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A Purpose that Matters

Purposeful Branding masterclass

7 December 2016, One Alfred Place

Some Insights and Learnings

Some of the questions, insights and learnings from our half day yesterday:

UN Sustainable Development Goals – Personal Perspective

One of the overriding issues around ordering the 17 UN Sustainable Development goals was the recognition that the task alone was considered either straightforward or hugely challenging. Some struggled to order them in a linear list suggesting that they are not linear. Some struggled to personalise with a certain goal believing it was for others to deal with.

There also seemed to be two broad approaches to what touched people personally. A split emerged on several tables between people who focused on the issues that they could address more immediately and closer to home (e.g. well-being, quality education) to those who prioritised the ‘big’ issues they felt passionately about (e.g. gender equality, climate action).

In addition, some sought to focus on the end goals themselves (e.g. end poverty); others focused on the things or mechanisms that would help to achieve the end goals (e.g. quality education as a driver for change).

Delving into why these people adopted such different approaches to the same task opened up conversations and introspective thinking about themselves, their journey and what they could personally do.

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There was also an interesting observation from a number of tables which was that something at the top of someone's list was at the bottom of somebody else's list! One of the dynamics at play seemed to be around those who had faith in organisations/systems already in place and those who felt change is only going to really happen if we all personally engage and drive the change ourselves.

One interesting observation was that many younger individuals may well have the goals deeply imbedded in their DNA, whereas older individuals could find them a little overwhelming or theoretical.

There was a general acknowledgement that people had previously spent little time reviewing or reflecting on them.

From the few stories that were shared it was clear everybody had their own story or narrative around their own purpose and why they do what they do. In some cases this was reflected by one or more of the UN goals, and sometimes not.

There was general agreement that having time to personally reflect on the Goals and to acknowledge what motivates or does not motivate was useful to take back into the workplace.

UN Sustainable Development Goals – Organisation Perspective

Several attendees felt that the Goals were a little too abstract and overwhelming for their organisations. Some struggled with the number, the language or relevance to running a business.

For example, some believed that there was a lack of connection between the UN's goals (and those who compiled them) and the everyday reality, on the ground, for businesses (for or not-for-profit).

The contrast between the hierarchy of the goals on a personal level and those on an organisational level, proved highly useful for several to see how aligned they were as individuals with the organisation they worked for, or represented. Many found clear alignment and this was reassuring; however, in some cases, the lack of alignment made individuals question whether they are working at/for the right organisation. For some people, where there was, at first glance, a lack of alignment, they could see how the organisation's goals could connect to their own.

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As an exercise, several found it a good starting point to begin a conversation about identifying their organisation's purpose; some attendees had never paused to reflect or contrast their own values or personal 'purpose' to that of their organisation. It inspired some attendees, who were in the process of identifying their organisation's purpose, to go back to the workplace and explore such alignments (or otherwise) with their colleagues.

Purposeful Principles – Personal reflections

A short introduction to the Purposeful Principles kicked off a number of powerful conversations:

- What does it really mean to be courageous and how do we dial this up when needed?
- How do you balance courage with humility?
- Is there a dependency between substance and fun? Is fun only realisable when substance is being achieved?
- What role does fun play in the working environment and how does it sit with the issues being raised by the UN?
- How and when do we recognise our own personal substance or when we are at our best? How can we be more energised in the workplace (rather than outside)?
- How do you share one's own vulnerability and weakness amongst strangers?

There was an appetite for the next session to dive more into understanding and being able to live the Principles; to explore what gets in the way; and where change can really happen.

The Team will be looking at how we can dive back into the Purposeful Principles for our Third Brand Masterclass in April/May 2017.