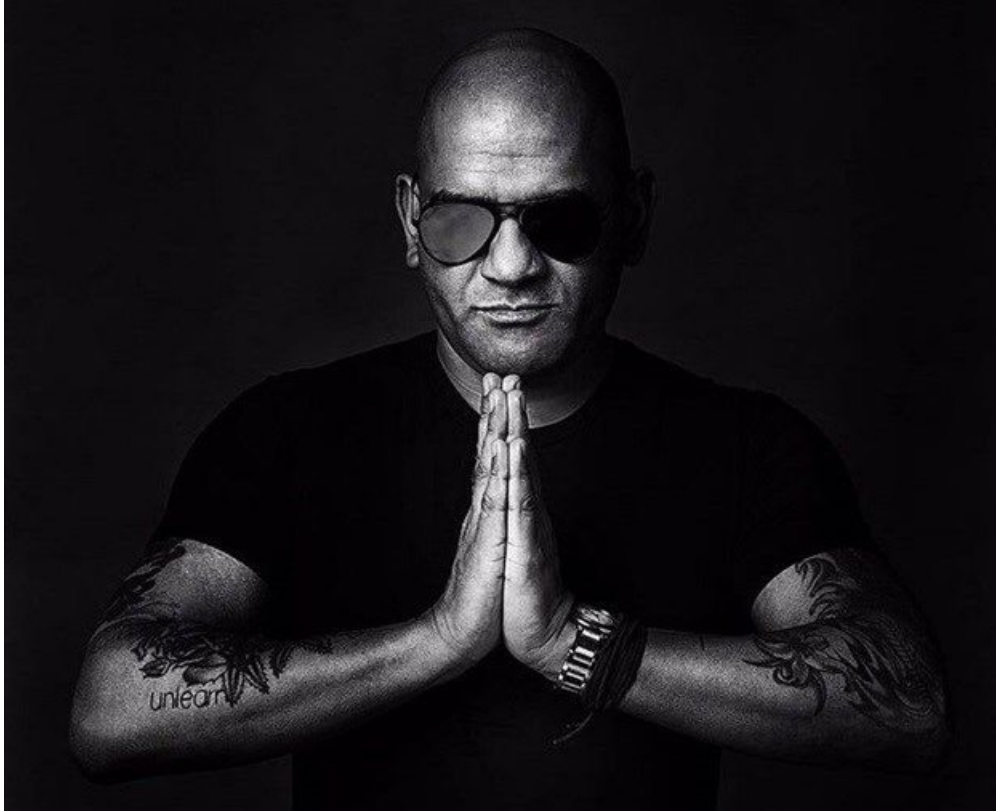


Brands have to mean something to be sustainable

By  Nathan Reddy

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In an increasingly competitive environment, brands that intend to be sustainable in the future need to find an authentic space which they can credibly own. It's about ensuring that a brand's purpose means something significant, something that resonates with consumers.



Nathan Reddy, chief creative officer at GRID Worldwide, photographed by Liezl Zwarts of Lamppost.

'Making it mean something' is a combination of consequence, substance, implication, magnitude and even gravity. Brands that get it right are assured of connecting with the hearts and minds of consumers.

In order to survive a rapidly evolving world where disruption is par for the course, advertising and branding agencies need to be ensuring they add visible and concrete value to their client's businesses. To achieve this, they need to consciously strive to work meaning into the brands in their care.

“ Essentially, it's about tapping into what Austrian neurologist, psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor Victor Frankl called the primary motivation of all human beings: to search for meaning in life. ”

Without some kind of sincere and authentic meaning in place, brands will find it very hard to develop any degree of affinity with consumers.



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When you consider a brand from the perspective of making it mean something, it inevitably points to the underlying dynamics of the brand.

In the process, it raises a number of critical questions:

- Are the brand's values aligned with its actions?;
- Does its positioning and proposition connect on a level beyond its functional positioning?;
- Does it have the power – and appeal – to attract?;
- Is there a sympathetic resonance between the brand world and the consumers' emotional world and how can you build on that resonance?; and, finally
- Is there overall positive brand health and brand dysfunction?

What also needs to be taken into consideration is the fact that meaning is in the eye of beholder. As a result, the custodians of brands need to be cognisant of the inherent subjectivity of meaning.

Despite shared values, symbols can mean different things to different people. To ensure that meaning is interpreted in the way it's intended requires an understanding of the context, the cultural subtext and semiotics (the study of signs and symbols).



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In addition to understanding the brand's soul meaning, brand custodians need to understand how the brand lives in the world. To survive – and thrive – in future, it's imperative that brands play a role in popular culture.

It's essential that every brand has a single-minded and clear view of its proposition. Ideally, this proposition should be grounded in trust and authenticity.



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To achieve this requires interrogating the heart and soul of a brand and its distinctive assets and then ensuring a seamless customer experience of the brand across all touchpoints.

All touchpoints within a brand's 360-degree ecosystem need to be strategically considered and then played out

consistently, cohesively and with authenticity.



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For brands to be sustainable in the future requires that they successfully intersect at the point of purpose and meaning to become iconic and live in culture.

This achievement has a sound economic and commercial imperative, given that brands are not only assured of being future fit for the 21st Century but are also in a position to disrupt the conventions of their marketing category and act as challengers.

ABOUT NATHAN REDDY

Nathan Reddy is chief creative officer at GRID Worldwide. GRID Worldwide is a creative investment business which generates value for its client by creating solutions for its clients' business challenges. The agency specialises in creating challenger brands which disrupt the conventions of their marketing category. Underpinning its work is a proprietary investment creative operating model called #makeitmeansomething, an ethos which is grounded in giving brands real meaning and purpose so that they are able to live in popular culture.

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