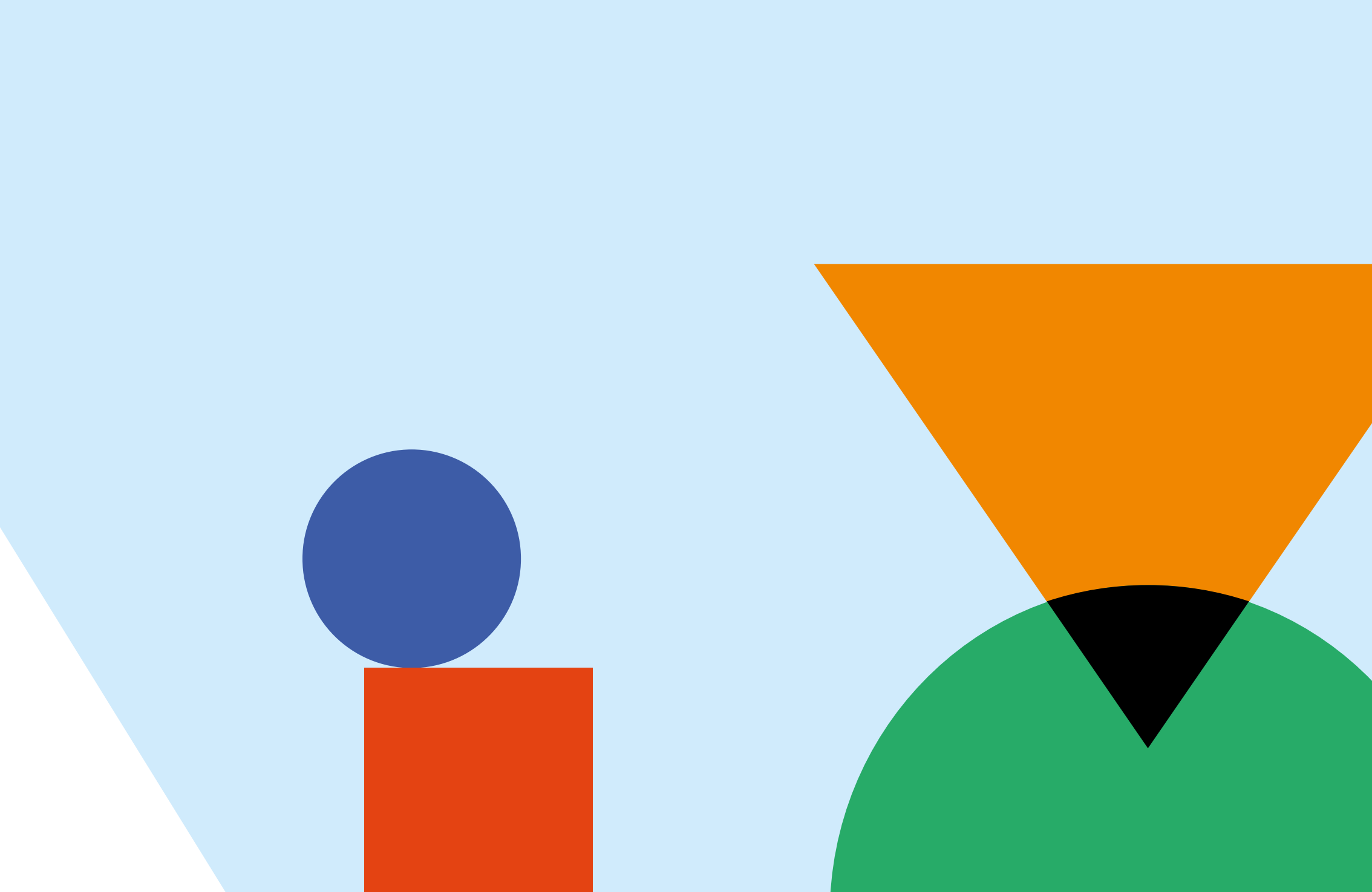


Insiders' Guide to Purpose

Volume three:
Bringing purpose to your culture



GIVEN



Ripping up the rules of culture

‘Culture eats strategy for breakfast,’ noted legendary management consultant Peter Drucker. Far from implying that strategy is unimportant, he was pointing out that a powerful and empowering culture is a sure route to success.

If we can agree that culture amounts to ‘the way we do things around here,’ then it stands to reason that successfully executing any strategy depends on a culture that encourages new thinking and empowers change. A passive or risk-averse culture can explain resistance to even the most well-crafted purpose statement.

I have often been surprised by how little attention is paid to the concept of ‘followership’ given its importance to the success of leadership.

Followership is an intentional practice, and its presence (or not) can explain the success (or failure) of many organisational ideas. It is the collective effort of many people that makes leadership vision a reality.

People unified by a mission, culture and values are a formidable force. The trick is to foster and harness a work environment that optimises the chances of success. Well-established cultures can be difficult to influence. Emerging over time in every workplace, they combine explicitly stated policies and practices with the often ‘unwritten rules’ of custom and precedent.

When I first worked at Aviva, I used to refer to the ‘authorised’ and ‘unauthorised’ versions of the way things got done. I was never in any doubt that to make things happen at pace, strong personal relationships and values, side conversations and interdependencies frequently had to override cumbersome official channels. However, it was well understood that there would be

less friction if the ‘authorised’ version of Aviva could align with its unauthorised counterpart.

Considerable effort was subsequently invested in engaging everyone in a new set of values designed to change the 300-year-old hierarchical ‘command and control’ culture. They would prove to be the catalyst to changing the way the whole company operated.

The value ‘kill complexity’ was introduced to banish the complex sign-off procedures and bureaucracy that consistently inhibited innovation and entrepreneurship. As a result, documents were shortened, often-unread reports were discontinued, and delegated authority was reduced to no more than two line-management signatures, releasing thousands of work hours and speeding up decision-making dramatically. The culture had to change before working practices followed.

This third volume of the Insiders’ Guide to Purpose explains why culture is so important to purpose. Having considered and crafted a new organisational purpose, often with accompanying values, leaders must address culture if they are to elicit commitment to its implementation. Inspiring the behaviour and attitudes

required to ensure imaginative, productive engagement is not simply a question of communication.

It’s relatively easy to tell people that the company has set a new direction. What is hard is translating a lofty ambition into the everyday practices of the people who work there. Especially at a time when teams are often dispersed and less likely to witness how things get done (beyond what they experience on their computer screen) the re-wiring of culture requires proactive management. Rules can be rewritten, but they won’t be followed without doing the work to make sure they are understood and co-created. This guide offers a way of thinking that through.

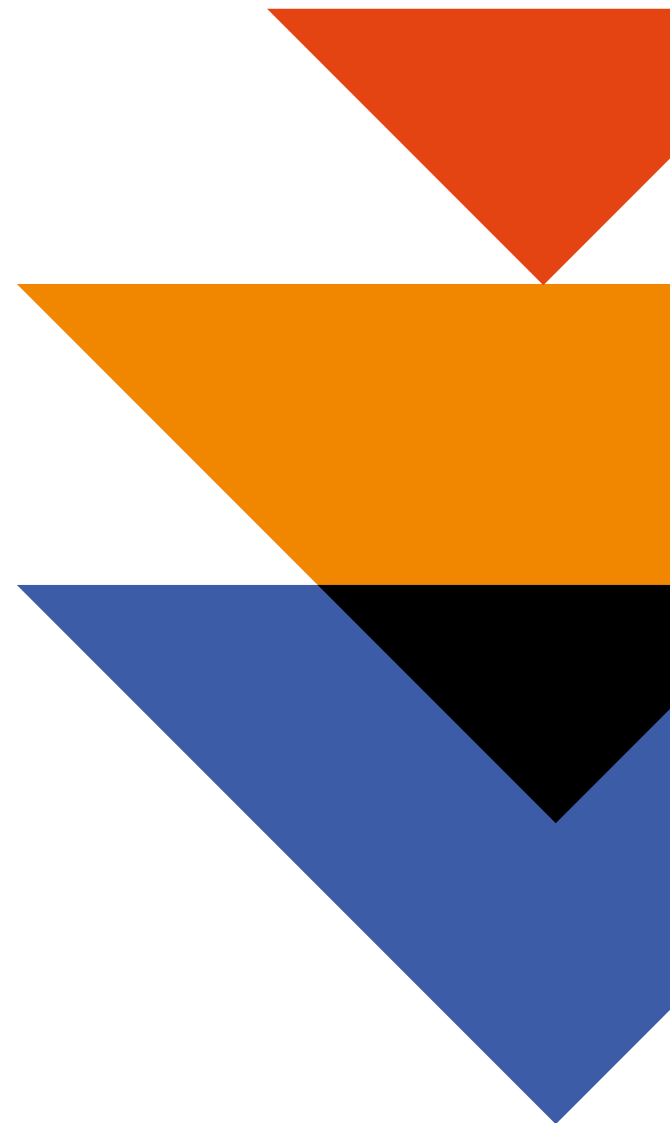


Jan Gooding

Chair, Given

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Why culture is so important to purpose (and vice versa)

Just like purpose, organisational culture has never been higher up the boardroom agenda. In only a few short years, global events have completely reset how we think about culture at work.

The pandemic made us look again at health and wellbeing, work design and engagement. #BlackLivesMatters raised a fist for the long overdue reappraisal of equity, diversity and inclusion. And even in their infancy, AI and ChatGPT are upending everything we thought we knew about the ethics of business and the future of work itself.

It's no wonder organisational culture is under such scrutiny.

Culture, by which we mean the **written and unwritten rules about what we believe, how we make decisions and how we actually do things**, is no longer the sole preserve of HR teams. And addressing it isn't optional: the UK Corporate Governance Code was updated this year to explicitly demand that boards assess and monitor culture.

So, what has this got to do with purpose? Defining and embedding purpose provides the essential nutrients from which a high-performing culture can bloom.

It does so by underlining an organisation's humanity and ethics. It encourages the colleague experience to be valued, establishing a mandate for trust; necessitating

the framework for empowerment. This reinforces the need for transparency and provides the permission to use judgement.

And it's a two-way street. Unless purpose is consciously hardwired and 'softwired' into culture – along with strategy, innovation and everything else we set out in *Insiders' Guide II* – it'll never be more than an empty promise. In fact, we

would argue that failing to embed purpose may be more damaging to culture than ignoring the purpose agenda altogether.

But get it right, and the benefits will sing. Purpose-driven businesses attract and retain the best talent. They create more engaged teams with a greater sense of collective pride. And the evidence suggests this increases productivity.



Hard and soft wiring

Embedding purpose into culture often requires lots of things to be done all at once to provide the evidence and momentum for change. There's no one-size-fits-all formula for culture building.

It isn't a linear process. It's a tangle of diverse activities designed to connect with different people in different ways. As such, while no one can give you the perfect process map for reorienting culture around purpose, we can steer you

through some of the symbols of change that demonstrate intent and set direction.

One useful way to categorise these activities is as hard or soft wiring. Hardwiring purpose into culture involves using established people practices – hiring, onboarding, performance reviews, training, policies – whereas softwiring is more informal. It's about our day-to-day actions, the commitments we make to each other and how we behave as a business. The success of softwiring depends on people not processes. Leaders, managers, relationships and storytelling all play a big role.

Hardwiring

- Recruitment and onboarding
- Company policies
- Training and development
- Reward and compensation
- Tools and frameworks
- Business ethics

Softwiring

- Internal storytelling & communication
- Leadership behaviours & role modelling
- Rhythms & rituals
- Working environments
- Management, mentoring & coaching
- Symbolic acts
- Communities & networks (formal and self organised)

Begin the hardwiring with your Code of Ethics

There are different ways of hardwiring purpose into culture. Structures and frameworks around pay, incentivisation, development programmes and performance management are all common examples – but one essential piece of the jigsaw that’s often overlooked is ethics.

Business ethics are under intense scrutiny at present, with repeated scandals, such as the one that unravelled the CBI in 2023. Scandals like this demonstrate that organisations which don’t hold themselves to high ethical standards are built on rotten foundations.

As Dr John Amaechi says, culture is defined by the worst behaviour you tolerate. Ethics help draw red lines around what’s right and wrong, and while purpose is often focused on doing more good, doing less harm is just as important a tenet.

Because ethics are such an integral part of how a business sets itself up as an employer, partner and supplier of goods or services, we see them as necessary hardwiring. They direct the policies and structures that guide behaviours, the moral commitments that inform contracts and the critical governance that keeps complex organisations running. They are vitally important work.

However, ethics and codes of conduct aren’t regular features in all organisations. According to the Institute of Business Ethics (IBE), only half of FTSE 100 companies have written commitments that protect staff who raise concerns about unethical behaviour.

We also know, that even if you have a code of conduct, it’s probably a dry, dense policy document that feels like it’s written by lawyers, for lawyers. Ethical policies are often only promoted or communicated when things go wrong and are rarely celebrated as part of the strategic decision-making of leaders. They are often, to a large extent, invisible.

So, to begin hardwiring purpose into your culture, ethics offer a valuable starting platform. Assess whether your code of conduct is fit for purpose. Does it provide tools and guidance that help, rather than hinder, your teams? Does it feel accessible, clear and inclusive? Creating a purpose-driven culture provides a fine opportunity to make your ethical code more human, like the people it’s designed to protect.

Are you ready to embed purpose in your culture?

We want this third Insiders' Guide to show you how to unleash the enormous power of culture in building a more purposeful business.

It won't help you define your purpose or get started on your purpose journey – Insiders' Guides I and II cover that. It's also not a magic formula for fully integrating purpose or a comprehensive list of policies and structures for hardwiring it into your specific business.

Instead, over the coming pages, we offer practical ways to approach the often messy task of softwiring purpose into culture, sharing insight and ideas drawn from more than a dozen years helping organisations make purpose real.

To get started from this point, you'll already need to be clear about the role purpose plays in your

business and corporate strategy. That means you've agreed on:

- A purpose with the potential to be a true North Star for your business. Simple, inspiring and credible, it's rooted in genuine human and societal needs, setting out how your business can help solve them.
- A corporate strategy shaped by the pursuit of your purpose. It's unlikely to be a total alignment – there may be practices that still conflict with purpose – but there's evidence of genuine commitment backed up by purpose-driven strategic choices.
- The appetite for change. It's going to take time, energy, leadership and sufficient resources, as well as an understanding that not everything will go to plan, to make purpose-driven changes to your culture.

How do purpose, strategy and culture fit together? These are the most common elements we see in organisations getting it right:

Purpose

Why we exist. An active statement that guides our every move.



Priorities

What we need to do to deliver on our purpose. The big strategic goals we'll aim for.



Values

How we need to show up every day to live our purpose. Active statements or behaviours describing how we interact and work together.



Essentials

How we make business decisions. The no-compromise truths we'll always seek to uphold.



Ingredient one

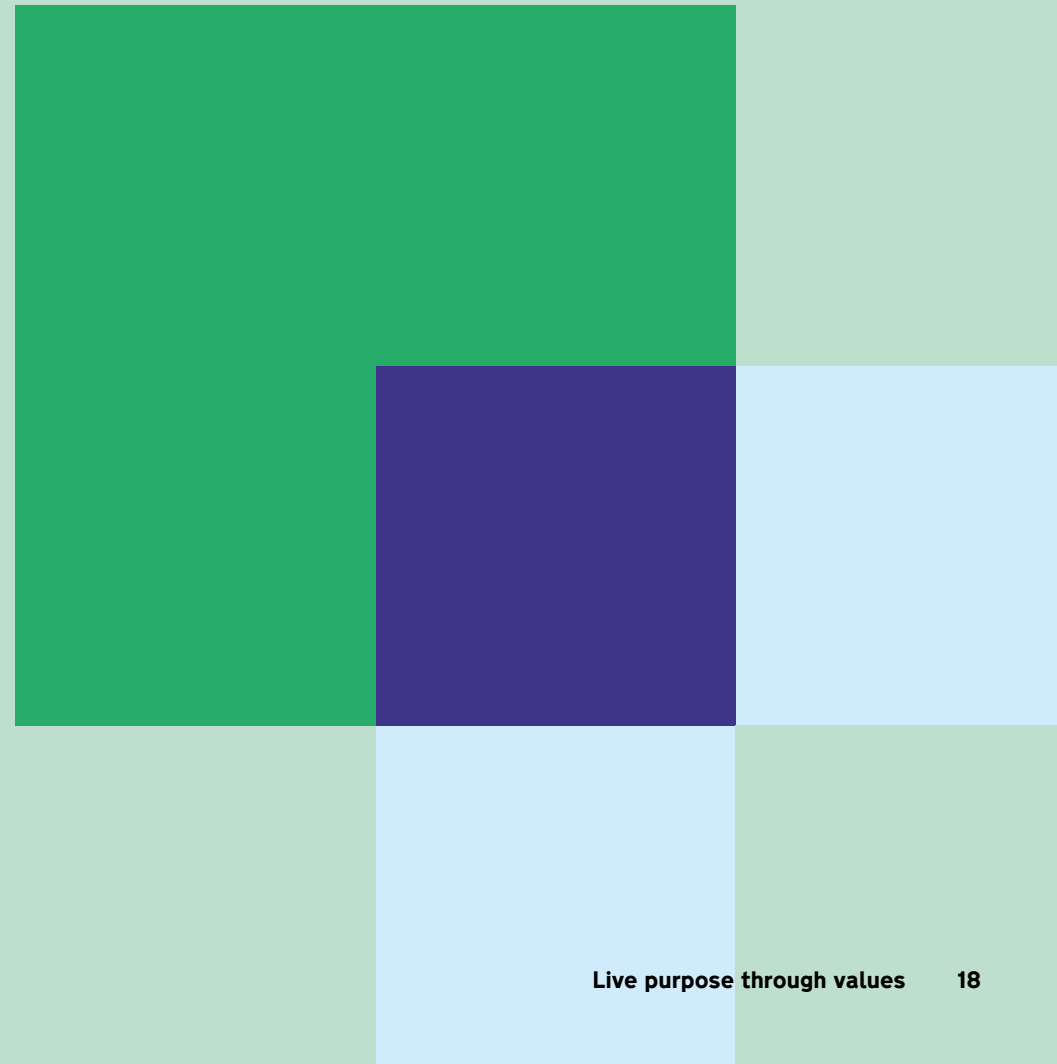
Live purpose through values

How to co-create and use them
in pursuit of purpose

Through values, your people help deliver your purpose – but only if there’s a clear line of sight between the two. Values don’t just need to be about how people show up; they can and should shape decision-making, too. It’s this combination that enables a purpose driven culture.

Values that guide culture, improve performance and connect people to a company mission are nothing new. Since the 1950s, academics and business leaders have understood that positive workplace cultures drive better performance and that codifying a culture into values can amplify these effects.

Today, carefully crafted and shared values are a fundamental part of businesses striving for greater consistency in the experiences of employees and customers alike.



WHY IT MATTERS

Values are shared principles informing behaviour, action and decision-making, and most big organisations use them to bring people together. But in purpose-driven cultures, values have an extra role as the ideals that help businesses deliver against their purpose.

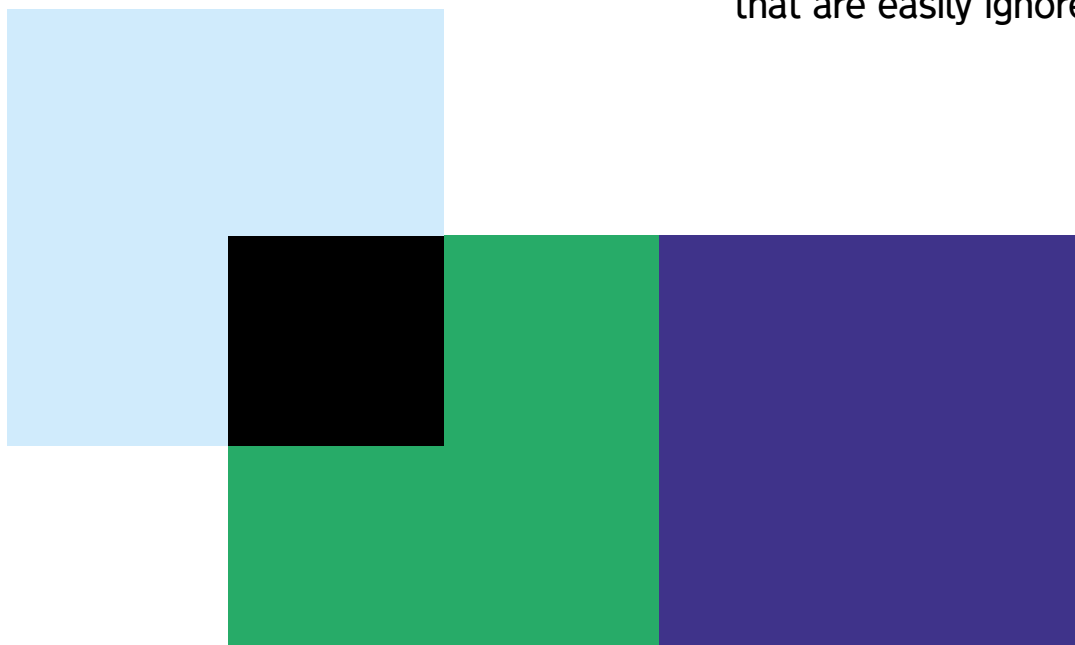
In the previous Insiders' Guides, we showed that hardwiring operational plans are a necessary part of any purpose transformation. But softwiring a culture is arguably just as important, and values can help create collective belief in a purpose. They give teams common ground on which to build trust and a shared language with which to offer feedback. Perhaps most crucially of all, they connect individual behaviour to the abstract concept of business purpose in a clear and useful way.

THE CHALLENGE

A magnetic attraction between purpose and values is key to the success of both. However, with input from various parts of a business often diluting bold ambitions in search of collective agreement, that connection is sometimes weakened. This results in values becoming bland organisational wallpaper that are easily ignored.

For values to be effective, they must be owned and understood across the whole organisation. Leaders and managers of every business unit must use values to inform their decisions and steer their behaviour.

Defining clear and useful values is no easy task, but using purpose as your brief can actually help you figure out what makes the cut. Starting with purpose should also result in values that feel more distinct and relevant.



Get good values

You can't magic a nice, new set of values out of thin air; they need to be based on your aspirations for the business as well as your existing culture. That means your starting points are to identify what fuels your collective success and what matters most to your people.

As well as seeking out the best of your culture, it's imperative that you don't dodge the worst. It can be tempting to ignore your business' dark side, but it's where you'll often find the biggest barriers to your purpose transformation. These barriers can be addressed with strong, directional values.

Getting to this information means spending a lot of time listening to your people, customers and partners, holding honest conversations about what matters to them, what they think makes the business special and where they feel it needs to change.

As you do so, use purpose as your goal and think about what your organisation needs to do to achieve it. If your purpose is particularly new or ambitious, that might result in some challenging or unfamiliar ideas. Bringing in expert external perspectives can help you become more comfortable with any changes that may be required.

The result of all your conversations is likely to be a long, bewildering list of potential values. With purpose in mind, we've developed some simple criteria to evaluate whether a set of values are likely to be effective. All these criteria are important, but the acid test is that values and purpose should be mutually reinforcing:

1 Are your values purpose driven?

If you look at your values as an equation, will the sum of your values equal your purpose? Have you tried different combinations with this in mind?

2 Are your values progressive?

Will they push us to think bigger than we do today and help us understand how we get there?

3 Are your values active?

Are these ideas and language that everyone can understand and translate into action?

4 Are your values credible?

Are they true to who we are, and do they build on what matters to us as a business?

5 Are your values relatable?

Do they pass the cringe test? Will they work for everyone across the business? Do they feel 'human'?

Insider Insight

Getting to a good set of values is like naming triplets: they need to work individually and also make sense as a set!





At Lloyds Banking Group, our purpose – Helping Britain Prosper – has always been inspiring and motivating for our people, but we wanted to make sure it could drive our actions, every day. Co-creating new organisational values, designed with our purpose in mind, was an essential part of making that happen. Our refreshed values – People-first, Bold, Inclusive, Sustainable and Trust – not only give people clarity about how to work together, but also about how to make purposeful decisions. We’ve spent time ensuring that everyone in the business, and especially our leaders, understand what they mean and how to use them.

Our efforts to link our purpose to strategy and culture are paying off – with 79% of colleagues telling us they see the Group becoming more purpose-driven and 92% believing that delivering on our purpose will help us profitably grow.”



Janet Pope

Chief of Staff and Chief Sustainability
Officer at Lloyds Banking Group



Ingredient two

Change the conversation

How to make
communications purposeful

Purpose can be an incredibly powerful, motivating idea that unites colleagues, ramps up productivity, improves brand perception and contributes good to the world. Or it can fall flat on its face, spectacularly unnoticed and operationally irrelevant.

For a purposeful culture to gain traction, people need to take ownership of the idea it represents. They need to understand it, connect with it and use it.

To make that happen, you need to stop thinking about improving your communications and start thinking about improving your conversations.

Conversations bring an organisation's culture to life. To truly understand your business' culture, just listen to the conversations. How people interact with one another — in the corridors,

at the coffee machine, on Teams calls, in meetings — is arguably one of the best indicators of a company's culture.

Purpose should change almost every conversation that takes place in a company. But that doesn't happen on its own; it needs to be deliberate.

WHY IT MATTERS

Purpose-driven approaches to business aren't usually simple ideas to get your head around. They involve compromise, debate and a grasp of what it means to go beyond the basic pursuit of profit. Being able to recite the words of a purpose statement isn't the same as using the idea that it conveys to shape decisions and build aligned cultures.

Consequently, positive and well-informed conversations are critical to both building shared culture and helping everyone understand their role in delivering purpose.

Employees are increasingly prepared to speak out about the way organisations show up in the world. A Gartner study noted that 87% of employees felt their employers should take a stance on issues relevant to their business. Gartner also found that 60% of employees reported improved colleague engagement after their business became involved in societal issues. As such, creating a culture that discusses difficult decisions, airs problems and unites colleagues around a deeply felt ambition has never been more important. Purpose is the anchor for these big conversations.

THE CHALLENGE

It sounds ridiculous to say it, but having good conversations is hard. Not everyone is an expert at taking part in effective conversations about big ideas.

Most organisations treat the disciplines of engagement and internal communications as interchangeable. This often results in top-down, broadcast approaches that turn purpose into a messaging exercise rather than a way of connecting people.

Doing so is problematic for two reasons:

1. **People want to be part of the conversation**, especially young people. The 2023 Deloitte Gen Z and Millennial survey found that little more than half of respondents believe organisations seek input and incorporate feedback. Worse still, a third believe their feedback isn't acted upon.
2. **Communications are just one part of sustained engagement**. If you want to thread a new purpose into the complex fabric of an organisation, you can't think about your teams as an audience. They're participants, co-creators and owners. Treating them as such drives engagement, changes culture and snowballs the adoption of purpose.

Good conversations require two-way engagement that includes as much listening as it does 'broadcasting' content. Embedding purpose in a business culture is an iterative process, with purpose positioned as an evolving concept that people own and build together.

Create campfires and fireworks

We think there are two main mechanisms for engaging large organisations in conversations about purpose: campfires and fireworks.

Campfires are safe, convivial environments where people want to spend time. In engagement terms, they're the daily drumbeat of communications and conversations in safe spaces that bring people together.

Fireworks provide moments of excitement, stimulating people to think more expansively about purpose. They're bigger and louder, and while they might feel like a one-off, they mark the beginning of something, signalling a substantive change of commitment. Fireworks light organisations up through big events and experiences, external communications and partnerships that provoke new conversations.

In the following pages, we've outlined some starting points to help you identify and create welcoming campfires and spectacular fireworks.



Content

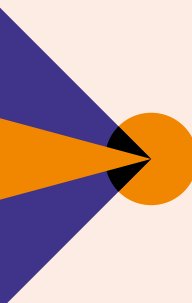
What stories can you share that bring your purpose to life?

Capture them from people in the organisation by asking three easy questions:

1. Share a proud story. Describe an important moment where you felt like you were doing something meaningful for the business.
2. Share your ideas. What could the business do more of to live its purpose?
3. Share examples. Where have you seen your colleagues put purpose into action?

Here are some ideas respondents can use as a prompt:

- When purpose helped inform an everyday decision
- How people are integrating purpose into their jobs
- How you're delivering purpose through your own performance objectives
- How purpose shows up in other people's behaviours



Campfires

What exciting, celebratory stories can you use to spark conversations about purpose?

Examples might include:

- Stopping a behaviour or business practice that doesn't align with your purpose
- Aligning with experts who can help you deliver your purpose and hold you to account
- Launching new policies, partnerships or programmes that embody your purpose
- Bringing to market new products or services that reflect your purpose
- Bringing people together to celebrate your purpose - eg awards



Fireworks

Format

How can you communicate campfire moments?

These are the regular (probably daily or weekly) communication and engagement moments that encourage conversations about purpose:

- Internal newsletters
- Everyday interactions, e.g. the start of meetings, one-to-ones, reviews, internal updates, townhalls
- Digital platforms, e.g. intranet, Slack, Yammer
- Team meetings and whole-company workshops
- Business planning
- Website updates
- Annual reports

How do you deliver firework engagement moments for maximum impact?

Examples include:

- Launch events and all-company celebrations
- CEO announcements
- External, corporate or brand-led communications

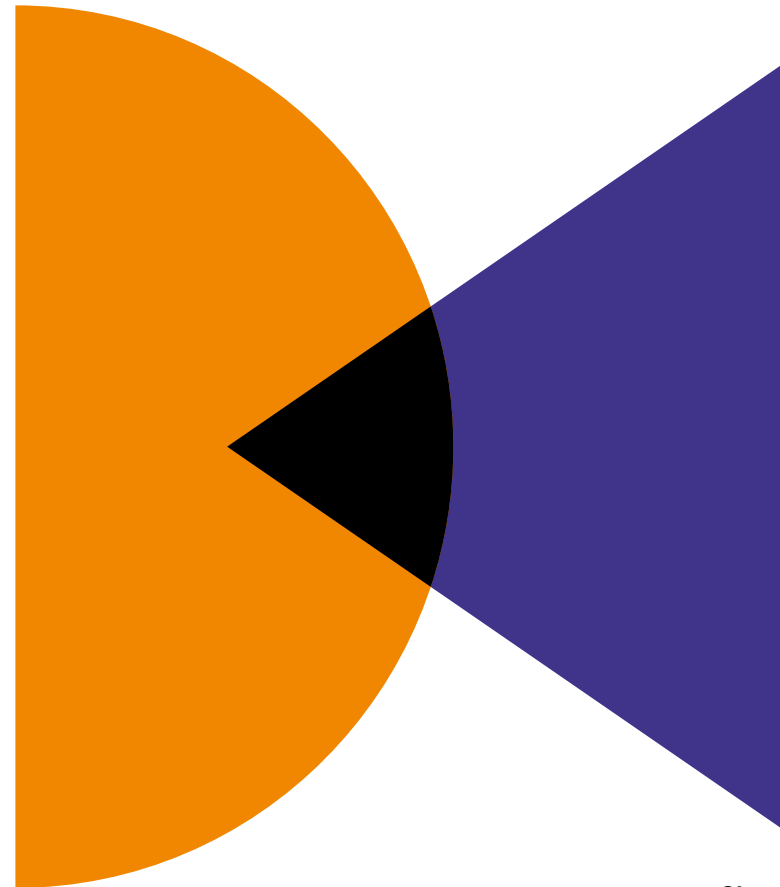


Approaching your internal communications as engagement is just good practice. In my experience, with purpose it's so important to understand your audiences. You need to know what motivates them and then make the subject simple, accessible and relevant. From OVO to Aviva, what has always worked is linking purpose to the things that matter to people – emotions, human stories, our day-to-day lives not just the big picture stuff. It's also a great idea to use formats or tools that people can then take on and create for themselves – we did that recently at Aviva with some internal campaign films that we created – now we have people making their own and sending them to me! That's when it really feels like the work is part of the culture.”



Fran Chambers

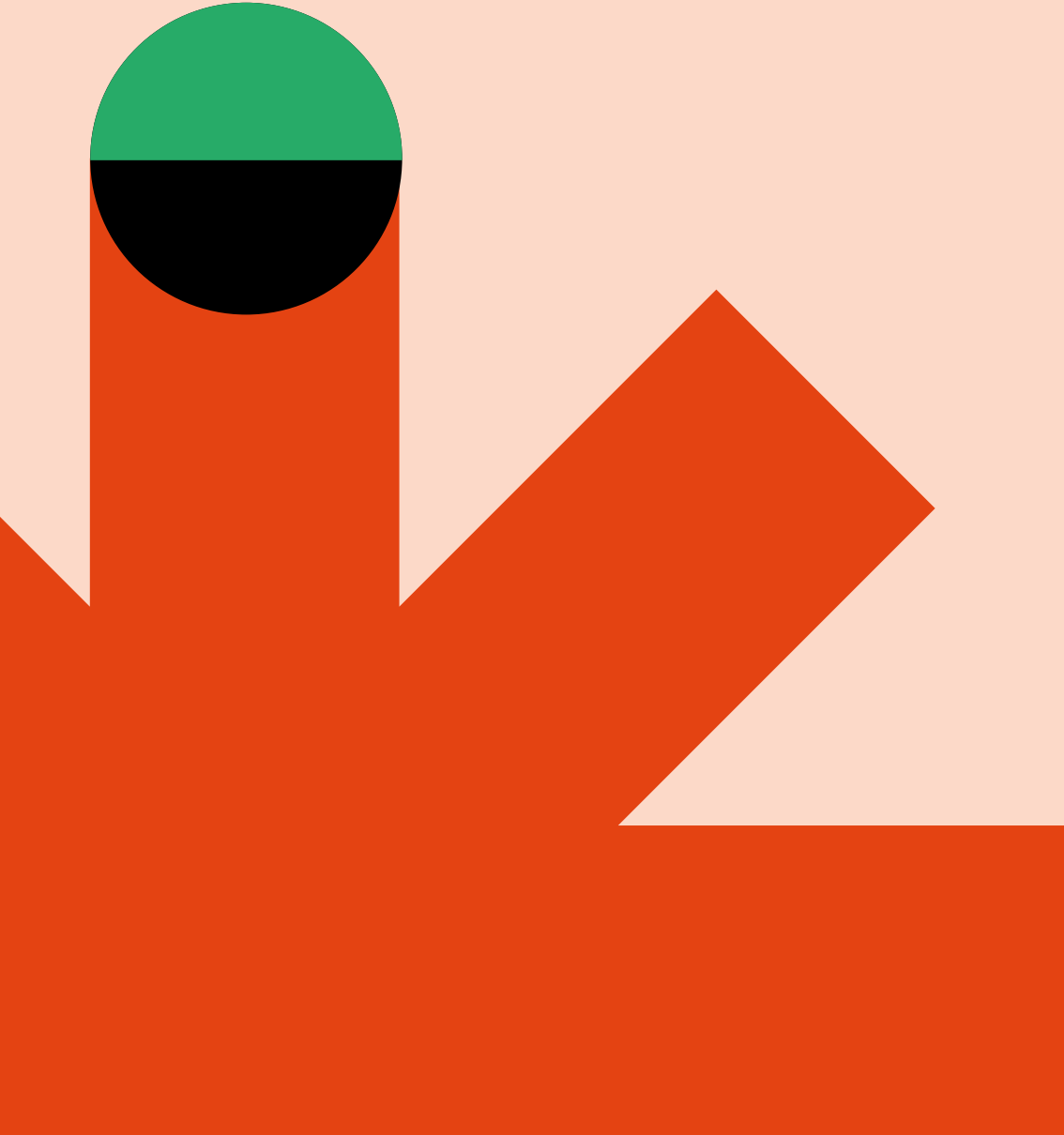
Director of Employee Communications,
Aviva



Ingredient three

Lead with purpose

How to amplify the role
of role models



From spiralling costs and economic stagnation to the increasingly loud investor voice urging businesses to futureproof against existential threats, there are plenty of challenges taxing today's business leaders.

According to GLG's CEO survey, less than half of CEOs felt confident their revenue would grow in 2023 – a marked decrease from the optimism of 2021 when, with the pandemic receding, almost 70% were positive about business growth.

Within this context, committing to put purpose at the heart of culture might seem like one job too many. But we know from experience that colleagues simply won't believe in purpose unless leaders role model it. Research has found that demonstrating clear ethics and values is one of the top three expectations employees have of their leaders.

So while purpose should be a North Star for the leadership agenda, the best contemporary leaders make sure it's reflected in the way they show up, the decisions they make and the stories they tell, for all their teams to see.

WHY IT MATTERS

The leadership team has always been responsible for a business' success, but nowadays, the expectations placed upon leaders go way beyond turning a profit.

Leaders are central to defining and nurturing a positive culture. They're example-setters, required to model and propagate behaviours that align with the company vision they've mapped out. Leadership styles and approaches may differ, but these extra demands on the individuals running organisations are now universal.

It's also right that leaders should be held to the highest standards when it comes to the commitments companies make to ideas like purpose or values. But this accountability goes beyond setting a great strategy, or even executing it. How leaders show up, how they tell stories, which issues they support and what they're seen to value all matter a great deal. Because without that visibility – that moral leadership – it's tough to expect employees across a diverse organisation to embrace the purpose-driven culture you seek.

THE CHALLENGE

With multiple competing priorities, it's difficult for leaders to consistently maintain a commitment to a single agenda, such as purpose. But once you have stated an ambition, you have to be prepared to follow through. Purpose is a promise, not a tagline.

Fortunately, more and more, leaders in big businesses and disruptive start-ups view their legacy as being about something bigger than their organisation's financial success. They want to lead with integrity and leave a positive mark on the world.

We've moved on from the era of CEOs basing corporate responsibility initiatives solely around their preferred charity or fundraising approach. However, this new, progressive zeal makes it more important than ever to get the direction right.

To create value for company and society alike, purpose-driven businesses need a clear strategy in which everything ladders up to a big, impactful idea.

Leaders committed to purpose need to:

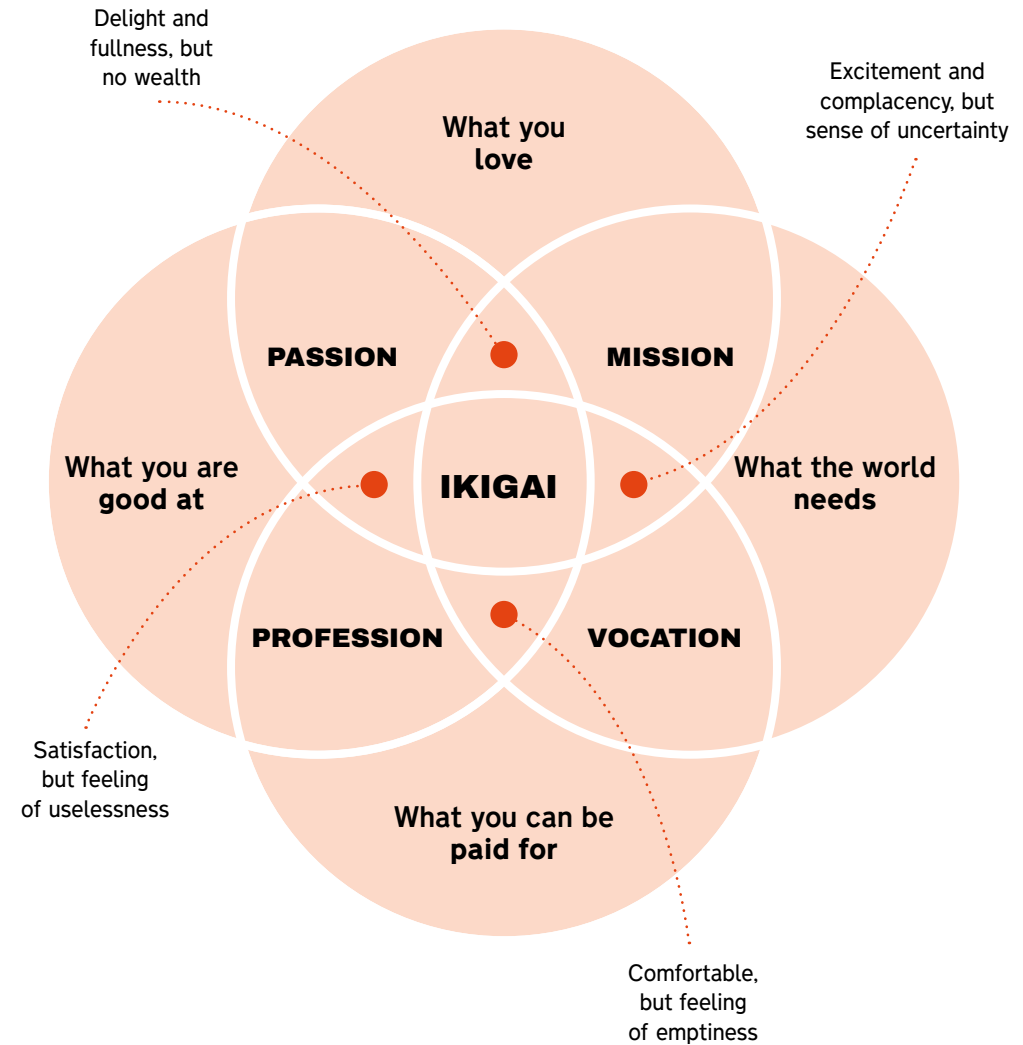
1. Be focused – lead with purpose, but also with credibility and clear commitment to the cause.
2. Be authentic – balance strategy with personal conviction. Embrace difficult decisions and communicate them effectively.
3. Be a storyteller – purpose-driven culture needs brilliant storytelling. Leaders must bring the why, what and how of purpose to life.
4. Live the values – company values are only as believable as the least-committed leader. Role modelling the way to show up is vital to get others to follow.
5. Stop, look and listen – to prove their actions are connected to culture, leaders need to take stock, be open to feedback and look to their team for inspiration and advice.

Find your personal purpose

An organisational purpose can sometimes feel lofty and intangible. That's one reason why identifying and working towards a personal purpose is becoming an increasingly popular way for leaders to engage with purpose more effectively. It makes something that might seem abstract feel instantly personal. As a side note, personal purpose can be used for anyone on the team, not just leaders – but they are a good group to start with.

This approach is based on the Japanese philosophy of ikigai – a motivating force that gives life meaning or direction. The idea is that by prioritising what matters most to us, what we can influence and what the world needs, we create a framework for making better life choices.

The organising structure behind ikigai makes it a relatively straightforward way of defining your personal purpose. Once you've figured out your own direction and aligned it with your role in delivering your corporate purpose, it should help provide clarity and energy for the tasks ahead.



PURPOSE IN ACTION

How do you get there?

Your first job is to identify your 'purpose zone'. That doesn't mean crafting a perfectly worded purpose statement but reflecting on what it is that you can centre on and draw from your life and career.

There are four steps in getting to your purpose zone using the ikigai model. On the opposite page, we've suggested a few questions for each stage to fire up some ideas.

Once you've gathered your evidence, you can start creating your purpose zone by identifying common themes or links between ideas.

Experiment with a few different ideas based on what emerges from this exercise. It can be helpful to work with a partner who will keep you true to your qualities rather than drifting into the expectations of your role.

You don't need a precisely worded purpose, but if you feel clearer about the broad objective of your purpose and can describe it to someone else, the exercise has done its job. Then it's time to start talking about your personal purpose and integrating it into your leadership.

1 What you love

The easy option is to default to something professionally appropriate, but take time to really interrogate what matters to you and what makes you happy.

- When did you feel a real connection to an activity? What made you feel that way?
- Think about a moment when you felt truly happy or content. What made it so special?
- Ask friends or family – those who know you best – when they see you truly light up about an issue or during an activity.
- What would you fight for or feel you couldn't live without? Why?
- What are your interests? What are you curious about or would love to read a book or watch a film about?

2 What you can be paid for

Rather than thinking about your many attributes as a leader, consider the qualities you bring to your job that fuel your success. Perhaps it's your work ethic, ability to listen or analytical skills. Spend ten minutes reviewing what you're really good at.

- What did people say about you in your last 360° feedback?
- Where have you always felt comfortable as a leader?
- What did you want to be when you were a child? Why?
- What really matters to you that you wish you had more time for in your job?

3 What you're good at

In a perfect world, you get paid for what you're good at. But, in reality, that's not always the case. Look further back into your life and consult with friends and family to uncover your 'superpower' – what you do that no one else can.

- Ask a friend or family member what qualities they saw in you as a child.
- When have you felt so at ease with what you're doing that you could just enjoy it without needing to think about it? Where were you? What were you doing?
- Try drawing your qualities. Sometimes it's easier than writing them out and can give you a bit more room to be expressive.

4 What the world needs

A critical aspect of personal purpose is that it needs direction. Think about the issues that connect with your corporate purpose or the opportunities your business has to effect real change. You can also challenge yourself more generally about what you and your business could be better at.

- What elements of your business purpose connect with you personally? Why?
- Where might your skills and passion be most useful at effecting change for the better?
- What do you wish was different in the world? Why?



In a constantly changing, ambiguous and complex environment, having a clear sense of purpose provided the fuel for leaders to authentically navigate challenges and create meaningful impact for themselves, their teams, the organization and broader society.

Discovering your purpose can be really hard – it is an evolutionary journey, and can take time before it feels like it “really fits”. It is in essence the difference you make to those around you and is rooted in your values, strengths and experiences in life.

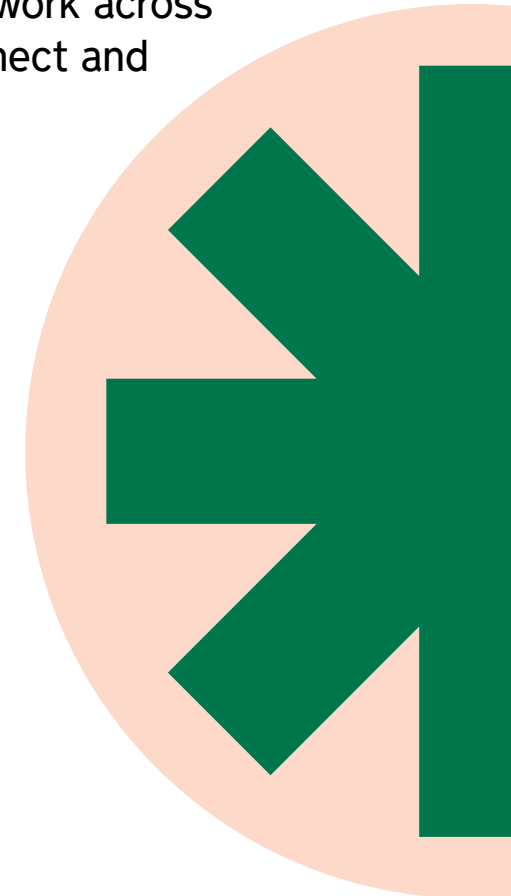
We invited our global senior leaders to discover their leadership purpose through self reflection, feedback and diagnostics through a virtual social learning platform, supported by peer coaching and leadership team workouts.

This served as the fuel for innovation – asking leaders to set bold goals on how they would use their leadership purpose to cause impact against our strategic priorities. Purpose is now a shared language and framework across the organisation, helping connect and inspire our teams.”



Sonia Gupta

Former Global Head of Leadership Development at Diageo





Ingredient four

Align your people proposition

How to put purpose at the heart
of talent attraction and retention

For colleagues to truly value and benefit from working in a purpose-driven business, every people policy and process must, ultimately, align with that purpose.

Which is, of course, a colossal undertaking. In our experience, it helps to break down the employee journey into manageable stages, and the first and most important of these is recruitment.

Embedding purpose into recruitment can help organisations win the contest for talent. The evidence clearly shows that Millennials, who now make up the majority of the UK workforce, and Gen Z, who will account for more than 25% of global workers by 2025 (OECD Employment Outlook), want to work with organisations whose purpose, values and priorities align with their own.

Across all generations, according to the Edelman Trust Barometer 2022, 60% of people now choose a place of work based on their beliefs or values. In addition, Deloitte found that 93% of Gen Z say that a company's societal impact affects their decision to work there. So how do you show potential recruits what they're signing up for?

WHY IT MATTERS

As they say at Hubspot: ‘Culture is to recruiting what product is to marketing’. Positive cultures rely on both continuity and adaptability – the old and the new. When they join, new starters bring fresh energy and challenge to companies and cultures. But they also need direction, support and an understanding of the expectations of their new community.

That’s why a clear and compelling Employee Value Proposition (EVP) has become a core part of businesses seeking to connect with the best talent and differentiate themselves from their competitors. Allied

with that, some evidence that a meaningful purpose is being lived within an organisation increasingly drives the decision-making of discerning recruits.

This means a purpose-driven EVP should be a central part of any organisation’s strategy to attract today’s best talent. But more than this, integrating purpose into an EVP helps businesses recruit based on purpose and values. Doing this ensures that new employees are also good for the company and the culture they’re trying to build.

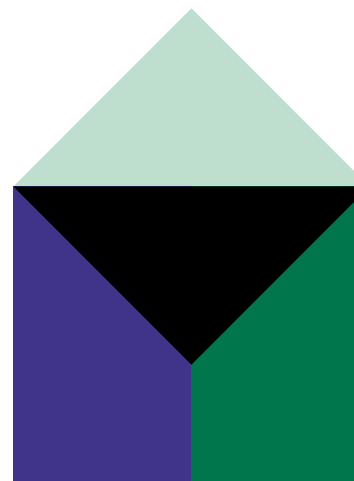
Of course, attraction is only half of the story. Retention is equally important, and the first year is key. The data tells us that employee churn or intention to leave is sky high during this period, with a staggering 22% of people leaving within 12 months of joining a business. Reviewing your onboarding to ensure the actual employee experience matches the promise of your EVP is an essential task to help mitigate this risk.

THE CHALLENGE

Until recently, many people processes in big companies were due an overhaul. It wasn’t uncommon for them to still have their roots in 1980s or 1990s work cultures focused on squeezing short-term profit. But the agenda has moved on.

Post-Covid and Black Lives Matter, businesses had to act decisively to change processes and policies that were no longer fit for purpose, especially those covering mental wellbeing, flexible working and equity, diversity and inclusion. A well organised and thought through purpose enables business to present these very different ideas and benefits with consistency and clarity.

This is particularly true when an employee has just joined a business. If your recruitment, EVP and onboarding aren’t aligned around purpose, you don’t only miss an opportunity to connect with talent in a human way, you also risk creating a ‘purpose gap’ – the difference between what your EVP says you stand for versus the reality of colleague experience.



Integrate purpose into your employer brand and EVP

An external-looking employer brand presents your internal-facing EVP to potential recruits in the outside world. It should be built around your purpose.

For many of the most talented candidates, especially those approaching their first or second jobs, connecting with a purpose embedded in an employer brand provides confidence that a workplace might be a good fit.

Well-crafted employer brands and EVPs should be underpinned by purpose and culture, wrapping the functional benefits of a vacancy in the principles that matter most to the company – your ‘why’. Here are some ingredients of a purpose-driven employer brand that we’ve found to be most effective:



✓ Faces, cases and facts

Purpose is reinforced through stories and case studies – real people sharing their experience of the business. You should also include evidence of actions you’re taking to deliver your purpose through the business, so that candidates can understand the role of purpose in the business they’re about to join.

✓ A note from the boss

Senior leaders must reinforce the purpose in an employer brand. As we set out in the previous chapter, the words and actions of leaders in communicating purpose matter, and that’s perhaps even more true for connecting with new talent.

✓ A media plan

Knowing where your employer brand shows up during a recruitment journey is critical. Your recruitment partners, website, social media presence and even the walk from reception to the interview room all provide cultural cues to potential recruits. It pays to be deliberate about how purpose shows up in these spaces.

Insider Insight

A good way to understand what these touchpoints are really like in your business is to complete the candidate journey yourself. Walk through every stage of the experience, and discover how clearly and frequently your purpose is – or isn’t – reinforced. Perhaps enlist a new recruit to help if you’ve been in your role for a while.

THE INSIDE VIEW



A shared purpose within a business has such a powerful, unifying impact. It really enables teams from different backgrounds to unite and is essential if you want to make change happen at scale. For the British Army, to fulfil our purpose of ‘recruiting tomorrow’s army, today’, we had to ensure every action we took served that purpose and it helped us to make operational decisions. For example we reviewed ALL our entrance requirements – academic, demographic, medical and physical – to examine all the marginal gains we could achieve to deliver to our purpose.”



Cath Possamai

Talent Acquisition Director
for EMEA, Amazon



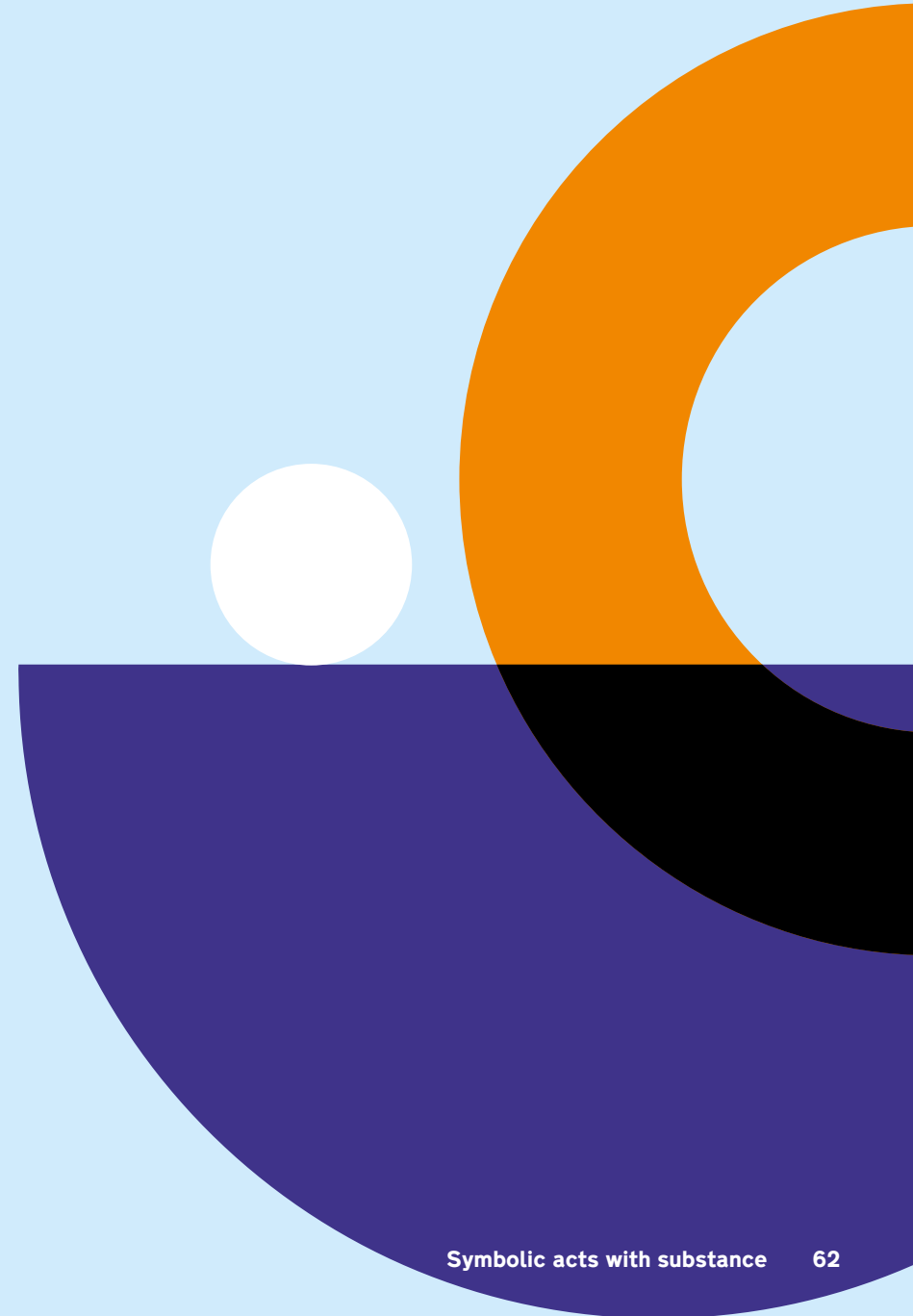
Ingredient five

Symbolic acts with substance

How to make big and
small decisions count

Symbolic acts are the things we do as businesses and individuals to signal our commitment to purpose – from tiny tweaks to grand gestures. They help develop a culture by providing content for our storytelling and the proof points that back up our pledges.

When we do them as a collective, symbolic acts are shared endeavours that bring groups of people together. They may be spontaneous reactions to events in the world around us or crafted and deliberate activities that are part of a coordinated delivery plan for embedding purpose.



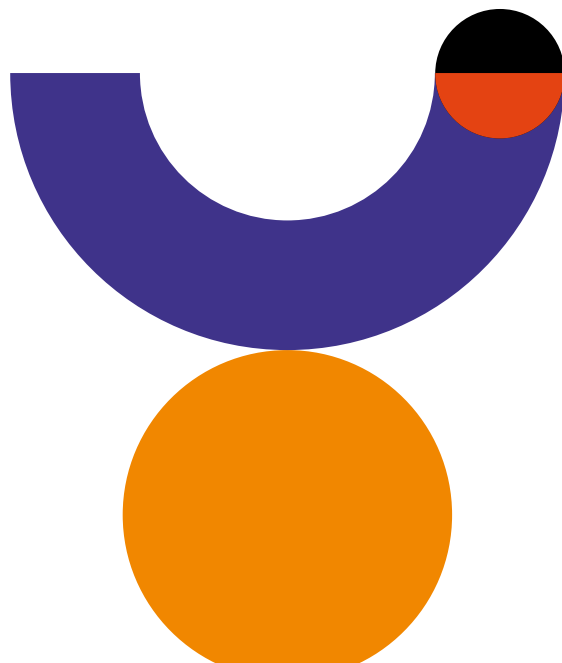
WHY IT MATTERS

As we've explored throughout this guide, organisational culture is a relatively loose concept that's hard to create, even harder to control, and likely to shift over time.

Its continuity and energy are driven by the things people say and do: consistent and clear messaging ensures employees hold the same ideas in mind, while the actions businesses take in pursuit of their goals or in service of their values speed up the adoption of a desired culture. Words without actions are empty. When people see this happening, it has an unravelling effect, eroding trust, commitment and happiness.

Symbolism has always been a powerful device for bringing large, disparate groups of people together. It's a valuable tool for representing and simplifying ideas or causes. From hieroglyphs to emojis, symbols have always played a major role in communication, and in branding, marketers use symbols as cues to help trigger a connection with brands.

But symbols aren't exclusively realised as graphics. When building a culture, the symbolism of a culture includes the way people behave, such as the things they invest in, discuss and celebrate.



THE CHALLENGE

It isn't always straightforward to determine what might constitute a successful symbolic act. Symbolism that's designed to advance a purposeful culture depends heavily on context, timing and framing. Naturally, the acts you choose must always derive from the organisation's purpose itself.

The world outside the office window can often influence the symbolic acts businesses make. When an issue becomes a movement for the masses, the degree of symbolism in any action is dictated by its speed (are you leading or following?) and scope (are you taking a stand or making a gesture?).

Get the context, timing or framing wrong, and symbolic acts can backfire, undermining purpose. In today's climate, for example, a press release proclaiming that a CEO won't take their bonus because of poor performance is likely to be greeted with little more than a shrug. And a luxury brand closing its Red Square store a full year after Russia began its cross-border invasion is unlikely to garner it a flurry of new followers.

It's essential to make sure symbols are substantive. Otherwise, acts of purpose are likely to feel performative. So how do you achieve that?

Choose the right symbolic act for the right job

Embedding purpose in culture requires a good mix of acts so that employees see plenty of everyday proof points that demonstrate your investment and intent. But story-based cultural symbols can't simply be business decisions; they also need to be humanised and allow individuals to own the agenda.

Above all, no matter whether the act is big or small, easy or hard to implement, or about the individual or organisation, it's critical that it has substance and that you can link it back to your business purpose as the North Star behind your decision-making.

To stimulate some ideas, we've put together five types of purpose-driven symbolic acts that we know, if implemented well, can help build a purposeful culture:



1 The new standard setting commitment

Standard setting commitments are a great way of grabbing attention inside and outside your organisation. They enable you to establish a new agenda and build buzz around your pursuit of purpose. A standard setting commitment is a big, often transformative change that you are prepared to make, demonstrating a real investment in purpose. These commitments often shine a light on category level issues, setting new benchmarks and creating pride in your team.

CASE STUDY

patagonia

Whether it's a Black Friday campaign asking that consumers 'Don't buy this jacket' or giving the entire business away to help fight the climate crisis, Patagonia is always ready to risk profit in order to shift mindsets. It's a business that see itself as a disruptor, creating solutions for customers while holding a mirror up to the industry to show what good practice can look like.

2 The everyday action

Symbolic acts don't need to be enormous or flashy, but they do need to be visible and, usually, involve some degree of sacrifice or commitment to change. An everyday action works particularly well at the individual level. These human stories not only prove commitment but also feel relatable.

CASE STUDY

GIVEN

At Given, we have a Friday ritual where the team celebrates the hard work and commitment of their colleagues through a dedicated Slack channel. These small, symbolic acts recognise the value of team members' work throughout each week.

PURPOSE IN ACTION

3 The big invitation

Creating a purposeful culture requires collective action and a degree of humility. Embracing co-creation and opening yourself to ideas and criticism about your purpose agenda generates more internal engagement. As a symbolic act, asking colleagues what they think – because you don't have all the answers – demonstrates bravery and intent.

4 The bold stand

Taking a stand on an issue is an emphatic demonstration of commitment to purpose, albeit one that's tricky to navigate. Most brands and businesses shy away from overt politics for fear of alienating people. But having the courage to back a cause or perceived injustice can be very powerful, if done well. However, beware taking a stand externally unless you're confident you can live up to the bar it sets internally.

CASE STUDY

hydrogen

Global recruitment business Hydrogen Group developed a new purpose to help people thrive in a changing world. Before launching the purpose externally, they spent a year asking their people around the world what the purpose meant to them and what they needed to thrive. They then used the ideas and insights they captured to develop their purpose activation plan.

CASE STUDY



Activism is a big part of Ben and Jerry's social mission, which in Europe focuses on protecting the rights of refugees and asylum seekers. They are often criticised by far-right supporters as a result. But they're not afraid to take on the politicians and policies that are at odds with their agenda, and they encourage internal teams to get behind the mission, too. They recently went full 360 with this mission and brought in the full team to launch a new flavour, Sunny Honey Home, co-created by refugee entrepreneurs and the Co-op supermarket here in the UK.

5 The full stop

Delivering purposeful cultures isn't always about starting something new. Sometimes, it can pay to put a stop to something that's already established. Big businesses find change tough, and big egos sometimes find it hard to accept that the formula for past glories may not be the same for future success.

CASE STUDY



Lloyds Banking Group's purpose is Helping Britain Prosper, which, in practice, means using finance to shape a more sustainable and inclusive future for the UK. In pursuit of that purpose, in 2022, they committed to stop direct funding of new oil and gas projects.

THE INSIDE VIEW



At Ben and Jerry's we strive to be a social justice company that makes ice cream, so, by making the world's best ice cream, we aim to fight for social justice, racial equality and our planet.

To try and create the change we're after, as an activist brand we expect criticism and push back. So it's incredibly important for everyone in our business to understand the topics we're working on and why we're doing what we're doing.

If you want to have an impact – and this is about impact, not brand building – it's so important to empower your teams and equip them to amplify your beliefs. It's also really important to look after them too.”



Jessie Macneil-Brown

Head of Social Mission at Ben and Jerry's

Conclusion

Purpose and culture are mutually reinforcing concepts. Without a strong sense of purpose, it's difficult to organise a coherent and successful culture. Yet, without a culture that's built around your purpose, it's almost impossible to deliver the change your purpose promises.

As we've made clear throughout this guide, there's no single magic formula for creating a purpose-driven culture across every type of organisation. Cultures emerge organically, as groups of people around the world come together on a daily basis to form communities of employees.

However, if you're deliberate about how you set up your organisation, support your people and think holistically about softwiring your purpose into culture, you'll earn the chance to steer your culture in the direction you want.

If you haven't already, prioritise effective values, great conversations, purposeful leadership, thoughtful people practices and symbolic acts that make a statement. These ingredients are all essential parts of the recipe for a purpose-driven culture.

Remember, cultivating and evolving your culture is just as important as trying to create it. The job is never done and requires you to listen, co-create and be an active part of the communities of people who make up your business.

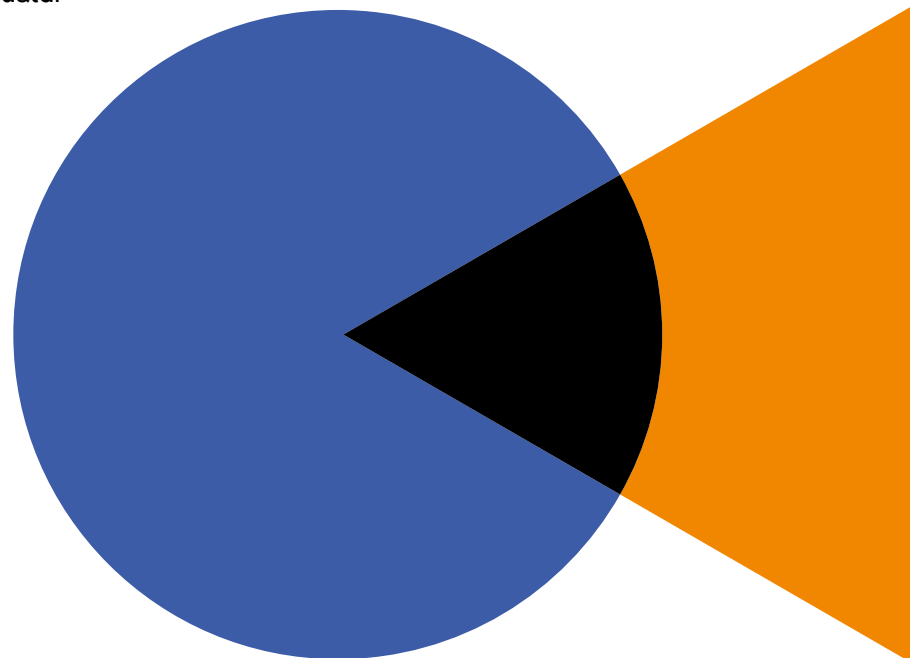
Speak to us about how we can help you unleash the power of purpose to build a positive, progressive and high-performing culture in your organisation.
info@givenagency.com

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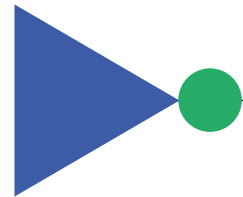


Given helps leading businesses and brands unleash the power of purpose

Given is the award-winning consultancy for purpose-driven businesses and brands.

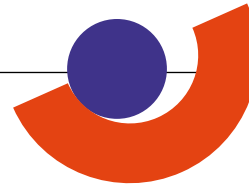
We bring together strategic consultancy, true expertise in purpose and sustainability and an in-house creative studio – all under one roof.

We help you define, embed and activate your purpose to unlock purposeful growth.



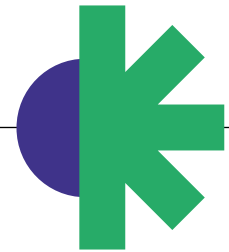
We help you **define** your purpose

So you can unite your business and mobilise your people around the positive role you play in the world and the problems you can profitably solve – and we build the plan to make it real.



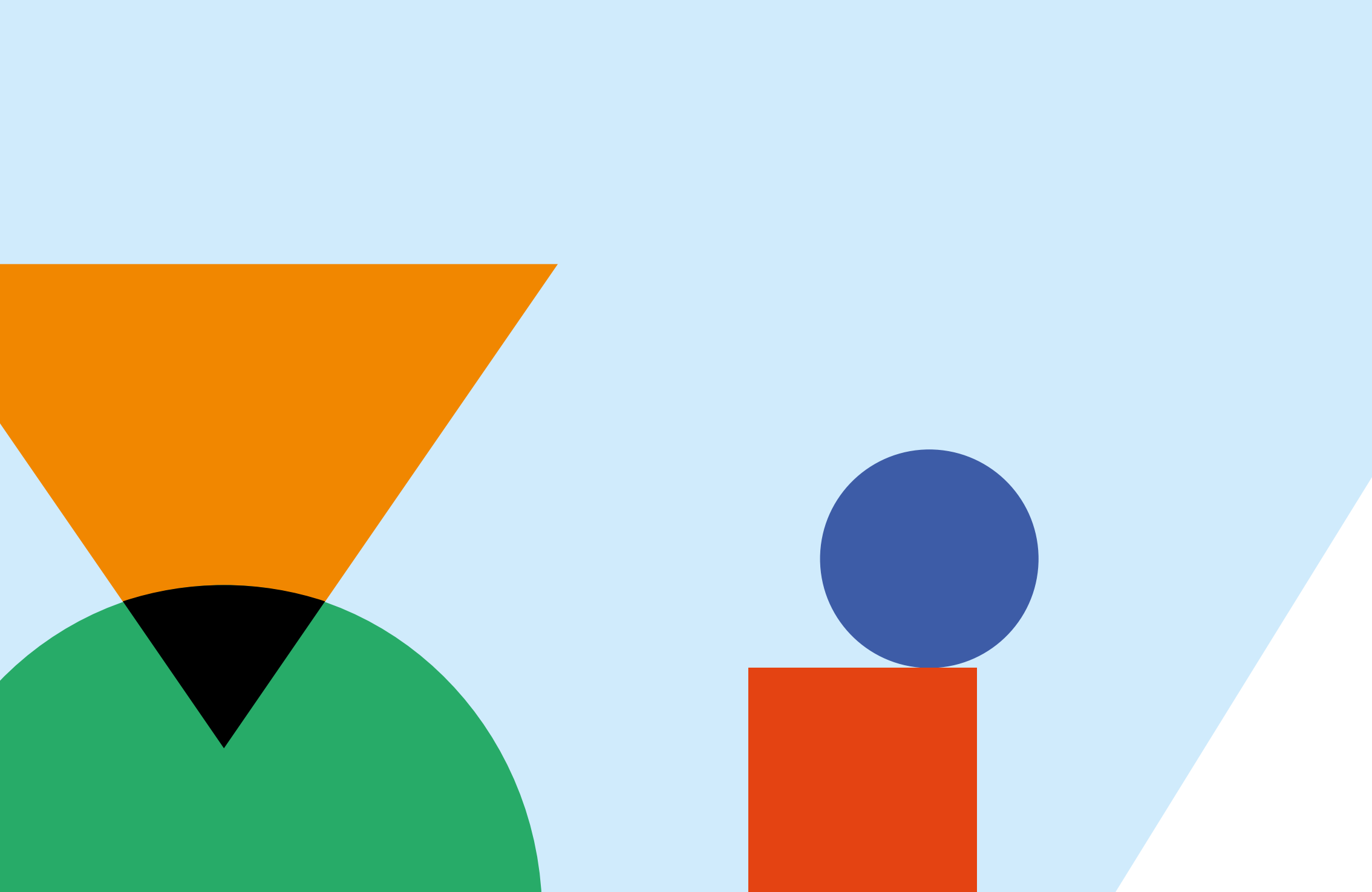
We help you **embed** purpose

So you can drive better decision-making and shape your ways of working, making your culture and business practices more purposeful, sustainable and inclusive.



We help you **activate** purpose

So you can bring it to life in the world and create impact and brand equity through communications, campaigns, customer experience, innovation and impact partnerships.



GIVEN

At Given, we've been spearheading work on purpose for over 14 years. We've learned to spot the difference between truly purpose-driven businesses and those with a splashy statement of intent that's not backed up by genuine change. Creating an aspirational mantra about an organisation's role in the world might make everyone feel good, but on its own it's a licence for business as usual.

Purpose-driven businesses understand that purpose is a complete management strategy – one that goes beyond the 'why' to consider the 'what' and the 'how' – to be embedded in every aspect of the organisation. It's not easy to do. It takes time, energy and a multi-year commitment. There is no shortcut, but there is an inside track – and that's where our Insiders' Guides come.

For more information about Given, visit givenagency.com or contact info@givenagency.com