

## **Activate your change brand**

Adopt the principles of marketing and brand activation campaigns to drive organizational change to every individual in your organization

A 2016 Human Capital Perspective



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# An ever-shifting landscape

Organizations across industries are undergoing nearly perpetual efforts to change themselves as business and operating models rapidly evolve. Organizations are being asked to simultaneously deliver results, improve operational excellence, enhance customer experience, comply with regulatory pressures, respond to the needs of internal and external stakeholders, and stake their competitive advantage—all while adapting their internal organizations to better compete in this shifting landscape. In fact, over 80 percent of respondents to Deloitte’s 2016 Global Human Capital Trends survey report say they are either currently restructuring their organization or have recently completed the process.<sup>1</sup> Clearly, change is at the foundation of the current business environment.

At the same time, most change leaders are up against significant hurdles. A majority of large-scale change initiatives don’t meet their goals in the long run because organizations do not take a consistent, holistic approach to changing themselves.<sup>2</sup> Yet, too many organizations are still employing traditional change methods with mixed results. While “winning hearts and minds” is still critical, organizations should adapt their methods to incorporate the very trends, tools, and philosophies that are shaping the new business landscape and even society itself.

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# Global brands as change agents

Leading global brands are experts at responding to shifting consumer preferences, new technologies, and digital trends. They are masters at capturing attention, creating advocate communities, motivating action from individuals and collectives, and reinforcing the brand. They use consistent themes and forward-thinking tactics to proactively engage consumers and provoke an emotional response that results in unwavering brand loyalty. Companies like Nike, Apple, and The North Face embrace neuroscience and connect with consumers through vivid images and stories that invoke strong feelings, going beyond the traditional customer relationship to create an emotional connection.

Leading brands also take advantage of another powerful motivator—FOMO, the fear of missing out. FOMO is a product of human nature, a reflection of a widespread tendency to be influenced by those around us, to want to be “in the know” and involved in activities other people value. Major brands are masters at generating FOMO-inspired buzz about their products and services through social and traditional media.<sup>3</sup>

## Developing an emotional connection with a brand

Apple focuses its resources behind just a few products, but makes them exceedingly well, and delivers value to customers in a way that endears them to the brand.

- Through highly publicized, well-choreographed product launches, Apple creates a sense of anticipation and solves a problem no one knew they had.
- Through its advertisements, Apple tells a story about what the product does for the user’s life and stays away from product specifications.
- Through sophisticated retail store experiences with compassionate customer support, Apple provides a no-pressure environment for consumers to directly experience the products, thereby creating a strong emotional response.

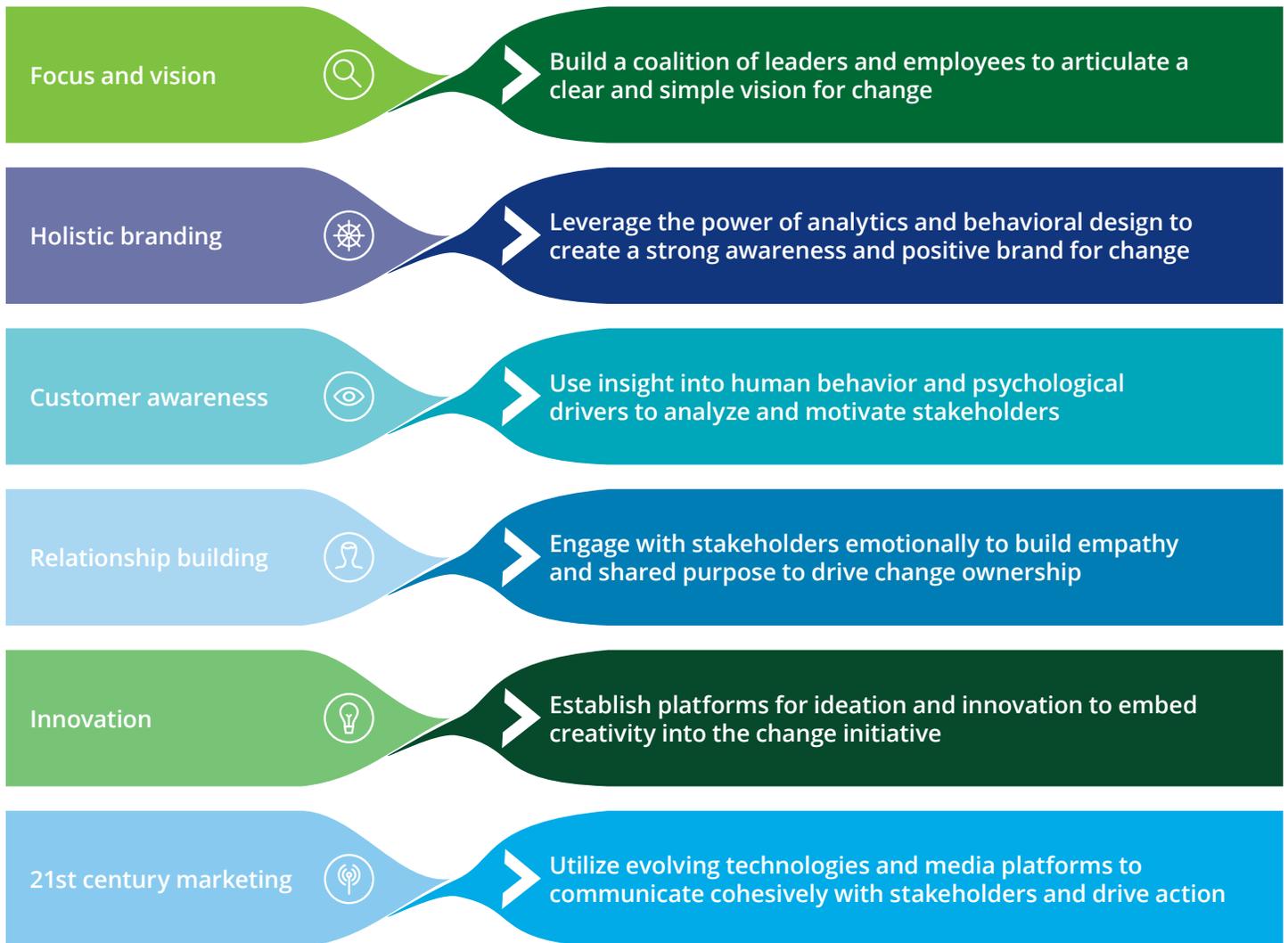
# Taking lessons from global brands to power organizational change

What can organizations undergoing change efforts learn from how top global brands motivate action?

After researching how top brands position their products, communicate with customers, and create differentiated value, we identified six key techniques they use to connect with customers and drive their desired consumer behaviors. Those six marketing techniques—focus and vision, holistic branding, customer awareness, relationship building, innovation, and 21st

century marketing—correlate directly with change management goals and activities.

Corporate communicators and change agents can tap into these marketing techniques to make their programs more desirable, noticeable, and impactful, and potentially increase the effectiveness of the organizational change effort. These examples spotlight how organizations have used one or a combination of these techniques to drive change.



## Using focus and vision to connect with employees and build momentum

Top brands know that setting a vision and branding the effort is critical to laying the groundwork for engaging customers and creating energy around a change movement. Many companies have successfully shifted their advertising strategies to engage their customers by eschewing details of how the product works and focusing instead on building an emotional connection with customers. A detergent company in India used a recent commercial to tell a story and challenge social convention by asking, “Why is laundry only a mother’s job? Dads #SharetheLoad.” The message went viral, building brand awareness and establishing an emotional connection with the product.<sup>4</sup>

In many organizations, it’s customary for the change vision to be set by executives and project managers and disseminated from the top down. This vision is too often built on the financial business case and focused on the motivations of business leaders, not the majority of employees. Thus, these types of change efforts rarely succeed at inspiring action and building an emotional connection with the very people they seek to inspire—the frontline employees.

### Engendering trust and loyalty through a brand

Nike focuses on understanding athletes’ needs to constantly create cutting-edge innovative products while inspiring customer loyalty through emotional storytelling.

- Through engaging with athletes on the field, Nike constantly tests new products and features that meet athletes’ specific needs, stirring customer trust and loyalty.
- Through pairing technology with products (e.g., its Nike+ Running app), Nike extends its reach to customers, creating a personalized experience and inspiring them to pursue their goals.
- Through emotional branding archetypes—“the early alarm, the darkness outside and long concrete road ahead”—Nike inspires strong customer loyalty and motivates action through the story of battling long odds, overcoming one’s inner demons, and emerging triumphant.

While it is critical to “set the tone” from the top, the vision should be crafted with the end user in mind. Rethink visioning to include grassroots involvement and engage the “humanism” of your organization. In *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, October 25, 2011), psychologist Daniel Kahneman points out that humans are far from rational and logical—often leaning on impulse, unconscious biases, and intuition (“thinking fast”) to make decisions that require more careful analysis (“thinking slow”). To effectively execute change, it is critical to gain human insights into your frontline employees, recognize the circumstances around their behaviors—and then engage them in a collaborative and positive environment to define and build momentum around a shared vision for change.<sup>5</sup>

For example, when a major technology firm found it was having trouble accelerating new products to market, it piloted the concept of a “Jam” to set a new vision for innovation at the company. The Jam is a group of interlinked bulletin boards and related web pages on the organization’s intranet, with systems for facilitating dialogue and generating new ideas. At first employees responded to the idea with skepticism, using the forum to raise questions and criticisms of the organization’s leaders. But as leaders and managers used the forum frequently to engage in conversation, the tone became more constructive—no one wanted to be the outlier when the established social norm was one of collaboration and creative problem solving. And as the forum gained traction, more people wanted to be involved (FOMO at work). The organization has continued to use the forum to build a sense of shared vision behind its innovation efforts, resulting in improved performance.

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## Using holistic branding and customer awareness to motivate employees

Market-leading brands spend significant time and effort on consumer research and analytics to better understand their customers’ behaviors and position products to meet their needs. Today, change leaders are learning to tap into these insights. While decades of behavioral economics research<sup>6</sup> suggest that intrinsic motivational factors such as relationships, a sense of purpose, and personal growth can be significant drivers of behavior, traditional change approaches often ignore the psychological aspect of change.

Adopting a behavioral insight-driven approach worked brilliantly at a petroleum

company to articulate a new personal leadership program with the objective to align personal, individual goals with community and company goals. To brand this program, a logo was designed to provide a visual, complementary link to the company logo while creating an identity for individual change. At the same time, language used in communication and training to staff reinforced the message of the positive consequences of personal change. This coordinated branding effort contributed to a clear sense of individual ownership, instilled greater belief in the value of the effort, and ultimately motivated change in behavior.



### **The power of the nudge**

Further, by better understanding the motivations and environments that drive their employees' behaviors, change leaders can design "nudges" that gently push employees in the right direction and drive new desired behaviors.

For example, competition can be a powerful motivator. A major, high-end retailer leveraged the competitive nature of its employees to encourage and drive change management related to the implementation of a large Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system. Its Change Agent Network comprised merchants and merchandise planners, a very competitive and reward-driven group. Recognizing the inherent nature of this group, trainers leveraged the principles of gamification to create a set of interactive classroom-based "Jeopardy" competitions. To further boost competition, the team created shared visual leaderboards, offered gameplay-based rewards, and provided a view of change activities across the group. Gamification provided an interactive activity that the Change Agents could then use to cascade information throughout the organization.

## Using customer awareness and innovation to build relationships with employees

Successful brands mine increasingly rich customer data to better understand consumer needs and behaviors. Leveraging innovative technology such as sociometric badging gives organizations deeper insight into behavioral economics.

Sociometric badges are wearable electronic badges that use social signals derived from the wearer's vocal features, body motion, and relative location to automatically measure a range of key behaviors. Sociometric data can provide change leaders with valuable information to help drive new behaviors by analyzing the facial expressions of the recipients of the message.<sup>7</sup>

Measuring audience response to a communication is critical to shaping the change effort—for example, by identifying leaders who are received well by the audience and are impactful at driving change. Sociometric badging could also help identify employees who can act as accelerators and change agents in the organization.

This concept worked brilliantly for Deloitte Belgium as it sought to instill cross-business collaboration among partners at a key leadership summit. The partners were asked to wear the sociometric badges throughout the first day of the session to measure individual and group interactions, conversational time, speaking tone, and physical proximity. After getting past the funny, awkward moment of wearing these devices around their necks, the group quickly resumed their normal conversation and behaviors that provided some interesting data-driven insights into communication patterns (face to face, side conversations, back channels), knowledge flows, and influential social network “nodes” within the group. Providing this quantifiable and observable feedback to partners dramatically improved conversational style, role clarity, and group dynamics for the rest of the summit, leading to better engagement and collaboration.

## Using 21st century marketing to spark action

Global brands have undergone a radical change of their own in the past decade through the proliferation and democratization of media platforms. Today's workforce is as likely to turn to Facebook, Twitter, and other social media sites to get their news as they are to read the newspaper and watch broadcast television.

Winning brands have adjusted accordingly. The North Face has built an emotional connection with its customers by asking them to co-own the company's brand. It leverages social media and platforms to empower its core audience—outdoor adventurers—and share stories that resonate with its brand of exploration: “finding the thing we love and relentlessly pursuing it.”<sup>8</sup> The goal isn't just to advertise new products, but instead to build relationships, strengthen the emotional connection with its products, and create a self-sustaining dialogue with consumers. The North Face encourages customers to share stories and photos that they connect with the brand<sup>9</sup> using The North Face's hashtag. #NeverStopExploring has now been appropriated by consumers and has taken on a life of its own—recently, the company profiled the explorations of a photographer, a marine biologist, and a scientist, which prompted thousands of consumers to post pictures and stories of their own exploration journeys inspired by the brand.<sup>10</sup>

In a similar way, effective change leaders integrate social platforms into their communication strategy to share experiences, spark new ideas, and inspire change action. In doing so, however, they should recognize that they may need to loosen their grip and empower stakeholders to own the message, just as The North Face did.



## Using innovation and 21st century marketing to tailor an on-demand training experience

Global brands recognize there's no "one size fits all" solution for attracting and retaining customers. For instance, Nike+ Apps personalize each customer's shopping experience using customer personas and purchasing data.<sup>11</sup> Information and experiences are delivered on demand, when and where customers want them.

Forward-thinking organizations are using these same principles to design and deliver the training experiences that help their employees adapt to organizational change. Organizations are leveraging the ubiquity of mobile devices; the emergence of disruptive learning technology tools such as virtual reality systems (Oculus, Google Glass), 3D training simulators, and game-based techniques; and the power of advanced HR analytics to create an immersive, on-demand, and personalized learning experience for employees across different global functions.<sup>12</sup>

For example, when implementing a new global order-management system, a technology company deployed an experimental approach to learning to catalyze its change effort. First, the organization built a new social- and mobile-first learning platform to empower employees to access just-in-time learning from a variety of sources and formats, including corporate courseware, massive open online courses (MOOCs), podcasts, and YouTube videos. In addition, it developed a mobile game aimed at teaching complexities of the new order-management process through interactive experiences that use mechanics such as scoring, levels of difficulty, awards, and competition. This enhanced learning experience was instrumental in raising employee engagement and cultural awareness while accelerating user adoption.

# Living your transformation brand

As leaders of change in their organization, today's change management professionals have the opportunity to lead by example in embracing innovative techniques that match a constantly changing communications and work environment. Moving beyond traditional change management techniques and adopting marketing-based techniques can provide an innovative and powerful set of principles and tools to accelerate and magnify the impact of organizational change efforts. Like renowned global brands, leaders of organizational change efforts can harness the power of new technology, data analytics, and behavioral economics to craft a compelling and enduring brand for the change journey that captures employees' loyalty and attention, sparks new thinking, and spurs desired action. Employers who expect their people to embrace change as a routine, regular part of work should also be willing to embrace innovative methods and technologies to facilitate change and make it stick.

## Endnotes

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