handle incoming requests for help. Deploy dedicated consulting people and create training programs that can be accessed remotely. Tap into the power of social media to boost visibility. Finally, create communities of leaders and participants using the program’s own website. This is where experiences, questions, challenges, and resources can be shared with a community that provides support.

Conclusion: Evaluation of Your Signature Social Program & Brand

Building a solid signature program is not enough. To ensure relentless growth, it is critical to measure its success. Ask questions like, “Does my program display substantial credibility?” “Does it “intrigue” and attract attention?” “Do a worthwhile number of stakeholders engage with it?” “Have the buy-ins been increasing?”



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