HBR Case Study

Authenticity: Is It Real or Is It Marketing?

Presented By (Group 8):

Arpita Bahadur
Gaurav Kumar
Manish Gupta
Pavan Kumar
Ranjini K Ballal
Vani Vyas
Overview:

These are the following important inferences from the case-

- Marty is appointed as the head of marketing in Hunsk Engines.
- Marty has earned a reputation as a Focused Miracle Worker from his earlier jobs.
- Over the time Hunsk Engines has systematically devalued its considerable pedigree.
- Now Marty’s focus is to regain Hunsk’s fame as a cult brand and place Hunsk as a ‘REAL COMPANY’.
- He is trying to improve Hunsk’s Customer Loyalty by emphasizing on “PASSION BIKING” as here customers are perceived to be ‘Believers’.
- He is directing Hunsk Engines to ‘Go-back to its roots’ and establish itself as an Authentic Company.
- But Marty found that employees in Hunsk were not Authentic although they were intrinsically motivated.

Question:

Should Gordon continue to back Marty’s no hold barred Authenticity approach?

Ans:

Marty’s Approach:

- Introducing Back-to-roots strategy in organization.
- Focusing on authenticity within the organization by infusing the internal customers (employees) with the feel of Hunsk being an Authentic Company.
- Stressed Hunsk to hold on to its values.
- Believed that employees DNA be same as that of customers.
- De-emphasis on Cause Marketing.
• Discouraged those employees whose mindset was not similar to that of Marty’s.

• Emphasized that corporate culture needs to reflect the authenticity of the branding message it sends out.

Marty’s no-hold-barred approach did improve Hunsk’s position as an Authentic Company which could be seen in results- new tagline, new ads and the new looks. The Marketing Campaign was dynamic.

But his approach also let some very good people in marketing department feel out of place. Employees throughout the company who had done terrific work for years were feeling dismissed, censored, marginalized.

We believe that Gordon should back Marty to-

• Instill the brand/product’s attributes into the organization to make Hunsk a more authentic company.

• Focus on the three elements that provide the foundation for organizational authenticity: identity, image, and actions.

• Employees at Hunsk to “live the brand”.

• Direct Hunsk to resolve the inconsistency by giving up for-purpose actions and become an authentic for-profit business.

• Create a work culture where employees will have a same mindset as that of customers.

These actions will empower Hunsk to be more Authentic which will –

- improve the creativity of employees

- motivate employees

- employees are perceived as identified with the organization

- Authentic functioning stimulates empathy

- Authentic functioning stimulates integrity
Customers will start associating themselves with Hunsk after seeing the new promotions which will help Hunsk Engines to regain its cult status.

There is “a flip side” to all of this however. Marty takes the concept of authenticity a little too far and almost to a fanatic point. His limiting on the careers "non-biker" employees is one thing that could definitely hurt Hunsk. Maybe increasing biker spirit solely in the marketing department might help; doing it throughout the company is definitely harmful. Fiona, for example, was very competent and productive, but was prevented from advancing because she didn't have a passion for motorcycles in particular. She then presumably went to search for a job elsewhere. What if this happened to the company's engineers and designers too? Most people capable of building and producing a superior motorcycle don't have a personal interest in owning one themselves. This could lead to skilled employees leaving the company, resulting in the decline of product quality, which would then lead to a loss of customers. Once again on the helmet issue, Marty is passing up a prime business opportunity for the image of authenticity. Hunsk could sign agreements with a helmet maker to advertise their helmets alongside their superior motorcycles for quite a bit of money.

All in all, We believe that the idea of going authentic is a good one, but it shouldn't be taken too far. If a company begins to oppress employees and drive them away all for the sake of image, then they have taken too far. However, if they make some changes to increase their appeal to customers and expand their market share, authenticity can be very helpful.

**Considering the above insights we want Gordon to direct Marty in these ways:**

Gordon can suggest alternative mechanisms to Marty. Gordon can empower Marty to hire and manage a customer relationship management team which would be involved in customer interaction and these teams can reflect the passion that Marty needs translated to his customers/market. This way Marty will be given the freedom to execute his customer focused campaign. The organization can tie up with real world motorists and Marty can achieve his vision for the organization via different means.

Gordon promises to increase employee awareness and interest in the product by trainings/ field trips/customer events. A change of this magnitude has to be achieved incrementally .The employees can still be valuable contributors to the
business even if they are not passionate Hunsk riders. Gordon should appreciate Marty for his customer focus and organizational vision while at the same time encouraging him not to tradeoff the focus on employees who are an asset to the organization.

With this solution, Marty’s vision, the organizational needs and employee morale are all preserved.