

Growth Challenges

Everyday challenges companies face that impede growth



Multiple Personality Disorder

“What does your company do?”

While this question is simple and posed frequently to many organizations, those who respond to it may find it difficult to answer. This is not because employees are incapable of doing such. On the contrary, many (especially those on the frontline of their customers and prospects) have created a mental script as they expect to be asked this question often. The bigger question is when they do respond, are they answering it correctly; are they answering it similarly to other employees?

The reason it is difficult to answer is because as companies grow and expand, offer more services, acquire other companies and continue to stay ahead of their competitors their proposition is constantly evolving. Therefore the answer to the question may be constantly changing. As a company strives to be aggressive and engage the market quickly or leadership lacks the telling of a clear story, the answers employees’ give can become inconsistent. These companies are often void of a foundational corporate story that defines what the company means to the market they serve. Also, if an answer exists it may not be shared constantly among the internal teams therefore repetition to build recall and consistency becomes void.

The most common result that occurs when this symptom is evident in a company is the majority of employees provide a different answer to the question. While some may have similar parts to the story, their individual answers don’t have a consistent purpose, which the customer is looking to understand. So as a company is fragmented internally with who they are and what they do, the customer or prospect is even more confused and must work harder to determine if the company is worth their dollars.

When a company struggles to answer the question or different answers are shared from one employee to the next, it’s called “Multiple Personality Disorder.”



Example of Multiple Personality Disorder in a Company

Product Development to Marketing to Sales

“Multiple Personality Disorder” can happen within a department but is more common across an entire organization and reflected in the different ways the company’s story is communicated by the individual departments. Take the three primary departments that are formed to drive growth in a company: Product Development, Marketing and Sales. It is quite common for these three departments who should convey a consistent story do not. This is often a result of either the lack of any foundational corporate story to follow or the individual department establishing its own version that fits their point of view and their need reflected in how their performance is measured.

The way this typically plays out across these three departments goes something like this... **Product Development** crafts their story on the solutions, features and benefits they have developed and can be reflected in the materials they use to guide other departments.

Marketing crafts their story for the audience they are targeting and the solutions right for them or the medium they choose to promote their story through (e.g. Social Media vs. Traditional Advertising vs. the Website).

Sales crafts their story on what will resonate with the prospect who they are talking to at any given time who has also shown interest in the company’s solutions.

In many cases the company’s solutions become the common thread, but how these solutions are framed and the context to the company story as a whole varies by the storyteller. Solutions (product or services) are tangible elements so it becomes easy for an employee to use them as a crutch to explain what the company does. While they are very much a part of the story, using solutions alone as a way to describe what a company does, limits the customer’s comprehension of the company’s full differentiating value. In a company who is competing in a commodity market the solutions are likely not enough to frame the complete value of why a customer should buy.

The end result of these three departments is different stories can be seen across external communications where they can become fragmented. A mixed message is



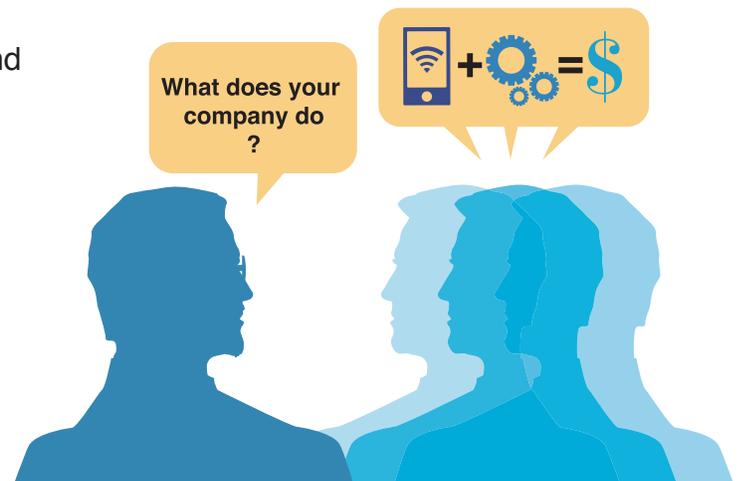
often the tell tale sign of a company lacking a cohesive corporate story. A common complaint that leadership will convey when this occurs is that each department is behaving as a silo. What this leadership is failing to see is they have not provided a clear story that everyone can understand, share with others and most importantly reflect their passion for why they are with the company. A good corporate story will make believers out of employees who will make believers out of customers.

How to ensure one personality exists

No different than a person, a company has different attributes that make their proposition and reason for being in their market unique. These attributes provide the full picture of what the company represents and inherent value to the customer. Different attributes however, do not mean multiple personalities. Many companies confuse these two, using attributes to create a conflicting image and message to its customers. They use attributes as ways to create different marketing messages to different customers fragmenting the corporate story.

A single personality begins by defining the attributes of the organization that are both necessary to compete, critical to differentiate and desired by the customer. This exercise when conducted begins to build a unanimous understanding among employees about what makes up the company's purpose. Many companies go through this exercise as if it is a word game where upon completion it can be put into a power point deck forgetting about it overtime. These attributes must be communicated often, respected, displayed and evolved when changes in the market occur. They become the context for the entire corporate story and ultimately the proposition the customer desires.

Once attributes are defined, the leadership is in agreement and comfortable socializing them with employees, the corporate story can be crafted. No different than attributes, this story must be socialized among employees and used as the foundation for all external communications. It does not need to be a multi-chapter story describing every facet of the organization. On the contrary, in order for it to be impactful, it should be short and to the point. The corporate story should convey the attributes;



the cultural tone of the organization and the value the company brings to its important customers. The most effective corporate stories can be woven into pitch presentations, marketing materials such as videos or advertisements and spoken easily by frontline employees when customers ask, “What does your company do?”

Multiple Personality Disorder is corrected when the organization aligns everyone behind a single impactful corporate story. Assuming employees can accomplish it without the leadership team is wrong and will only perpetuate a fragmented image to the customer. Once a corporate story is established, attributes defined for each department must embrace these foundational communications and weave them into their individual messages. The leadership team then must ensure consistency and the right translation of the corporate story is followed by all departments in order for it to be adopted and effective.

Multiple Personality Disorder in a company is not difficult to overcome but must be recognized and identified where it is occurring in the company. Many companies may see this as an exercise in futility and believe selling the company to customers in different ways with different over-arching stories is fine as long as they buy. They may be correct today, but in the long run as markets become more segmented and competitors specialize, these companies will realize quickly they stand for nothing in their customers’ mind.

If you suspect your company has an issue with “Multiple Personality Disorder” and are uncertain how to resolve it, we can help. Our team will work with your leadership and employees to shape your corporate story guiding your organization and resonating with your customers. Addressing this issue sooner versus later will position your organization to improve customer acquisition and retention, increase revenue, align teams and establish future growth.



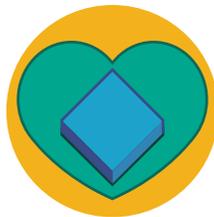
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**If you're interested in learning more about how we
can help your business grow, please contact:**

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