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A Case for Aligning Values with Your Brand

An effective brand is more than a tagline, logo, and Pantone color. While these elements are important to visually communicate an organization's identity, the highest achieving organizations define their specific type of brand and promote cultures that support the values purported by that identity.

Finding Your Type

In a Harvard Business Review article, "Build a Culture to Match Your Brand," author Denise Lee Yohn states that there are nine essential brand types: disruptive, conscious, service, innovation, value, performance, luxury, style, and experience. While these types can (and sometimes should) overlap, ideally, there is one type that represents your organization's motivation and values and helps define your brand.

One example is Sportsfield Specialties, a manufacturer of athletic field equipment for countless collegiate venues across North America – their primary brand is "Innovator." While the company prides itself on providing excellent products and services, what drives them is the urge to move the athletic field equipment industry forward.

Yohn describes innovative brands as those that "consistently introduce advanced and breakthrough products." In the case of Sportsfield, this is exemplified by a 25-year track record earning them over 35 U.S. Patents for their designs. Patented innovations include their hydraulically operated gooseneck-hinged football goal post, multi-sport netting systems with breakaway technology that prevents extreme weather failures, and a pre-engineered baseball pitching mound concrete form that ensures accurate placement from year to year.

Understanding Core Values

Once a brand type is identified, Yohn recommends better understanding the company's core values. She says that they are needed to "cultivate the desired culture." A company whose brand is value, like Walmart, may focus on accessibility and pragmatism; a conscious brand focuses on purpose and

transparency; and for an innovative brand like Sportsfield Specialties, inventiveness and ongoing improvement are core values. Inventiveness is encouraged through interdepartmental brainstorming between the sales team, in-house engineers, manufacturing department, and others, which is informed by feedback from the field – from athletics directors, coaches, and sports construction professionals.

Regarding continued improvement, the company's gooseneck-hinged football goal post provides an excellent product example, as its design and function have been improved upon from earlier models. From an institutional point of view, Sportsfield has grown from a small three-person operation to having two campuses (N.Y. and N.C.), approximately 150 employees, and is still growing.

Benefits of Aligning Values with Your Brand

The bottom line is that when an organization embodies the values it promotes through its brand, they are building trust with followers, clients, vendors and employees. Additionally, by defining your values and brand type clearly, employees are better able to make decisions on the company's behalf that reinforce the brand identity. Aligning company values with your brand identity is a win-win that is sure to increase relationships with your community.



Erik Christianson

CoSIDA

Executive Director

At all levels of the enterprise, college sports are undergoing dramatic change.

So is athletics communications, and CoSIDA is taking a number of steps to look to the future, innovate and position the organization and its members for success and leadership on their campuses and conferences.

In many ways already, CoSIDA is not the organization you may think you know.

Change has come – and more is coming – for CoSIDA.

To start, we have adopted a new all-in membership model to be inclusive of the many roles that now fall within athletics communications. These include both traditional sports information and media relations positions and also those staff using

the latest creative and digital tools to support student-athletes and their institutions.

Under this new model, our new memberships allow other communications staff, marketing professionals, brand managers, senior administrators, graduate assistants, student workers – even athletics directors – to become members of CoSIDA.

In addition, our Executive Board just approved important changes to our nationally recognized Academic All-America awards program. These changes both raise the bar on academics and at the same time allow more student-athletes to be honored. These strategic adjustments are critical as we are seeking a new title sponsor for one of the nation's oldest and most prestigious awards celebrating the highest-achieving student-athletes in every division of the NCAA, NAIA, NJCAA and our Canadian institutions.

We have new leadership for our organization, including my appointment as executive director and the ascension of Jessica Poole as our membership President for 2022-23. She is the first Black female in the history of CoSIDA to lead our organization.

And thanks to the leadership of our Executive Board, staff and others in our membership, we

are in the final stages of a strategic branding initiative. This effort will lead to a new name and other branding elements that will reflect how athletics communications has changed and position us to grow, lead and better serve our membership.

As I told our members in June at the CoSIDA Convention in Las Vegas, the way we do our work continues to change, but the why is the same. We tell the story of the student-athlete, and we provide communications solutions for college sports.

In my new role, I look forward to collaborating with NACDA, its Affiliate Associations and all of you as we all seek to support student-athletes and further strengthen college sports, and I look forward to sharing more updates in the near future.