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The Power of Mission and Values

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Captivating, honest mission and values are essential—they are the story told when the marketer, firm leaders, or firm ambassadors aren't present. They voice the purpose of your product or service across print, web, and social media. If printed on your business card, they speak long after a meeting ends. They recruit top talent without lifting a finger. Applications for mission and values are endless. They continue to accrue value the more they are spoken, marketed, and exercised.

While a few reasons are alluded to above, the main interrelated reasons for updating or adopting these important business essentials are unpacked below. Call this the business case for working on your company's mission and values.

Guide your firm's trajectory. The first and foremost reason for having mission and values: They are your firm's compass. They

allow leaders to measure opportunities with the best interest of the company and its people in mind. They should help steer the projects and clients that your company pursues and selects. For example, if community engagement is a part of your mission and values, do your clients and projects reflect this?

Attract compatible clients. Make it easy for potential clients to know if you're a fit. Mission and values help illuminate if an opportunity would demand your firm to be something it's not. They empower leaders to say no to the wrong opportunities (and yes to the right ones).

Inspire employees (and attract new ones). It's no secret that employees achieve their highest potential when they believe in their company. Many factors influence this, such as the leadership, pride in the product or service, and, yes, mission and values. When employees

align with a company's core beliefs, and they can point to something written rather than merely spoken or assumed, the ubiquitous message can orient, recharge, and encourage employees (especially when leadership is not physically present to inspire and lead). At the risk of stating the obvious: The best employers attract the best talent.

Communicate a common goal and collective culture. While valuable at any company, these ideals are especially valuable for mid-sized to large companies to keep the workforce engaged, united, and inspired.

Questions To Ask Early

The finished product is important, but the process is equally important. Whether your firm is looking to update its mission and values or is starting the journey for the first time, define a structured path forward. Once your team has determined



OUR PROMISE IS TO CREATE MEANINGFUL SOLUTIONS
THAT ARE INNOVATIVE, RESPONSIVE, ENDURING, & BEAUTIFUL.

The Bialosky rebrand was achieved in parallel with its new office space, allowing the new graphic identity, mission, and values to be realized and celebrated as environmental graphics, which were designed in-house. Photo by Kevin Reeves.

why it wants to author mission and values, these are subsequent questions to consider early in the process: Does this align with a greater strategic plan? What is our timeline and what is driving it? Who is the right team internally? How many man hours are we committing to the process? What can and cannot be done in-house? How will it be implemented? (How is it realized via website, marketing materials, physical workplace, etc.) Can we manage this effort ourselves?

Advice for Authoring Mission and Values

Treat it like a project. Assign the project a job number and staff a right-sized team to see it to realization. Be fully present at meetings and work sessions, and hold to deadlines (and re-calibrate as needed). Assign, empower, and respect the champion of this project.

Earn buy-in from all generations and departments. A process that embraces shared ownership and diverse voices is more likely to win hearts and minds as opposed to a single authorship.

Reiteration and patience is part of the process. If you curate diverse voices, listen to them. Unearthing what a company is and should be about can (and should) be illuminating. We have two ears and one mouth: Listen to all points of view. Be prepared for writer's block and multiple drafts; have patience.

Clarity is key. Keep it simple and honest. Mission and values should be memorable. For that to be the case, make it easy for your leaders, marketers, employees, and clients to paraphrase or point to them.

Include an outside voice. It is invaluable to have a strategic coach engaged at some level in the process.

This engagement could be a biweekly consultancy, an advisor to gut-check and tune-up your progress, or a facilitator who leads the process and work sessions and assists in the actual wordsmithing. This strategic coach is valuable not only for the expertise he/she brings, but also for the validity brought to the project. When a company only solicits its own voices, it is very possible to incorporate assumptions, mistakenly misrepresent, miscommunicate tone, or simply settle themselves on mission and values.

Authoring mission and values is a tall order. If approached with dedication and an open mind, mission and values can help elevate your firm to new heights and positively influence your trajectory, clients, employees, and firm culture. ■

For more details on the rebrand, see the 2017 Marketing Communications Award story on page 40.