

PURPOSE TRENDS REPORT

A selection of what has been published about Purpose in April 2024



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Garcia, T.; Florez-Jimenez, M.P. & Lleo, A.
School of Economics and Business. University of Navarra

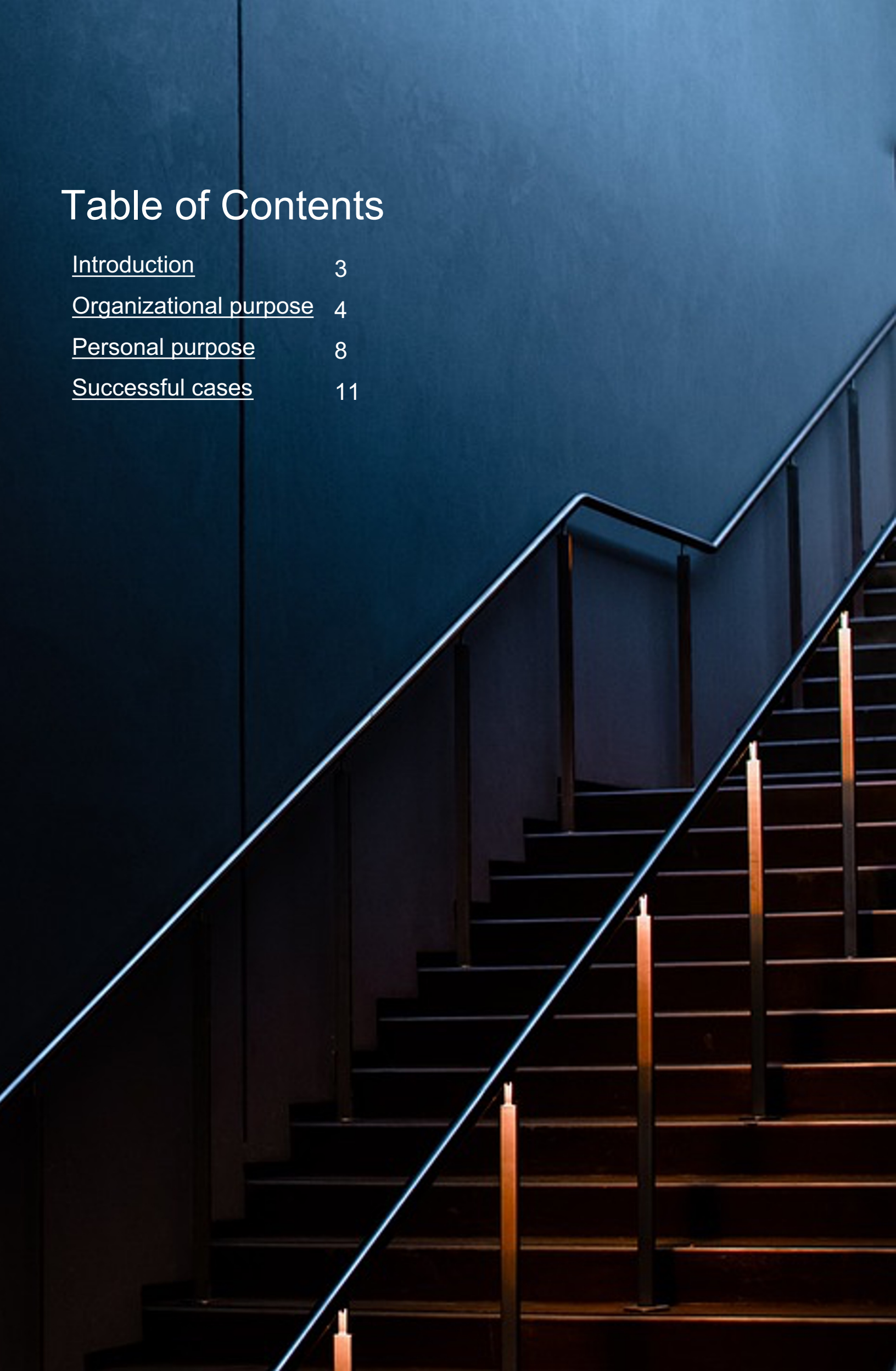
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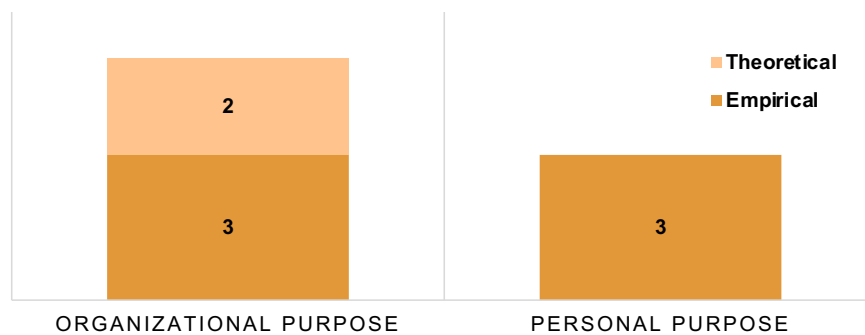
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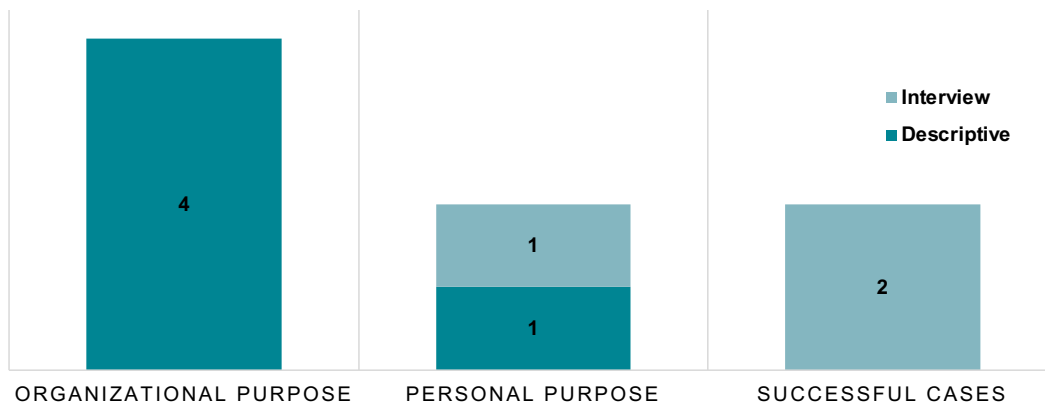
INTRODUCTION

In this report, we want to synthesize the most relevant about corporate purpose published in April 2024. For this aim, we did a content search (using selected keywords) in Scopus and Google Scholar for academic publications; and diffusion magazines and other trusted sites for articles and reports. We selected relevant publications about organizational purpose and personal purpose. From January's 2024 report onwards, the "purpose alignment" category will be discontinued and incorporated into the "organizational purpose" category, as the differentiation is minimal. Also, we include successful cases that show how corporate purpose has been implemented. Below, we present statistics about the selected literature.

ACADEMIC PUBLICATIONS - APRIL 2024



ARTICLES AND REPORTS - APRIL 2024



Academic discourse delves into the complexities of corporate governance, challenging traditional agency theories. Stakeholder-centric approaches, advocating for maximizing collective welfare, gain prominence, suggesting nuanced design principles to mitigate contracting problems. Additionally, studies explore the pervasive issue of unnecessary organizational burdens and the impact of global initiatives like the UN's SDGs on corporate purpose adoption. Amidst these discussions, articles underscore the evolving commitment of businesses to social impact, emphasizing the integration of purpose into core business values for sustainable growth and societal benefit.

Further, scholarly investigations into individuals' purpose orientations at work illuminate the multifaceted nature of human motivation and well-being. Factors such as social usefulness and learning opportunities emerge as critical determinants of meaning in work contexts. Initiatives like the Back to Bedside program exemplify proactive efforts to combat burnout and enhance residents' sense of purpose in healthcare settings. Complementing academic inquiries, articles advocate for a broader perspective on personal purpose, urging individuals to align their values with organizational goals and societal impact for more fulfilling careers.

Finally, success stories showcase how purpose-driven businesses integrate sustainability and social impact into core operations. Companies like Tillamook prioritize profitability alongside sustainability through stewardship commitments and partnerships aligned with Sustainable Development Goals. Leaders like Brooks Tingle champion purpose-driven initiatives, driving societal impact while achieving financial success. These cases highlight the transformative power of purpose-driven leadership in fostering meaningful change in society.

Academic publications (5)

Beyond Primacy: A Stakeholder Theory of Corporate Governance

Academy of Management Review, JCR Q1 [see online](#)

Abstract: We develop a stakeholder theory of corporate governance grounded in classical property rights theory, adopting the view that governance should help free individuals to maximize their collective welfare. In contrast to the agency view of corporate governance, we submit that the central problem is to devise coalitional contracting solutions to the collective action problems inherent in team production and team innovation. Agency problems and other contracting problems resulting from shirking, hold-up, market power, and externalities are best understood in this context. We develop design principles for the allocation of property rights to mitigate each of these contracting problems by reducing stakeholders' vulnerabilities to opportunistic behaviors. We extend earlier efforts to build a stakeholder theory of corporate governance by considering a more comprehensive set of transaction problems and analyzing the comparative efficiency of different governance arrangements for different types of firm–stakeholder relationships and different economic contexts. One conclusion from our theory is that giving primacy to shareholders, or any other group of stakeholders, is a comparatively inefficient solution to governing the modern global and knowledge-driven corporation. We discuss the implications of our theorizing for the debate about the purpose of the firm.

Unnecessary organizational burden: a conceptual framework

Future Business Journal, JCR Q1 [see online](#)

Abstract: This paper investigates the mechanisms that lead organizations to impose unnecessary burdens on their actors. The prevailing narrative in the literature is that unnecessary organizational burden (UOB) is created either on purpose—as a way for an organizational actor to assert control—or inadvertently through the passage of time as layers of policies, rules, and processes accumulate. Based on a wide review of relevant literature, we propose a different explanation: in our conceptual framework, the onset and mitigation of unnecessary burdens are explained, respectively, by organizational decision-makers' weaknesses and strengths. Our framework combines (1) a typology of unnecessary burdens with (2) a typology of factors influencing the likelihood of UOB mitigation, and (3) a typology of managerial mitigation responses to such burdens. The conceptual framework, and a series of 12 propositions, aim to offer researchers and practitioners a shared language to empirically investigate unnecessary organizational burden, and implement effective solutions.

The influence of the sustainable development goals on large companies' adoption and implementation of a broader corporate purpose

Corporate Governance, SJR Q1 [see online](#)

Abstract: Purpose: This paper aims to understand whether, and if so how, the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) influence large companies' adoption and implementation of a broader corporate purpose, beyond profit maximization. Design/methodology/approach: Adopting a multiple-case study method, data were collected from semi-structured interviews with 28 managers from 16 large companies in Australia and Japan, and from secondary sources. Grounded theory methods were used to analyze the data and draw out key findings. Findings: The study revealed the influence of the SDGs on corporate purpose depends on the SDG integration level: where and how the SDGs are integrated into management practices. The influence was more significant when the companies implemented the SDGs at a normative level compared to those implementing the SDGs at a strategic and/or operational level. Research limitations/implications: Due to the exploratory nature of the study, the sample size is limited and covers only companies in two countries. Future studies could examine the validity of the findings and the explanatory model by testing with a larger sample and expanding the scope into different countries. The study provides practical implications on how large companies' could scale up their contributions to achieving the SDGs. Originality/value: While the extant literature suggests a simple relationship between sustainability (the SDGs) and corporate purpose, this paper identified a more complex relationship. It presents in a multi-pathway model that explains the relationship, based on empirical evidence from 16 large companies in two different institutional contexts.

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In contrast to pure profit thinking, organizational purpose features a more transcendent quality in that it aims to describe “something which is greater in scope than the subject” of the company itself.

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Unlocking the value and transitional purpose of plant-based meat alternative companies in the German market

Sustainable Futures, SJR Q2 [see online](#)

Abstract: Meat-free foodstuffs that emulate key properties of meat, meat alternatives, are portrayed as instruments to contribute to a dietary transition towards more protein from non-animal sources, a protein transition. Although they promise the large audience of meat-eating consumers easy sustainability gains, truly sustainable diets require changes beyond the replacement of animal by other proteins, a full-fledged protein transition. Meat-alternative companies are in a central position to support and to shape the form of the protein transition. So far, however, it is not entirely clear for “how much transition” enterprises actually aim, what activities they engage in to get there, and what limits their efforts. Our research contributes to elucidating these questions. Drawing from the concept of organizational purpose and from sustainability marketing scholarship, we investigate the transitional purpose of companies in the German market for plant-based meat alternatives. Through a series of semi-structured interviews and by studying the websites of key firms, we find that enterprises indeed largely aim for a protein transition, which replaces meat by meat-like substitutes. Also, there seems to be little company activity to facilitate dietary changes at the level of consumers or society. Nonetheless, our work indicates that wider changes are possible - e.g., even firms' standard marketing activity could stimulate changes. In doing so, it lines out a path for future research that could help to better assess the potential role of meat-alternative businesses for a full-fledged protein transition.

Customers First vs Employees First: Effective Organizational Culture Contributing to Empathy

6th International Conference on Artificial Intelligence in Information and Communication, ICAIIC 2024 [see online](#)

Abstract: Currently, companies face various social issues, such as climate change and health issues. Companies are required to achieve both the resolution of these issues and economic growth. Hence, many managers formulate and communicate a corporate purpose internally and externally. However, most existing research on corporate purpose has focused on its content. In other words, there is surprisingly little discussion about the organizational culture that effectively communicates the corporate purpose. Therefore, this study conducted a randomized controlled trial targeting Japanese electronics manufacturers and found that employees empathize more with the corporate purpose when the organizational culture is expressed as 'employees first' compared to 'customers first.' We also confirmed that this effect is more pronounced for employees in research and development departments (RandD) who are located far from customers. Sales and marketing employees who interact with customers regularly have a high level of customer awareness, making it likely for them to empathize with the corporate purpose. Similar trends apply to back-office employees who work at the company's headquarters as well as sales and marketing employees. However, RandD facilities are generally located in the suburbs, far from the headquarters, with few points of contact with customers. In other words, although corporate purpose is necessary for product and service development, it is most unlikely that the engineers responsible for the work will be aware of the corporate purpose. For management companies, understanding this point is essential for instilling corporate purpose within the company.

Articles (4)

The State of Corporate Purpose 2024

Benevity [see online](#)

The article discusses how businesses in 2023 showcased heightened commitment to social impact despite economic challenges. It predicts a trend in 2024 where companies will align their social impact strategies with their core values. The focus shifts towards forward-looking and measurable impact. The piece identifies five key trends, including cautious use of corporate voice, the rising significance of ERGs, enhanced volunteer programs, ethical AI adoption, and outcomes-driven philanthropy. It stresses the importance of an impact mindset for companies to navigate uncertainties and drive positive change effectively.

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Over these last few tumultuous years, purpose permeated the corporate world, becoming a way of uniting and guiding us.

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The Purpose-Driven Digital Transformation

Lilin Huang, Ashley Grice, Wanying Zhu, BCG [see online](#)

The article underscores that people today want more personal value in what they buy, where they work, and how they live their lives. With technology handling more complex business problems, the article emphasizes that leaders can put more attention into underlying human issues. It also recommends that companies undertaking a digital transformation must meet the changing priorities of customers and employees by putting purpose at the heart of the process. Finally, the article highlights three elements of a business purpose: authenticity, appeal to customers, and meaning for employees. Cultivating them will add a human dimension to technological and organizational changes.

The Social-Purpose Economy Is Coming of Age

Coro Strandberg, Sustainable Brands [see online](#)

The article argues that the purpose ecosystem is evolving, evidenced by academic research and CEO endorsements. In Canada, the Propelling Purpose Summit in 2021 initiated discussions on the "purpose economy," leading to the creation of the Canadian Purpose Economy Project (CPEP). With federal support, the CPEP aims to mainstream social-purpose businesses, as outlined in the Mobilizing the Canadian Social-Purpose Ecosystem report. This report identifies 10 levers to activate the purpose economy and emphasizes embedding social purposes into business operations. It underscores the importance of nurturing the purpose economy for sustainable business practices and societal well-being.

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Now is the time to help it overcome any growing pains and highlight the purpose gains to put business and humanity on a sustainable path at scale.

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Tips For Building A Purpose-Driven Business

Jia Rizvi, Forbes [see online](#)

The article argues that purpose-driven businesses prioritize making a positive impact over profit, integrating their purpose into every aspect of operations. Kantar's study highlights that brands perceived as highly impactful experienced substantial growth compared to those with low or medium impact. To build such a business, defining core purpose and values is crucial, guiding decisions and operations. Purpose-driven models resonate with modern consumers, who seek brands aligning with their values, fostering brand loyalty and employee dedication. Transitioning from product-focused to purpose-driven necessitates aligning strategy and operations with purpose, fostering a resilient culture and meaningful impact. Ultimately, purpose-driven businesses exemplify success intertwined with societal contribution.



Academic publications (3)

Testing the Validity of the Expanded Five-Dimensional Model of Work Orientations

Journal of Career Assessment, JCR Q2 [see online](#)

Abstract: Finding meaning and purpose in work has become increasingly important in today's volatile world. Work orientations reflect the purpose individuals see in their work. The Work Orientation Questionnaire (WOQ), based on the expanded five-dimensional model of work orientation (Willner et al., 2020), was used to elicit individuals' purpose of work - calling, job, career, social embeddedness, and busyness. In Study 1 (N = 315 employees), the five work orientations were moderately associated with Schein's (1990) career anchors supporting the WOQ's convergent and discriminant validity. Study 2 using 5-year longitudinal data from 206 college graduates, revealed that the motives for selecting a college major had small to negligible associations with the five work orientations. Study 3 (N = 414 employees), applying Holland's (1997) classification of the six RIASEC environments, found that a calling orientation was most prominent among those working in a Social environment, whereas a job orientation was most prominent among individuals in a Conventional environment. Moreover, work orientations accounted for work satisfaction and career choice satisfaction beyond career anchors, motives for choosing a college major, and work environments. Theoretical and practical implications of cultivating purpose at work are discussed.

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Understanding meaningful work is a central issue in the development of human resources in organizations because it is related to individuals' intrinsic motivations.

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Relations between the meaning of work, psychological well-being, and psychological distress: A study in the state military police in São Paulo

International Journal of Police Science & Management, SJR Q1
[see online](#)

Abstract: The state military police of the Brazilian state of São Paulo (PMESP) has the lowest number of police officers in the institution since the 1990s, compared to itself, with a vast number of unpaid leave and resignation requests. Low salaries appear to be a reason, but the police say that this is not the only factor to be rectified; lack of recognition and difficulties in overcoming trauma are also frequently mentioned. This picture refers to a situation that can be understood as low motivation, loss of meaning, and psychological suffering. This study aimed to understand whether there is a general loss of meaning at work in PMESP, together with well-being and psychological suffering. Using structural equation modeling, the study sought to understand the factors that give meaning to the work of these professionals and their consequences for well-being and psychological distress at work. Social usefulness and learning and development opportunities showed a meaningful relationship with meaning of work, with learning and development opportunities being the most important for the surveyed military police officers. Regarding the consequent constructs of meaning of work, significant relationships between psychological well-being at work and psychological suffering were verified. The study indicates that when meaning is constructed (via social utility and learning), there is an increase in psychological well-being, as well as a decrease in the effect of psychological suffering

Humanism Rounds: A Multifaceted “Back to Bedside” Initiative to Improve Meaning at Work for Internal Medicine Residents

Medical Science Educator, JCR Q3 [see online](#)

Abstract: Introduction: Burnout is an increasingly prevalent problem among resident physicians. To address this problem, the Accreditation Council on Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) created the Back to Bedside initiative, supporting resident-driven projects focused on increasing direct interactions with patients. In 2017, Baylor College of Medicine (BCM) Internal Medicine Residency received a Back to Bedside grant to develop and implement “Humanism Rounds,” a multifaceted program which sought to promote personal connections between residents and patients and foster reflection about patients’ non-clinical stories, with the hopes of reducing burnout and increasing residents’ sense of meaning at work. Materials and Methods: Between 2018 and 2020, internal medicine residents were instructed on and encouraged to participate in Humanism Rounds. The program included three components: taking a “human history,” bedside rounds focused on non-clinical concerns, and sharing patient stories with colleagues (“celebrations”). Residents were surveyed using institutional and ACGME surveys regarding burnout, meaning at work, and the clinical learning environment. Results: Three hundred eleven institutional (response rate, 74%) and 328 ACGME (response rate, 78%) surveys were completed and analyzed. Residents who actively engaged with Humanism Rounds reported more meaning and fulfillment at work ($p < 0.001$). During the period of this project, ratings of the learning environment and personal callousness improved among subgroups of residents. Conclusions: Baylor College of Medicine Internal Medicine residents who engaged with Humanism Rounds reported more meaning and fulfillment in their work. This program describes a low-cost model for other specialties and institutions to strengthen human connections and improve residents’ experience during training.



Articles (2)

Your Career Doesn't Need to Have a Purpose

Stephen Friedman, HBR [see online](#)

Outside of popular anecdotes and social media stories, there is little evidence that a single, defined “purpose” is necessary for a rewarding career. In fact, it can be quite the opposite. It’s surprisingly common to go after what we think is our purpose only to discover that we hate it. Instead, shift your focus from “purpose” to “meaning.” Ask yourself: (1) What do I like, prefer, or enjoy doing? Let go of yearning for a career purpose. Dial it back and consider what you liked about any of your previous jobs, school projects or other ways you spend your time. (2) What am I good at? Early on in your career, you will have many burgeoning skills. These are skills that you are good at now and can get even better at with more practice. (3) Would this role provide growth and learning that I can use later? Research shows that what scholars call “ability development” (i.e. getting better at what you do) brings with it greater happiness, satisfaction, and meaning.

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The trick is to *make* work meaningful by making it part of your exploration, as opposed to expecting a job to fulfill your entire reason for being.

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A “Growth-at-All-Costs” Mindset Can Stall Your Company

Jenn Lim & Jen Fisher, HBR [see online](#)

The strength of any organization depends on its people. Research has found a strong positive relationship between employee well-being and firm performance. When people feel healthy and engaged, their work performance improves, their relationships are stronger, and they’re better motivated to impact change. This is what’s at the heart of “human sustainability”— a concept introduced in Deloitte’s “2023 Global Human Capital Trends” report. It’s about creating value in people’s lives — from their physical and mental well-being to their career skills and overall sense of purpose. It starts with individuals, but ultimately has a ripple effect to the people they encounter and the organizations they’re part of. Research shows that a focus on human sustainability drives stronger business results. All organizations need a business growth strategy where people feel they’re prioritized. Before you launch your next growth initiative, make sure you’re not sabotaging your employees, and your company in turn. This article offers five questions to ask yourself as you’re setting your own growth strategy.

Articles (2)

Brands People Love on Purpose, feat. Tillamook

Jen Mazi, Sustainable Brands [see online](#)

The article explains how Tillamook, as a purpose-driven business, intertwines profitability with sustainability and social impact. Through initiatives like its stewardship commitments and B Corp certification, Tillamook demonstrates its dedication to sustainability, resonating with consumers. Partnerships, such as the one with New Seasons Market, showcase its commitment to Sustainable Development Goal 17. Tillamook's success illustrates that profitability and sustainability can coexist, offering lessons for other businesses. Similarly, Tillamook's emphasis on transparency and consumer engagement aligns with its commitment to responsible practices, mirroring the case of Tillamook's success in integrating purpose into its operations.



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The magic happens when you find something in their answer that can solve a problem for them that also amplifies your sustainability commitments.

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How Purpose-Driven Business Leadership Saves Lives

Nell Derick Debevoise, Forbes [see online](#)



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The challenge and the opportunity is to connect every person in the organization with those stories... If you believe in it, you power through all of that.

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The article explains how Brooks Tingle, President and CEO of John Hancock, champions purpose-driven leadership, akin to John Hancock Insurance's innovative Vitality program. Tingle's conviction in purpose-driven initiatives transforms the insurance industry, prioritizing societal impact alongside financial gains. By leveraging behavior change science, Tingle ensures the Vitality program promotes healthier habits among policyholders. Despite skepticism, his unwavering belief empowers him to drive meaningful change, inspiring leaders to prioritize purpose for positive societal impact. Tingle's visionary leadership underscores the transformative potential of purpose-driven approaches, evident in John Hancock's success.

