

## Perspectives

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# Declare your intention, strengthen your brand

Declaring a clear and focused intention for your organization, then following up with visibly congruent behavior, is one of the best ways leaders can build successful, sustainable brands.

There's incredible power in declaring an intention — stating what you want to create in the world and how you'll get there. It helps others know what to expect, and what they'll get if they sign on with you as a customer, employee or fan. Fulfill those expectations, and you have the foundation for a brand that's going to survive and thrive over time.

Of course, lots of brands exist without this intentionality. But because organizations today live openly, on a sort of virtual stage, your goals, beliefs and values are on display whether you want them to be or not, and whether you're conscious of them or not. Putting serious thought into your organization's intentions is essential. Here's where to begin:

### **Gain internal alignment**

Declaring your intentions, which should be based on a clear vision, mission, and set of values, gives your employees a sense of greater purpose, something many workers now expect and demand. And because your intentions are instrumental in creating your internal culture, they also provide you with a fundamental tool for recruitment and retention.

When employees can connect with your organization multidimensionally — intellectually, intuitively and emotionally — they are more likely to champion your brand internally as well as at important consumer touchpoints.

At Little & Company, we define vision, mission and values as follows:

- Your vision tells team members what you aspire to do or be in the world, and therefore, why they should be engaged in your organization. Why they should stay on board. And why prospective employees should join their ranks.
- Your mission helps them understand how the collective “you” will get where you’re going.
- Your values establish the guardrails for everyone’s behavior and for decision making.

Understanding your intentions also allows team members to engage at higher, deeper and broader levels. As a result, they see your organization as multidimensional. They can make connections that are intellectual, intuitive and emotional. Connections that motivate them to champion your brand internally as well as at important consumer touchpoints.

### **Build external authenticity**

Of course, when you declare an intention, you’re putting a stake in the ground. People will start looking to you for answers and holding you accountable. For this reason, you must be prepared to align your speech and actions. Every time. Every day.

You must also be willing to take on new opportunities that will inevitably come your way once you’ve made your intentions known. Or be able to explain why you won’t. Potential partners will seek you out. People will ask for your help: your advice, your money, your time. Be transparent about how you prioritize, and your constituents will see you acting in accordance with your intentions even when you have to decline an opportunity.

Building authenticity takes commitment. And it takes time. Clear intentions will help you nurture relationships and build trust with all of your external partners through repeated, reliable experiences. Succeed in this, and you have the underpinnings of a lasting brand people will resonate with and want to follow.

Is there risk in declaring your intentions? Of course. The greater risk, however, is in not declaring them.

## **A declaration worth making**

Is there risk in declaring your intentions? Of course. If you're not prepared to back them up with congruent behaviors, people will know —and quite probably share their knowledge with others. The greater risk, however, is in not declaring your intentions at all. Without a clear vision, achievable mission and established values, you leave your culture, your brand and your business to chance. Articulate your intentions, loud and clear, and you regain control, as well as the support of your employees and customers.

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