

Entrenching a purposeful culture: inspiring beyond the mould

 By [Brian Eagar](#)

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Aligning your team members to your desired culture is not about forcing them into a mould; it's about inspiring them to actively participate in the journey that delivers on your brand promise. The more aligned their purpose is to the company purpose, the greater the possibility for fulfilment and growth for all.



Brian Eagar

Pep is a company and client I find particularly inspiring in this regard. I asked Dup du Plessis, Pep's training and development manager, to unpack how he thinks fostering a purposeful culture in Pep has contributed to its tremendous growth.

So, when you make a promise like 'Best prices...and more', how do you go about delivering on it? The first part is relatively simple – keep costs low and productivity high. But doing only that won't necessarily set you apart from your competitors. The key lies in delivering more – doing that little bit extra to ensure a pleasant experience for the customer.

My conversations with Dup once again confirms my deep belief that empowering your team members to connect with the company purpose is a key differentiator. I summarised Dup's insights in three practical steps:

Making the emotional connection between your purpose and your brand promise

This means inspiring your team with why your brand makes the promise that it does. Pep describes its customers as remarkable people who, on a very small budget, make it possible for their families to live with dignity and pride. This effectively describes why Pep wants to offer both the best prices and friendliest service. If you can help your team members connect with how their efforts contribute to how the brand is making a difference, you are far more likely to gain their buy-in and discretionary effort. As Simon Sinek says, is not about *what* and *how*, it's the *why* that matters. That is the value of purpose – Pep's team members work there because of the *why* – they connect with Pep's purpose.

Foster a purposeful culture that supports your brand promise

This is about walking the talk i.e. displaying the organisation's values in your daily example. If you want your team members to provide the customer with a certain experience, you have to make sure they know what it feels like. You cannot expect them to fake what they don't feel. This is why it is so important for leadership to set the example. Pep defines its unique culture as *Sikhula KunYe* (We are growing together) and believes this to be the driving force behind its growth as a

company. Its leaders at all levels are committed to role-modelling the purposeful culture consistently. By actively supporting their team members' and customers' growth, they are spontaneously growing as a company.

Celebrate the purposeful culture to inspire and recognise

It is important to engage team members with incentives, events and rituals that celebrate the culture in big and small ways. For example, Pep leaders and team members always greet each other with a high five instead of a handshake. However, Dup makes the important point that you have to earn the right to celebrate the culture. You cannot celebrate what you have not entrenched in the hearts of your team members. In order to celebrate authentically, in a manner that means something to your team members, requires consistent communication and role-modelling. Without it, you can neither celebrate, nor hold them accountable.

Applying these principles makes it possible for Pep to be the largest single brand retailer in Africa, showing double-digit growth for the past 17 years. At the centre of its success stands the authentic community of team members that they have established through purpose, example and celebration.

ABOUT BRIAN EAGAR

Brian Eagar is the founder and group CEO of TowerStone. From being voted as the naughtiest kid most likely to fail at school, Eagar found success in the information and technology sector as a young sales and marketing executive, culminating in an executive sales and strategy role for one of the Siemens businesses based in Germany. On his return to South Africa, his passion to inspire leadership led to the creation of TowerStone Leadership Centre in 2006.

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