

Meaningless messaging demeans us all

It's very natural for humans to see something working for other people and want a piece of it for themselves. This is why you see trends and memes sweep through the industry - just think of all the times you have heard pitches including "X is broken" or "we're democratising Y".

But here's the problem: these trends are imitating the surface output, instead of imitating the process by which they got there. This makes the outcome feel hollow. The effect of this only grows when you apply a hierarchy like mission/ values/ purpose.

Because the brain treats ideas in the same way it interprets physical objects, they must cohere in a way that respects their own internal logic and your understanding of the world around them. A table works because the legs are strong enough to hold the top up.

If you set out a huge vision for how the world could be, but your mission doesn't really justify why you would get there, the "table" collapses. That's why claiming your office space business exists to "elevate the world's consciousness" means you're going to get the mocking you deserve.

You don't "elevate consciousness" by opening offices on every corner with free beer

However, the good news is, most founders don't need to take on the awesome responsibility for elevating consciousness. It's OK to be a business that sells things that make peoples' lives a little better.

Messaging by any means

This is the real truth of defining your business. You don't need to graft on some world-changing message to explain what you do and get people excited. Instead, most companies would do well to remember the old-fashioned theatre message: show, don't tell.

Look closely at your most ardent fans and supporters. What is it about your product or service that they truly absolutely love? How do they talk about it? How does it make their world better? What are they telling you?

The big (small) picture

At the same time, ask yourself why the world has to be changed by putting a "dent in the universe". Change can come equally through small things every day.

This is especially true in B2B. We all spend most of our time at work. If you can make people's day-to-day jobs better by reducing frustrations and saving them time and stress, that can change thousands of lives.

Maybe even, dare I say it, give them time to elevate their consciousness a little.

Meaning from within

Equally, there are other ways to make your business more meaningful and gain the benefit. Look at the example set by [B Corps](#) — a commitment to high standards in social, environmental and legal accountability.

Just because you aren't trying to put a man on the moon, it doesn't mean you can't create an environment where talented people can enjoy exercising their

craft.

For every fiery Steve Jobs worshipper, there's a hard-working engineer who wants to achieve great things in their career but not at the cost of spending time with their family and friends.

Find a new perspective

This is the secret to true meaning: what is it about your situation, the problems you are working on, the customers you are working with that gives you an insight only you can see?

What is your *perspective*? Your way of seeing the world that may be inimitable?

How can you use it to define yourselves by the way you add meaning to others?

This is the first step to finding your voice. And once you have developed a truly meaningful voice, you will be able to use it for more than just talking about yourself.

The cost of faking it

Next time some eccentric (perhaps moustachioed?) branding expert tries to wallpaper your business with their own sense of style and "cool", think about whether that's what you really need.

Of course, as with all things, it's a balancing act. It is possible to go too far the other way and not articulate the true strengths of your team and product. It is possible to appear a commodity in a crowded market.

However, blandly applied generic "meaning", without distinction, will achieve much the same thing. And dilute its value for the companies who really have it.

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