



Don't Waste time on Purpose.

**It's Strategic Vision that Guides
Companies best.**

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Have you worked out yet whether Gillette's new commercial is great or truly terrible?

I'm going to go for ... not great.

Ignore the fact that it's like someone volunteering to serve 90 seconds Community Service as compensation for the years of toxic masculinity they've been encouraging.

What's wrong with it, is that it's going to fill thousands of acres of prime management headspace with questions around whether people should be trying to discover their firm's purpose.

The truth is, they shouldn't.

Why not? Because if their firm had a higher social purpose, it'd be obvious by now.

If you're having to search for it, you're "instrumentalising the notion of social good for greater profit". Or to put it another way, you're trying to con me.

I read a brilliant – long but brilliant – article about this recently. There's a link at the end.

In essence, the article says that as most big companies are seeing it, the purpose of purpose isn't to create change.

The purpose of purpose for big corps is to make sure that the levers of change – and the equations used to determine what changes to make and what things to leave in place - remain in the hands of the company's executive.

It's getting you to focus on what one hand is doing, while the other hand is fiddling away.

It's a way of hoodwinking younger workers.

It's a way of building a wall against scrutiny rather than creating transparency.

So, what should those acres of prime management headspace be filled with instead?

The commercial world is volatile, uncertain, complex and you can't make a profit by chasing the latest competitor or market trend: they move too fast.

Instead, you have to know what your company stands for: not in the purpose sense, but in the sense of 'we provide these kinds of people with these kinds of things, in this kind of way'.

That's a Strategic Vision. Creating it takes a mix of the rational and the creative mind.

Of course, you have to make sure that everyone in the company knows it. But when you do, the advantage of a Strategic Vision over Purpose is that a Strategic Vision is actionable: people know what they're meant to be doing.

It's also much more powerful at attracting and retaining talent : people like coming to work when they can do a job well – if you make it clear what the company is trying to achieve, they'll be more effective.

Certainly, people should act ethically. But that's not a higher purpose. That's a basic filter at recruitment. Like not hiring nurses who want to kill people or policemen who enjoy breaking rules.

This question of Purpose came up recently at a British luxury fashion brand we've been working with. Should they have one?

Well, what we found was that once we'd helped the CEO and leadership team formulate a simple, clear – motivating – Vision for what they were doing, many of the questions that had been bothering them disappeared: they were able to brief an external agency much more clearly, they were able to move ahead with the design of their flagship store. They were clearer on the kind of person they wanted to recruit and how to train them.

All of it came from having a clear Vision.

I agree that there needs to be something more about work than just 'sell more stuff'. But Vision is more actionable than Purpose, it's a truer statement of what a company is about, and it's your one true commercial advantage....

That's what I think anyway.

If you've ever wondered, how does Verbal Identity help CEOs create a Vision which defines, aligns and grows their company, often in less than 16 weeks, please [email me](#).

I'd love to hear from you.

And that article I mentioned: It's called "Big Business has a new scam: The Purpose Paradigm" by Maria Hengleveld, in The Nation.

If you can't find the article, [email me](#) and I'll send you a link.

If you're not sure whether your company has a strong guiding Vision, try our 15-minute [diagnostic tool](#). It's been built out of the learnings from our successful strategic repositioning projects at Hunter Boot, Harry Winston, Belstaff, Tourneau and many others.

As always, if you'd like to learn more, hear about my cat or just like to ask a question about anything I've said, just [email me](#).

Chris

You can watch the full video [here](#)

**To find out more or have a quick chat, just email Chris West:
chris@verbalidentity.com**