

Purpose Gets Personal



RED SKY THINKING

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Introduction

Long gone are the days when consumers had no expectations of brands beyond their product or service. When employees chose their employer and workplace based on an offer letter and salary. When investors cared solely about financial performance. When organizations could get away with misinforming or disinforming without being held accountable. Before the global pandemic, before activists and protests — before purpose became disrupted and redefined, and progress and actions came into sharp focus. Put simply, whilst consumers might not think in terms of environmental, social and corporate governance (ESG), they now want their brands to do more: play a progressive and positive role in our society.

Brands, more than ever, are more than just a name. Amazon isn't just an online retailer and cloud service provider — it's delivering on its mission to make customers' lives better and easier every day, investing in communities, generating economic benefits and vitality, and using its scale, technology, resources and

passion for innovation to support underserved community members. Whole Foods isn't just a grocery chain — it's a purpose-driven company that aims to nourish the people and the planet, and set the standards of excellence for food retailers. Nike isn't just a footwear and apparel corporation — it's moving the world forward through the power of sport, leveling the playing field and expanding access to sports for everyone.

As today's consumers are looking for more purpose in their own lives, they are also seeking alternative sources of trust and information — and more see businesses as both competent and ethical, compared to government and the media. To demonstrate integrity and build trust, recent years have seen increasing pressure on brands to prioritize purpose as a core pillar — a movement driven by a 24/7/365 news cycle, unlimited access to information, widespread transparency enabled by social media and, most of all, two passionate younger generations who are committed to building

a better world. While purpose-driven brands have existed for decades, a visible and active commitment to purpose has now become essential for all.

In our post-pandemic era, people's lives, needs and expectations have come under much greater scrutiny, causing everything to undergo a personalization — even brand purpose. As life around the globe becomes more uncertain and many people feel uneasy, unsettled or even unsafe, brands continue to be faced with increased pressure to demonstrate they care — this time, not only at the collective but at the personal level. The numbers are eye-popping: 1 in 3 people report being personally affected by at least one crisis day to day. Equally important, the same number believes that brands should

address their individual needs first, before taking a wider role in society. These were some of the key findings of the latest Havas **Meaningful Brands™** global report. In its 15th year, this landmark proprietary study explores how brands tangibly improve people's lives, enhance their well-being and contribute to society.

The study also found that today — when 68% of people feel the world is going in the wrong direction at a global level, 72% are tired of brands only pretending to want to help society and 71% believe that brands should be doing more to improve and support their health and well-being — *meaningful* brand purpose is indeed becoming increasingly personal.

“We are now entering a phase where purpose must evolve to also recognize that people should be at the heart of what brands care about most. Brands now must focus much more on addressing their customers' personal needs. This study shows that there is a new set of demands that people are now placing on brands — and they are rewarding those who deliver.”

—Seema Patel

*Managing Director
Global Intelligence,
Havas Media Group*





The Meaningful Brands™ study

is unique within the industry

- First global framework connecting brands with human well-being since 2009
- Explores proprietary metric of brand strength for business and marketing planning
- Helps to identify how and where to meaningfully engage people through brand experiences

Two main metrics:

- Meaningful Brand Index: 50% performance, 50% brand equity
- Meaningfulness Score: Average of attachment to brand + its contribution to improving quality of life

Three ways to use the data:

- Evaluate the functional, personal and collective benefits people want and value from brands
- Measure the gap between people's expectations of brands and their brand experiences
- Identify the greatest opportunities for brands to direct efforts and build meaningful equity

In the numbers:

- 91,000-plus respondents from 10 markets (22 more markets to be added in fall 2023)
- 1,300-plus brands from 42 categories
- 782,000-plus brand evaluations



We've already seen the writing on the wall in 2022.

Havas Red examined **The (Six) Biggest Waves in Employee Engagement** and “being purposeful about purpose” came out on top. We recognized that performance was no longer enough for the masses, purpose had to be anchored in one’s core business, values and actions. Companies that define a values-based purpose and pursue strategies aligned with that purpose can gain greater innovation, better collaboration, more engaged employees, more loyal customers and stronger performance.

Our **2023 Red Sky Predictions** report also highlighted the likelihood of “brand values to increase in value.” As the impacts

of global economic and geopolitical uncertainty really start to bite this year, we predicted that purpose-aligned brands would be the ones that succeed at talent retention and attraction, driving sales and staying relevant. But we also warned: It’s going to be an increasingly competitive space as brands across all categories contend for share of voice and mind.

Earlier this year, James Wright, CEO of Havas Red and Global Chairman of Havas PR Network gave the keynote address at Mumbrella’s CommsCon 2023 about “the three Ps” that continue to haunt public relations — purpose being one of them, along with the pandemic and polarization

— suggesting **‘It’s time for brands to take a stand on contentious social issues’** and explaining **‘How we shift from brand storytelling to fact-telling’** because the days of misleading consumers with marketing campaigns to drive sales are unquestionably over.

In this new age of meaningful, purposeful brand purpose that is getting increasingly personal, we as communicators must genuinely recognize the power that PR possesses and acknowledge it can be used as a force for good — and bad. More than just telling a good story, the onus is on us to tell the right story.

Purposeful progress —

as described in our white papers since 2019

Purpose is part of our DNA at Havas Red. Always searching for new ideas and fresh perspectives that help propel the conversation forward, we are actively and continually listening — to our clients, our thought leaders and our industry.

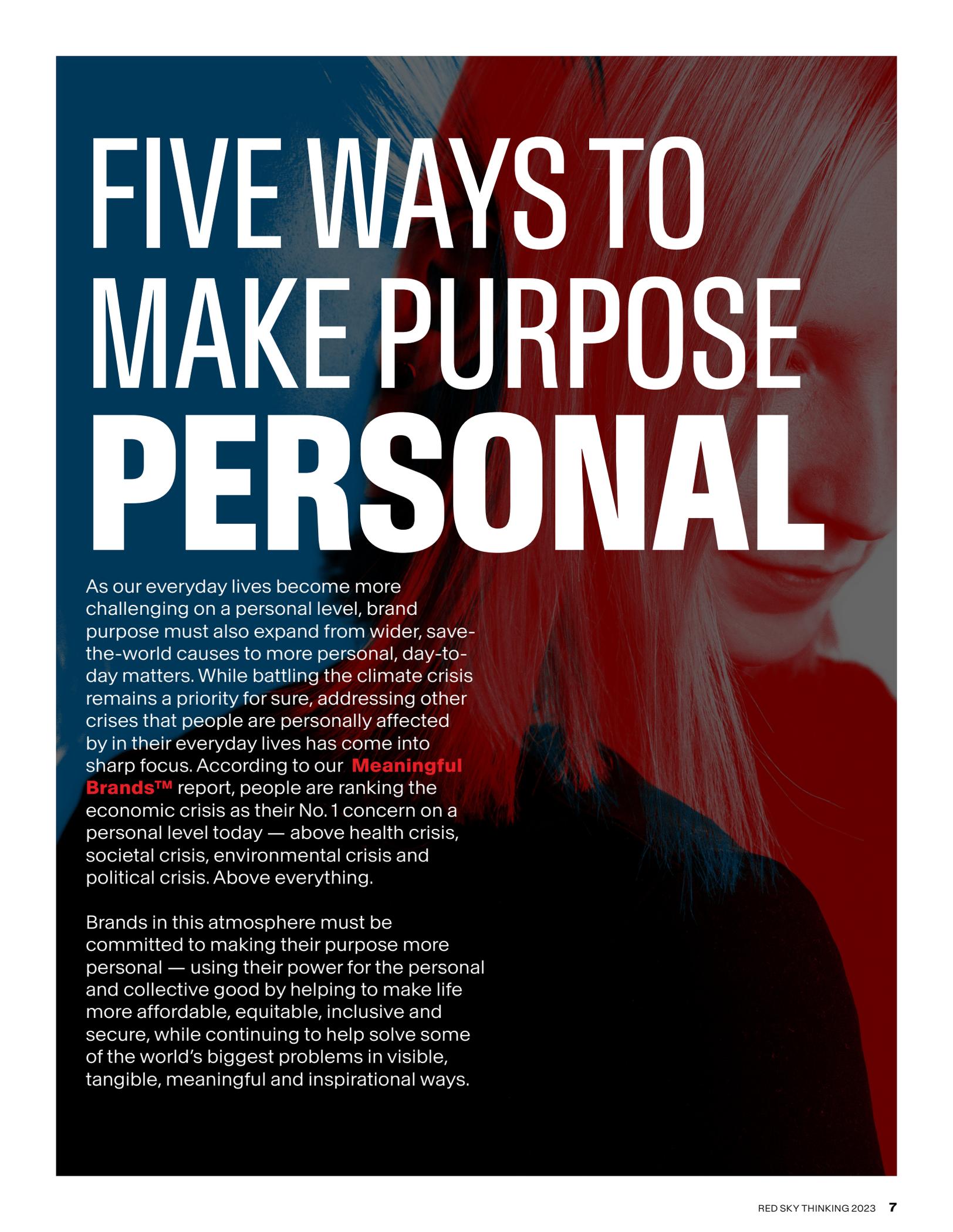
Even before the global pandemic erupted in tandem with social justice protests, we found purpose to be a trend that transcended borders and industries — something that Havas Red forecasted in our **Red Sky Predictions 2020**. It became the year when more companies began leading with values — not only offering more to consumers beyond the products they sell but also seeking to make meaningful contributions to society at large.

Since then, we have witnessed a move from performative pledges to demonstrating actual, tangible progress, as described in **Proving Brand Purpose in 2021**. Then, with continued shifts in the substance, style and tonality of brand communications, we dug deeper into how brands have responded to increased pressure to take a stance, **From Pledges to Progress**. Finally, we pivoted to the idea of being purposeful about corporate purpose versus taking a plain vanilla, one-size-fits-all approach in **Five Ways Brands Can Do Corporate Purpose on Purpose** in 2022.



"I used to say there is a distinct difference between storytelling and telling stories, but now I question whether we should be storytellers at all. It seems unsophisticated and fluffy in the face of critical issues like war, inequality, abortion, climate change, transgender rights and the rising cost of living. (...) When it comes to brand communications, there's far less room today for creative liberties and far more responsibility to tell the truth, while the concept of corporate purpose is being pressure tested like never before. Fiction might be more exciting, but today and every day, brands need to recognize they have a responsibility in how they present their stories."

—James Wright
Global CEO, Havas Red
& Global Chairman,
Havas PR Network



FIVE WAYS TO MAKE PURPOSE PERSONAL

As our everyday lives become more challenging on a personal level, brand purpose must also expand from wider, save-the-world causes to more personal, day-to-day matters. While battling the climate crisis remains a priority for sure, addressing other crises that people are personally affected by in their everyday lives has come into sharp focus. According to our **Meaningful Brands™** report, people are ranking the economic crisis as their No. 1 concern on a personal level today — above health crisis, societal crisis, environmental crisis and political crisis. Above everything.

Brands in this atmosphere must be committed to making their purpose more personal — using their power for the personal and collective good by helping to make life more affordable, equitable, inclusive and secure, while continuing to help solve some of the world's biggest problems in visible, tangible, meaningful and inspirational ways.

Use your (brand) power for good.

Do good for customers, communities and the planet.

It's a tall order: Be a good employer, contribute to the community, support the most vulnerable and act sustainably to meet the economic, social and environmental challenges of today. People are taking a stand on a wide variety of issues they care about — from social, racial, reproductive and criminal justice to volatile geopolitics and an existential climate threat — and expect the brands they support to do the same.

The most meaningful brands make their purpose real and tangible. According to our **Meaningful Brands™** report, 67% of respondents think that companies and brands have the power and responsibility to help solve some of the world's biggest problems, 64% prefer to buy from brands with a reputation for having a purpose other than just profits and, most importantly, an astounding 58% will stop buying from brands that don't respect the planet or society.

While delivering a positive environmental and social impact is not new to many brands with a history of doing good, Deloitte has been among the first to speak and act on the specific social issues they deemed worthy, announcing a powerful **\$1.5 billion social impact investment** last fall aimed at fostering community-driven change to drive equity.

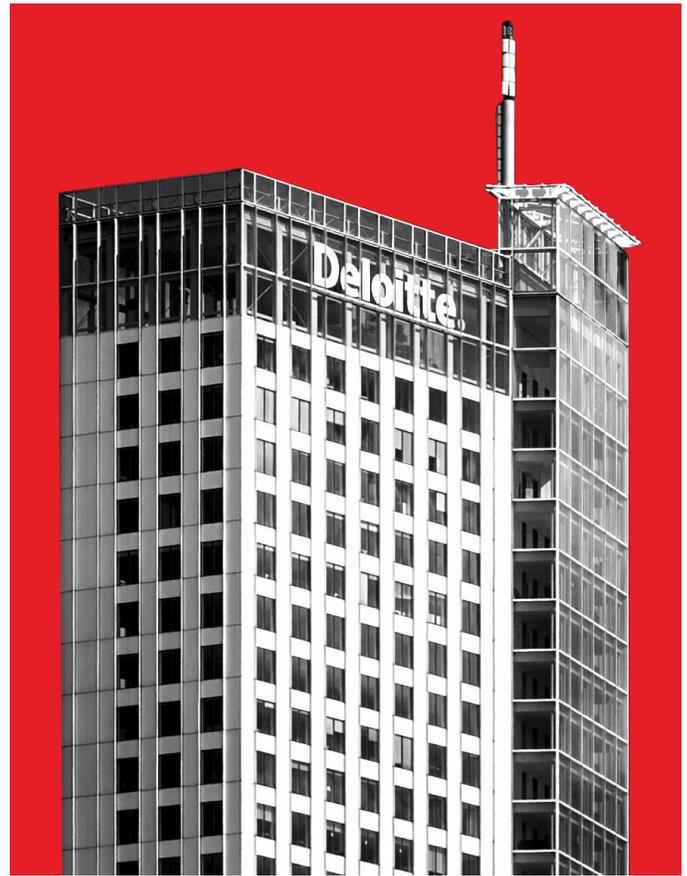
“Purpose wasn't a common element of corporate strategy 10 years ago but organizations are now seeing the invaluable role of purpose, so it has become a centerpiece on leadership agendas. As organizations turn their focus to measuring the outcomes of their purpose goals, they're seeing the importance of embedding purpose into everything they do to ensure their efforts can weather macro conditions and create lasting impact felt by their people, clients, and communities.”

—**Kwasi Mitchell**
Chief Purpose Officer,
Deloitte



Deloitte has set a pioneering path for corporate purpose by institutionalizing it within the company's core strategy, making a 10-year commitment to work with leaders, firms and communities on building pathways for social mobility and economic prosperity — with a focus on issues that are personal to many, including education, workforce development, financial inclusion and health equity.

While government and media are often seen as negative forces in society — because these two institutions are perceived to be feeding the cycle and exploiting it for commercial and political gain through disinformation and division — societal leadership is becoming a core function of business. Therefore, brands must find a balance between using their power for the greater good and supporting the personal needs of customers, employees and other stakeholders, to make a positive impact on society and the environment over the long term.



Taking an authentic stand



Until recently, corporate convention had been to shy away from taking a principled stand on current affairs, fearful of alienating customers, shareholders and business partners. However, consumers, employees and even job seekers these days look to brands to both exhibit the right actions and to speak up on the issues that matter to them. The challenge is finding the right cause at the right time and the right place.

Several companies — from retailer Target to the brewer of Bud Light — have found themselves in the crosshairs recently due to controversial or otherwise divisive campaigns. What they should have done differently can be summarized in the five Ps of purpose, our step-by-step process for brands to take an authentic stand that will resonate with their key stakeholders.

1. Platform: Brands must develop a purpose platform that aligns with their mission and values as well as what they do as a business.

2. Process: There needs to be a process for evaluating when, where and how to engage around societal issues so brands are not reacting in the moment to be popular, but have a consistent means for gathering and analyzing data to inform the position they take.

3. Position: While it is important to have a global, overarching framework when it comes to purpose, it should be applied by considering local needs, priorities and pain points whether relating to DE&I, climate and the environment, or governance.

4. Perspective: Instead of waiting for an issue to arise and seek feedback on, brands should create opportunities throughout the year to engage with internal and external stakeholders — then be able to reflect versus react as situations arise.

5. Plan: Finally, brands should have a plan for how to track and report progress against the pledges they make, which is key to earning and maintaining credibility.

Welcome everyone as they are.

Recognize and celebrate differences.

The business case for DE&I is stronger than ever for brands to remain relevant, viable and competitive. After all, feeling included, respected and appreciated regardless of any real or perceived differences builds engagement and loyalty among customers, employees and business partners alike. What started with focused efforts around race and gender has slowly expanded to include other dimensions over the years, such as age, sexual orientation, socioeconomic, neurodiversity and more. Today, the focus also extends from visibility in marketing, hiring and investing, to widening equity, opportunity and support for underrepresented groups.

The most meaningful brands recognize and celebrate differences. According to our **Meaningful Brands™** report, 74% of people believe it is important to be able to express their true thoughts and opinions, 64% are interested in helping those less fortunate in society, and 3 out of 4 respondents say it is important to coexist harmoniously with people who are different. Most consumers, employees and investors want to do business with brands they can relate to personally, which requires a genuine company commitment to DE&I — seeking to connect with various diversity dimensions on a personal level.

Beyond race and gender, generational disconnect is the age-old problem, with seven living generations confounded by each other's views and behaviors around the globe. For the first time ever, five generations are represented in the marketplace.



Instead of generational generalizations and ageism, brands therefore need to embrace the wisdom, experiences and dependability that older generations are known for, along with the energy, curiosity and honesty that today's younger generations exude, welcoming a diversity of interests and perspectives, while also indulging what makes each person unique.

"Inclusive communications means thinking about all of your stakeholders, which can be overwhelming, especially because our stakeholder groups are becoming increasingly complex. But being as open as possible, and using as much neutral language as possible—clear, concise language that maybe you run by a few of your diverse colleagues from all different backgrounds, just to make sure that there's nothing in there that's offensive. So inclusive communications means something that will not make anyone feel offended or excluded. And it actually takes a lot of care."

—**Carmella Glover**
President,
Diversity Action Alliance
speaking on Havas Red's
**Red Sky Fuel for
Thought Podcast**

Meaningful brands understand that every touchpoint is about inclusion. They focus on elevating all the moments that matter in the customer journey externally and the employee journey internally — to attract, support, reward and retain both consumers and talent. From language to signage, as well as digital and physical spaces, designers must embrace non-binary, universal, accessible and inclusive products and solutions to welcome everyone as they are.

Welcoming everyone as they are also requires that brands get comfortable with uncomfortable topics. They must seek to understand the perspectives and experiences of people from different diversity dimensions — especially those who belong to a historically underrepresented or devalued group — and how they can and do impact the marketplace. Meaningful brands can then create and communicate a purpose that is more authentic, empathetic and personal. Authentic companies are also more admired, approved and trusted by external stakeholders. And, **trusted companies outperform their peers by 400%.**

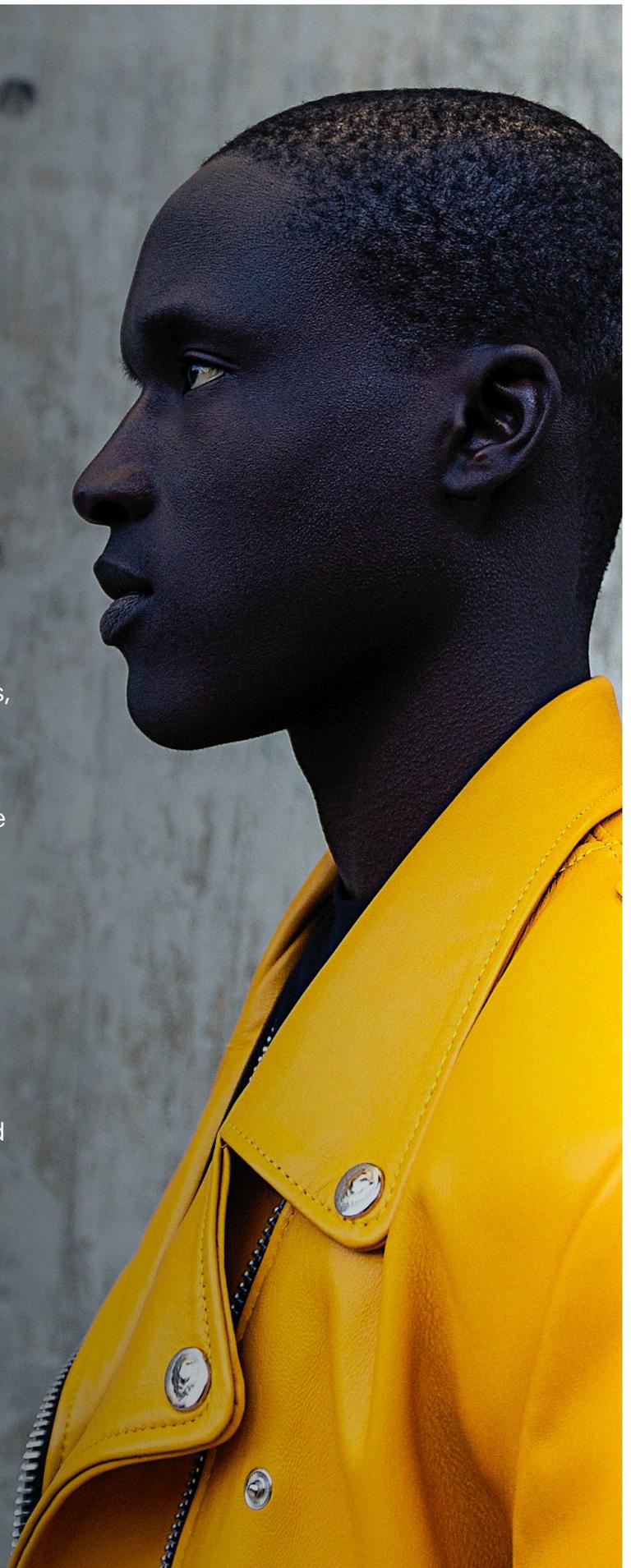


New trends in fashion and beyond

The fashion industry, for one, has been known for decades as being elitist and leaving no room for inclusivity — even though it's all about self-definition, self-expression and, most importantly, claiming your identity, whatever that may be. However, recent years have seen a marked shift not only within the fashion and beauty world but other industries as well to market to everyone as they are.

From curves to vitiligo, Down syndrome, different generations and different abilities, the diversity of models and influencers appearing on screen, online and in print has increased considerably, empowering consumers of all shapes and sizes with the confidence to feel amazing in their own skin.

A powerful example included Havas Red and Havas Middle East working with adidas to create the world's first swimmable, giant **liquid billboard**, seeking to highlight that one-third of women globally feel uncomfortable swimming in public. The brand spotlighted Middle Eastern athletes as ambassadors, and encouraged the public to test the waters regardless of their shape, abilities or religion, achieving 295-plus million in total reach along with widespread global media coverage in 50-plus countries across 6 continents, and winning the **Outdoor Grand Prix** at the 2022 Cannes Lions Awards.



Wear your purpose on your sleeve.

Be transparent about your commitments and actions.

Brands need a purpose platform that is personal to them and their stakeholders. One that allows them to talk the talk: state clear and tangible commitments — and then walk the walk: back those with visible actions and measurable results. One they'll proudly wear on their sleeves. From purpose-driven consumers to values-driven employees and performance-driven investors, being transparent keeps all their stakeholders informed — while benefiting their peers. By providing transparency into their commitments and actions, meaningful brands have the power to foster dialogue, enable engagement and drive real change.

However, there seems to be a disconnect these days between what brands are saying and doing versus what their stakeholders are hearing and perceiving. According to our **Meaningful Brands™** report, 77% of respondents are tired of brands pretending they want to help society when they just want to make money, and 73% think brands should be transparent about

their commitments and promises — but only 33% think they actually are. Given a pervasive lack of trust, there is room for improvement when it comes to transparently communicating brand purpose and progress to consumers, employees and investors alike.

In 2022, 96% of the world's largest 250 companies reported on their ESG work and 80% of them set related targets based on either global or national emissions goals — up from 51% in 2020 — according to KPMG's **2022 Survey of Sustainability Reporting**. In addition, an eye-popping 87% of respondents to PwC's **Global Investor Survey** stated they believe that ESG disclosures contain unsupported claims — also known as greenwashing.

A term coined by Greenpeace to describe deceptive marketing campaigns and superficial PR tactics to

boost sales and public image, greenwashing has been characterized by bold claims, green buzzwords and nature-inspired imagery that rarely hold up to scrutiny. From not being specific enough to not telling the whole story or not sharing evidence to back up any claims made, it has allowed brands to continue business as usual, while misleading the public and delaying meaningful action for customers, communities and the planet.



“Recent events have fueled polarization, not just in politics but in nearly all ESG issues, and left consumers with abysmally low levels of trust, particularly with the media. Half of Americans believe national news organizations intend to mislead, misinform or persuade the public to adopt a particular point of view through their reporting. For businesses and brands, it’s never been a trickier time to navigate these topical and emotive issues. And if you get it wrong it can leave you bitten by the very community, customers, stakeholders and even government you want to bring on-side.”

—James Wright
Global CEO, Havas Red
& Global Chairman,
Havas PR Network

This year a new term, ‘greenhushing’ appeared, which refers to brands under-communicating their ESG activities. According to South Pole’s **2022 Net Zero Report**, while 72% of companies have set emissions targets in line with

global climate goals, nearly a quarter of them don’t plan to publicize those — likely in order to avoid greenwashing accusations and/or because they are in fact greenwashing. What’s more, 59% of U.S. CEOs plan to pause or reconsider their ESG efforts,

according to KPMG’s **CEO Outlook Survey**, while more recently, a **Fortune 500 CEO Survey** found that 48% agreed with a statement characterizing the political pushback on ESG a useful correction.



ESG under attack

Brands that clearly state their ESG targets and report their progress towards those could face backlash from consumers and employees who might find the plans aren't ambitious enough, as well as from investors and politicians who might find the same efforts to undermine profits or run counter to prevailing interests — but this isn't the time to scale back on ESG communications.

As brands adopt clear, relevant and ambitious targets to battle climate change, increase diversity and promote social equity, they must stay true to their purpose, remain unapologetic in their ESG push and demonstrate their unwavering commitment to making progress. They also need to prove why their commitments and actions are good for all stakeholders — by improving productivity, equity and innovation. Being transparent about their commitments and actions makes their ESG targets easier to analyze and encourages knowledge-sharing, potentially leading to more ambitious targets being set and more opportunities for collaboration.

There is increased reporting on climate-related risks and carbon reduction targets. There is a growing awareness of deforestation and biodiversity risks. There is a spotlight on water and waste management. But the S and G elements of brands' ESG commitments and actions are slow to come into focus, and yet to be translated into a comprehensive set of disclosures. There is an opportunity to start reporting on all three letters of ESG performance with the same rigor and data quality that companies apply to reporting on their financial performance.

Additionally, purpose statements and disclosures increasingly focus on business, growth and future performance — hence demonstrating that they aren't being *driven* by values but *driving* real value. Therefore, opting for the bare-minimum, government-mandated disclosures instead of openly communicating about those along with the related challenges and progress is a missed opportunity to engage consumers, employees and investors, as well as help other brands step out of their comfort zone, embrace change and seek out collaboration.

Support everyone where they need it.

Do more to improve individual health and well-being.

Today's brands must deliver on the "me" as well as on the wider issues. To support everyone where they need it, brands must seek to make our lives simpler, easier and yet fuller — by helping us express ourselves as individuals, making us feel energized and alive, giving us a sense of peace and joy, inspiring us to make healthier choices and/or helping us save time and money.

The disruption and isolation the world experienced during the global pandemic — along with the continued pressure

and upheaval of our post-pandemic times — have set off critical conversations and awareness around well-being across the physical, mental and spiritual levels. People these days prioritize the products, services and resources they perceive to be good for their health, and brands must step up to get more involved.

According to our **Meaningful Brands™** report, 7 out of 10 people declare making a real effort to be physically and mentally healthy, and 71% believe that brands should

be doing more to support and improve their health and well-being. With purpose becoming more personal, and health and well-being becoming key priorities across all stakeholder groups, the most meaningful brands focus not only on enhancing wellness but making it available to everyone. Through product, messaging or activation, they inspire simplicity, optimism, peace, joy and/or escapism to people as the world continues to grapple with uncertain times.

"The essence of well-being isn't defined by physical health, and it's much more than absence of disease. Well-being stems from a full integration of our mind and body with our environment. This means accepting change and uncertainty, working every day to nurture our mind-body and build resilience, growing and learning, contributing to our community and doing something that is purposeful. There is no single way to achieve optimal health, but we know that the prerequisites are sleep, nutritious food, movement, stress channeling and belonging to a community."

—Bojana Jankovic Weatherly

M.D., double board-certified physician in internal and integrative medicine



Younger generations define and manage wellness differently than others. As they are experiencing unprecedented levels of stress, anxiety and depression, mental health and well-being have become a huge part of millennials' and Gen Zers' conversations, both in person and online. These young consumers are gravitating toward brands that hold space for their emotional needs — so brands must be comfortable to go beyond their usual reach by tuning into the current state of mental health and well-being, and getting involved in related conversations.

It's time to go beyond making donations. Many brands have unique offerings during various health and wellness observance days and months, such as National Nutrition Day or Mental Health Awareness Month, offering specially branded

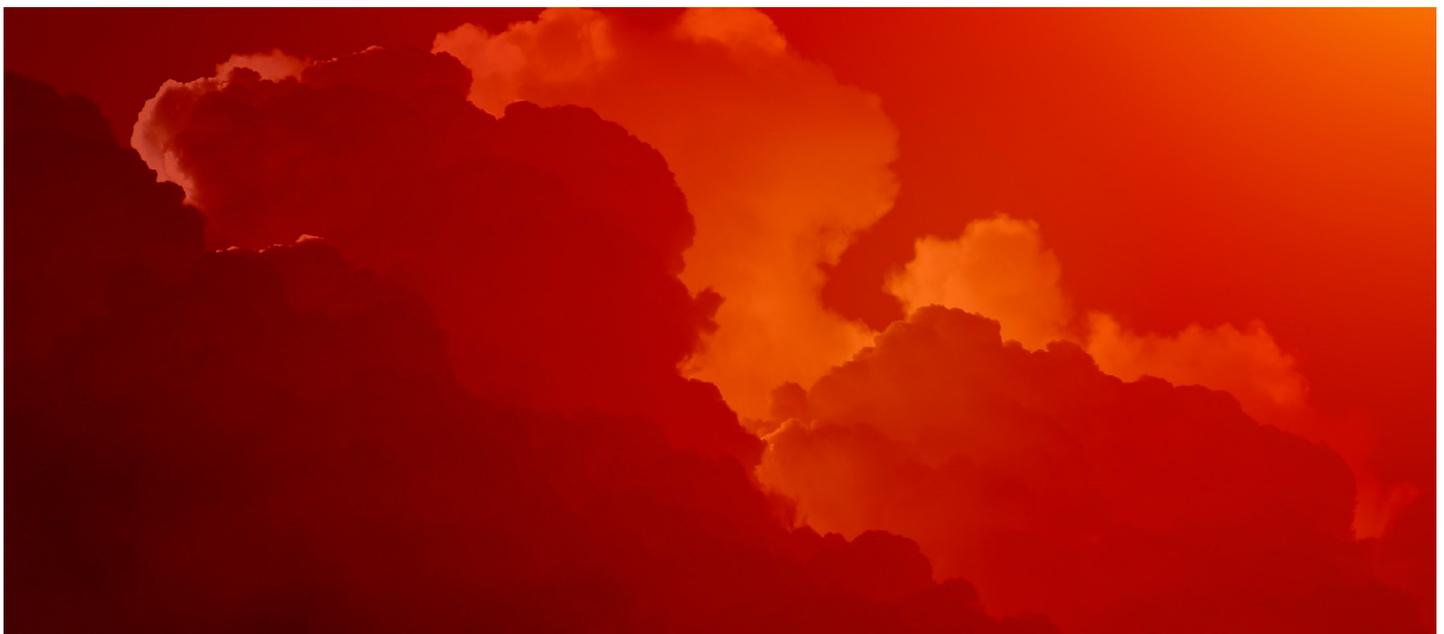
merchandise and/or donating a portion of their profits to a special cause, while others support related nonprofits year-round. These are the brands consumers appreciate for visibly supporting health and well-being — but they won't love them unless there is something in it for them personally.

By teaming up with health advocates, experts, authors and wellness influencers to go beyond their regular offering, brands can curate an assortment of health and wellness tips, resources and/or products that encourage positive well-being in a natural, unpretentious way. While relevance may be expected, it isn't necessary — they key is being purposeful, transparent and consistent. Just like a car manufacturer may choose to support vulnerable animals, brands may choose any aspect of human health and wellness

to champion, from sleep to nutrition, movement, escapism, time management, stress management or financial well-being.

Health, wellness and lifestyle brands themselves can also do more by making their tools, workouts and mindfulness resources available for everyone to try, to win or to access via brand partnerships or organizational associations.

It's also time to optimize the customer journey, taking the stress out of the process every step of the way. From creating ease and reward at the point of purchase to integrating support throughout the product life cycle — which ideally includes enabling its sustainable disposal — brands must strive to make their customers feel nurtured, checking in at regular intervals and providing helpful resources that support everyone.





A global food company. A need for food.

A meaningful example.

Kellogg, the leading healthy cereal provider and snack company, is doing its part to feed people around the world. In the last 10 years alone, this Havas Red client has provided 3 billion servings of food to those struggling with hunger and malnutrition. But Kellogg is going a step further with its commitment to supporting **Breakfast Clubs**. Here is why.

Around the world, 820 million people face food uncertainty. This means more than one in ten people don't know where their next meal is coming from. Hunger is especially devastating for children, as it can have serious implications for their physical and mental health, academic achievement and future economic prosperity.

In many places around the globe, before-school programs are in place (providing a lifeline to working parents and) allowing students time to play with friends, receive extra academic support and enjoy a healthy breakfast so they arrive at school ready to learn. Kellogg is making a meaningful difference not only by donating food, but by partnering with a variety of organizations from school foodservices in the U.S. to senior citizens in Germany and food banks across six continents to tackle the bigger problem and continue to expand school breakfast programs.

5. Make it personal — for everyone.

Become a platform that enables everyone to live more purposefully.



Countless studies revealed that the pandemic caused us to question our purpose on a personal level in- and outside work, and renewed our desire to contribute more to society. As people's expectations of our post-pandemic world continue to expand, they are looking to brands not only to enhance everyday life with purpose, joy and personal service, but to become a platform that helps others do the same. Today, consumers want to lead the change and be the change they want to see in the world, and they expect brands to become advisers, gurus and facilitators — especially in their content and brand activations — to help them shine.

According to our **Meaningful Brands™** report, more than half of respondents are prepared to make personal sacrifices to save the planet and take a stand on the issues that are important to them, 3 out of 5 are being the

change they want to see in the world, and 62% are starting to change their behavior specifically to adapt to the environmental pressures we are facing. Meaningful brands no longer hold the role of the superhero, celebrity or savior. Instead, they use thorough — and thoroughly energizing — fact-telling to effectively connect with their audiences and facilitate behavior change to affect environmental and social change.

When it comes to enabling everyone to live more purposefully, brands must be prepared to put the "active" back into brand activism. From deft, personal and relevant fact-telling instead of storytelling, to seeking longer-term results instead of instant gratification, actively listening to consumers, focusing on real-world problems, and including activists

and activist organizations in their partnership strategies can all help to deepen their existing brand impact. In addition, embracing the role of facilitator will help reframe a negative narrative surrounding PR and the media, while driving positive change for customers, communities and the planet.



Even if we don't all want the same change, we all must believe everything we do can change the world for the better. Whether it's about battling the climate crisis, addressing other crises that people are personally affected by in their everyday lives, responding to a political

decision, standing up for social justice or supporting another cause, brands must focus on the cause with a wider goal of changing behavior instead of using a cause to promote their own messages.



"I'm finding three big buckets of people using journalism-like skills outside of news organizations without ever calling what they're doing journalism. There are creators who are increasingly adding more depth to their work with storytelling, content marketers who are increasingly doing fact checking and source interviews and elevating what content marketing can look like, and then a whole class of advocacy and nonprofit groups that are adding either data intelligence or people's stories to deepen their work. They may even be doing their own surveying and research work."

—Christopher Wink
*Co-founder and CEO
of the news organization
Technical.ly*

A stack of newspapers is shown, with the top one featuring a headline in French: "IL FAUT CONCLURE UN TRAITÉ AVEC LES DEUX ALLEMANDS". The text is in a bold, sans-serif font. Below the headline, there is a sub-headline: "Les membres de l'Assemblée de Varsovie : Pacte". The background is a dark, textured surface, possibly a book cover or a folder, with some faint text visible.

The art of placing a story in the news-you-can-choose media environment

In our post-pandemic media landscape, where the mix of news people choose to consume is as unique as they are, brands face sizeable — but not insurmountable — obstacles when placing meaningful news stories. To earn a reply from a reporter or a click from a reader, a brand's story needs to be deftly told, personally and culturally relevant, and deliver a value-add to consumers.

Here is the trick: Lead with your brand's impact, not your marketing information. Your brand's impact on causes, people and communities should be at the heart of every story you tell. Not the product you're trying to sell, company you want to raise awareness of or message you want to land. It's all about impact — personal impact. It's about the human beings your brand has touched. Who are they? What do they think, feel, need or know? Most of all, what's been the benefit to them?

As purpose gets increasingly personal, brands need to make themselves the sidekick and the cause the hero. Learn more from our recent white paper on the [news-you-can-choose media environment](#).

Final thoughts

As purpose gets more personal, brands must use their power for the personal and collective good — to support all their stakeholders and the planet in meaningful ways. They must welcome everyone as they are — recognizing and celebrating differences beyond race and gender. They must wear their purpose on their sleeve — staying true to their commitments, and transparently communicating about their actions and challenges. They must go beyond their usual reach to support their communities where they need it most — doing more to improve individual health and well-being. And, they must be(come) service providers, advisers and facilitators — enabling everyone to live more purposefully.

When it comes to purpose, it's best done personally and on purpose — putting people, honesty and integrity first.

Meaningful brands look for ways to be relevant, transparent and human with customers, employees and investors alike. Most of all, they stay true to their purpose, demonstrating an unyielding commitment to the environment, and stepping up the S and G elements of their ESG commitments in visible and measurable ways.

Purpose is in our DNA. Our parent company, Havas Group, operates with an explicit mission — to make a meaningful difference to brands, businesses and people. It was ranked No. 2 by The Good Report among agency networks promoting good in 2022, and for 15 years now, has been guided by its proprietary and data-driven Meaningful Brands™ study, which looks at how brands tangibly improve peoples' lives, enhance their personal well-being and contribute to wider society.



UNBLINKERED THINKING | UNEXPECTED IDEAS

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Havas Red is part of the Havas PR Global Network, the PR and communications arm of the Havas Group that comprises approximately 40 agencies around the world and more than 1,300 employees. The Havas Red strategic merged media model brings together traditional and digital publishing, content, social media and data within a single infrastructure. For further information, please visit www.havasredgroup.com.