

Experience aligned

- a structured approach to building the brand from inside out

Living in a changing world poses endless challenges, and many companies struggle in the process of transformation, to cope with the continuing fast-change of behaviours and needs. Surely, most companies have no experience of what needs to be done and what should be in place to achieve a successful transformation process, therefore they rely on experts to help them during this difficult process.

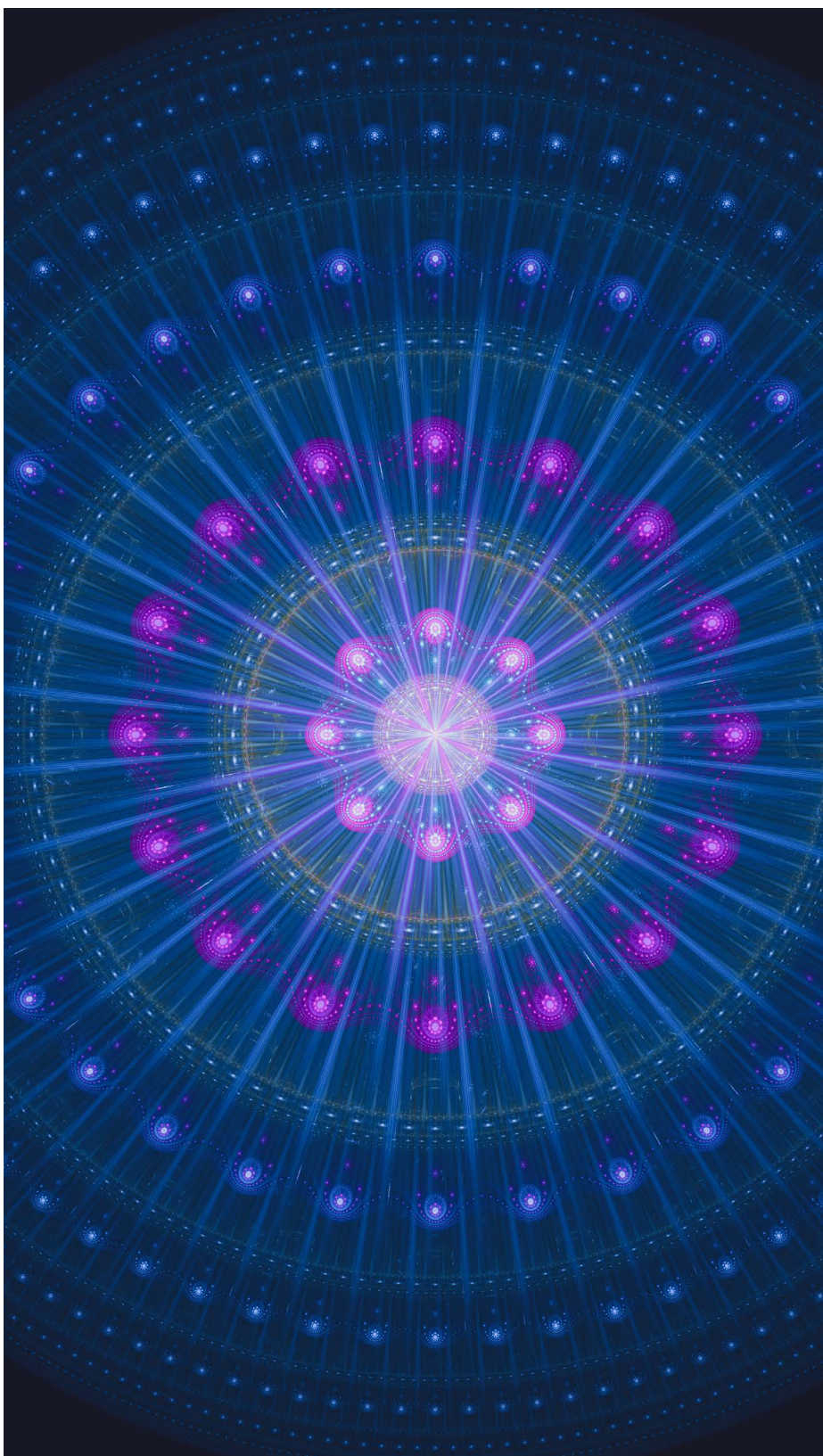
Contact

Katarina Önell
Kantar | Client Director

E: katarina.onell@kantar.com

Any company aiming for a strong brand experience need to address the importance of their “inside” – their people. By sharing a client case of a large organization, challenged on its market by new players, below referred to as “The Company”, we hope can inspire others to transform themselves for the future and build a strong brand inside out.

The Company’s industry is experiencing significant change – driven by customers’ demands and changing behaviours – where innovation, quality and capacity are taken for granted. Bringing relevant services to customers with ease may seem like a thing that all companies should be able to do, but old legacy and the former context caused difficulties of being simple and fast – impacting the attractiveness of The Company. At the same time the outside world has continued to change at a high pace with new players. This demanded a new strategic direction, fundamentally changing The Company through new strategic priorities, a new operating model and structure along with the need for new ways of working. The Company needed to change everything including purpose, values, and leadership.



Change from the inside

The grand scale of change prompted the discussion of why the company exists for its customers. As a consequence of this discussion, a common purpose and new corporate values were created. The corporate values are key for driving the necessary change in the company’s culture on a day-to-day basis, providing guidance to employees in the everyday work, supporting the delivery of the customer promise and ultimately securing the delivery on key strategic business priorities-“We need to change everything!” In turn, the new values, vision and strategy demand a different approach to how The Company leads its people.

A set of revamped leadership expectations were put in place for the existing cadre of leaders within the company, but also with great bearing on future promotions as well as external recruitment of leaders. The expectations of employees, as well as new hires, changed too. For this company, it was clearly understood that the promise to its customers needed to be equally aligned to its promise to current and future employees – the many and true creators of ‘the moments that matter’ for customers.

Tracking the journey – driving the change – we need to visualize our journey

Driving transition on this scale, rocking the fundamentals of an organization, is a great undertaking. Understanding how the organization is performing towards desired milestones and goals along the strategic journey is key, and this was very well understood by company management. In order to reassure the transition, the need to monitor and track the progress was identified by senior management. Kantar was assigned to design and deliver a survey program built around the long-term direction, supporting the cultural shift and ultimately a successful transition to the desired new type of player in the company’s industry.

The main anchor of the survey program was a strategic survey, built around Kantars’ core concept for creating high performing organizations, but with add-ons reflecting the company values, the strategic priorities and the new corporate leadership philosophy. The Kantar core model enabled the management to gain insight into the company performance in relation to external benchmark on key pillars required for building sustainably high-performing organizations, whereas the add-ons gave detailed input on the company specific areas connecting to the transition and the new values.

Additional to this central strategic measurement, the survey program contained a 360 leadership feedback component and an agile component in the form of corporate-wide pulse surveys to track the change progress in-between the annual strategic surveys. As always, the design is everything, the strategic direction, values and EVP served as inputs together with interviews with senior managers as well as focus groups of employees.

Using the Kantar validated model for sustainable high performing companies as a core, additional questions based on behaviours were added. Our expertise in question design, and global insight within other companies across different industries and cultures supported the final survey model - adapted to the company’s specifics, internal language and needs. A survey should not only track the progress but also support the message on what the company ‘is and wants’ from its people (see figure 1). This survey model is now in use with The Company on a yearly basis. Easy-to-grasp reports were designed for leaders for easy sharing of survey results and involving their teams of employees in the development of the daily work. This enabled thousands of micro-processes across the whole organisation, all aimed at improvement and alignment - a great positive force towards building one company and one clear brand.

Key listening moment of employee experience

Attract and recruit

Reputation among potential employees.

Follow-up the recruitment process.

On boarding new employees

Follow-up the introduction program focused on the newley employed.

Strategic employee survey

Strategic survey of the full organ- ization. Tracking alignment to business strategy and values.

Includes all teams and managers.

Agile surveys

Targeted survey directed to the entire organiza- tion or key target groups.

Higher pace; bi-monthly or every quarter depending on target group.

360° feedback for managers

360° feedback surveys linked to leadership expectations.

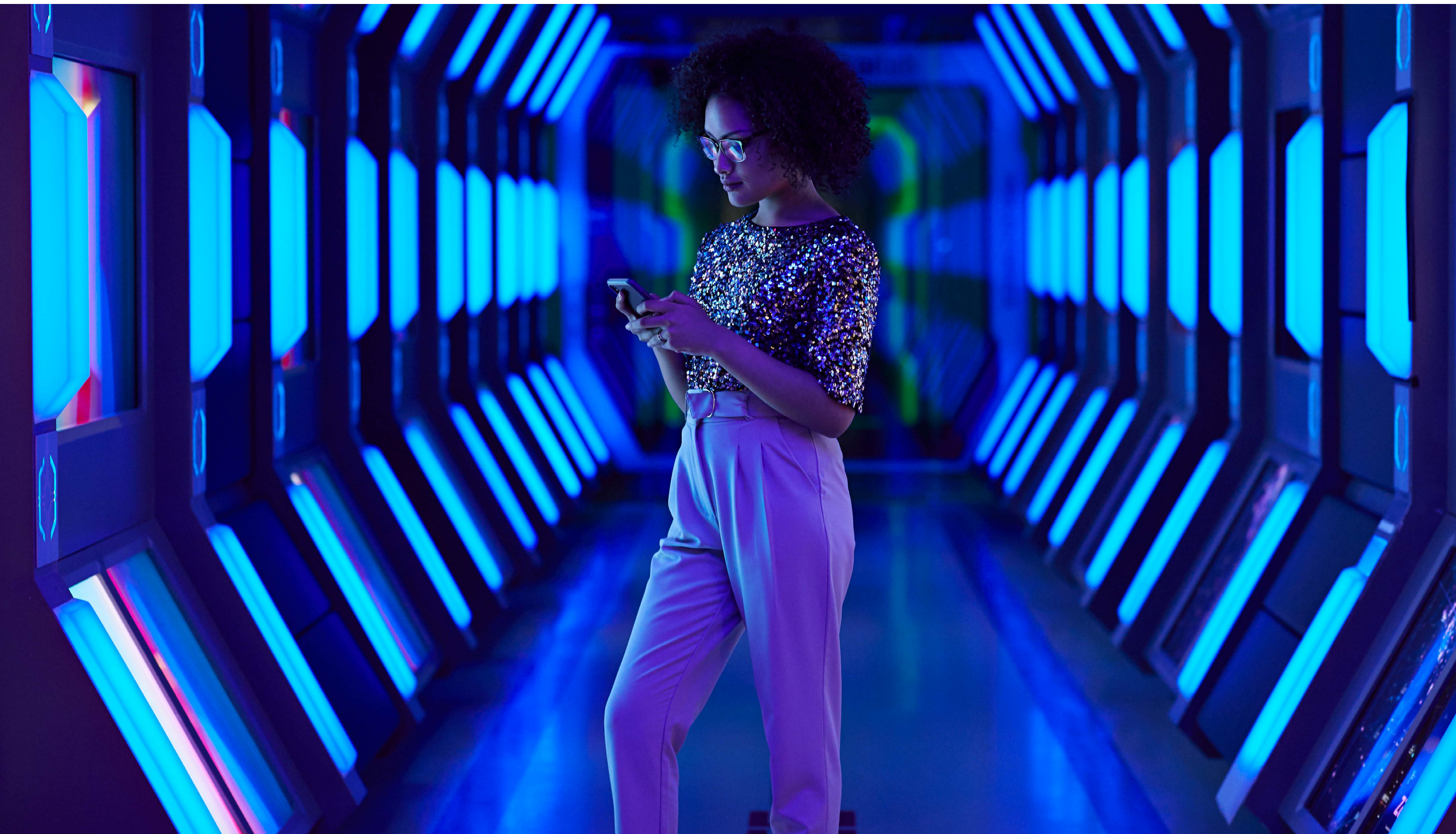
Exit survey

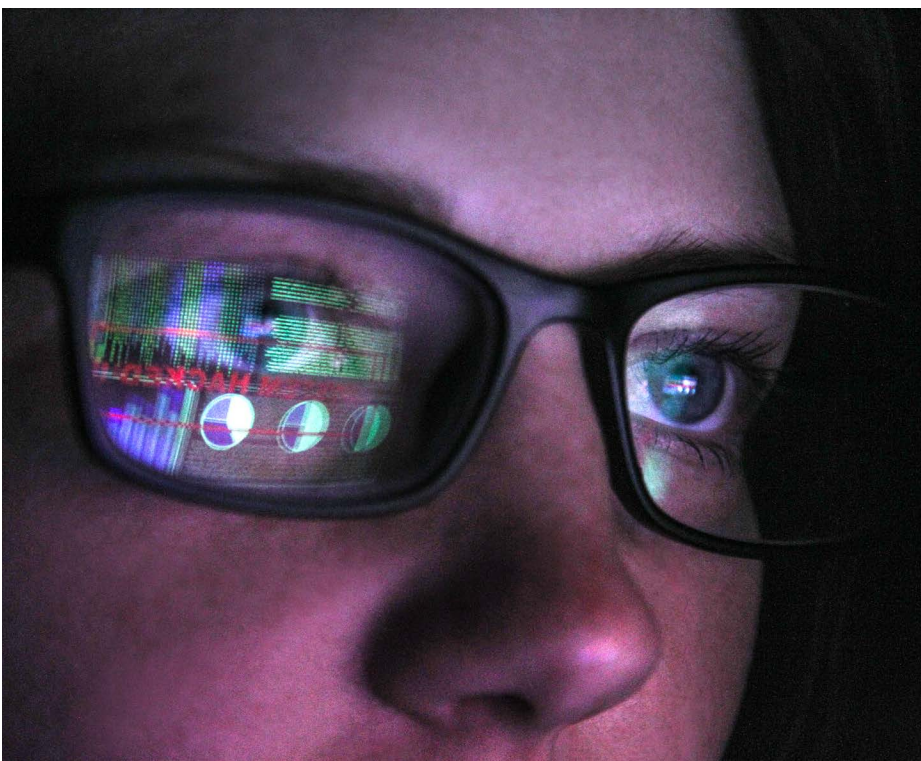
Online exit interviews with direct feedback.

Leadership –we need to enable the change leaders

Leadership feedback plays a role of its own, adding a key value as it is one of the essential drivers of change. As part of the change program The Company redesigned their leadership expectations and by that also their leadership training program. The Kantar team set up a 360 feedback survey aligned to the new leadership expectations. The 360 feedback was launched in the leadership programs, starting with group level managers, followed by the next level leaders attending the leadership programs. The 360 feedback questions for employees towards their leaders attending these leadership programs were also implemented in the yearly full-scale strategic employee survey in order to align the message, expectations and secure continuous follow-up.

For additional support, Kantar and The Company co-created webinars based on the core content of the new survey program and its connection to the new strategy and business direction in order to make managers prepared for the upcoming changes. The connection was clarified as to why the new leadership feedback was introduced, what to expect and how to work more diligently with the feedback to steer towards the desired culture. Consultants from Kantar also attended two of the modules of the leadership program, first to share this information and to further prepare leaders for the changes and finally as external feedback coaches. This training initiative simplified the process for management, coaching both leaders and HR business partners. Leaders were then thoroughly introduced to and prepared for the development process ahead.

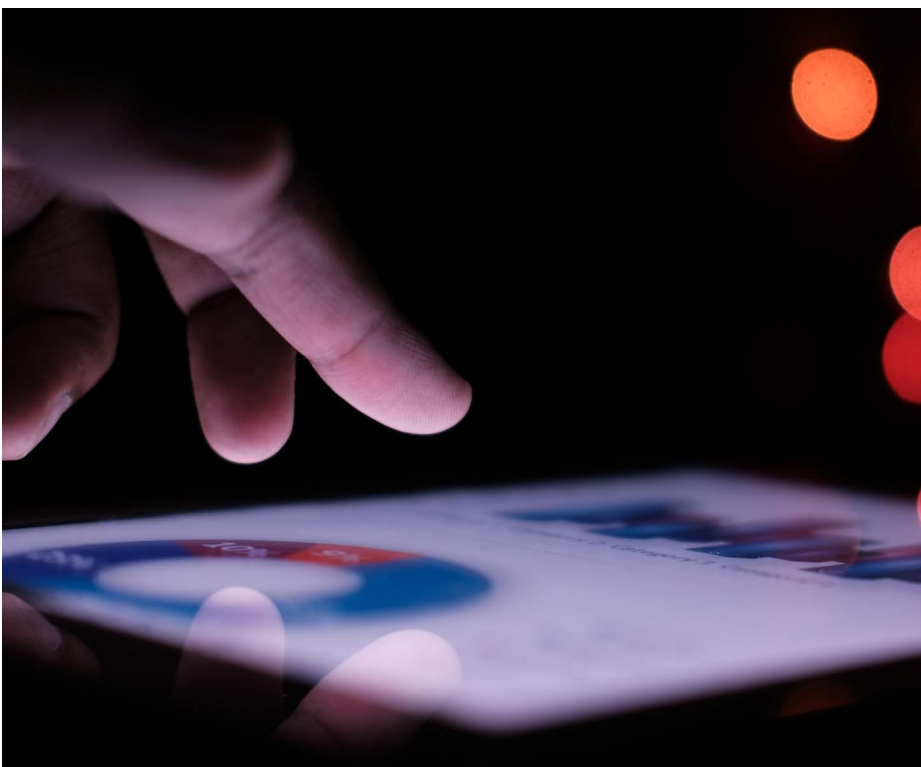




Communicating the purpose and preparing activation

A key aspect for driving successful alignment of the internal and external experience of a company, embedding both strategy and values, is strong collaboration with the internal communication function, when this resource exists. If internal communicators do not exist within a company, there is still a need to consider and work with the communication aspect. The communication for The Company was prepared for three phases: prior to launching the new strategic employee survey, during the surveys and for supporting the continuously ongoing activation/follow-up phase.

Many organisations underestimate the pre-communication phase, where the purpose of the survey is clearly connected to the business strategy and the values of the company. Equally important is the story concerning expectations on activation following the roll-out of survey results, which ideally should be told beforehand. This Company invested in additional ‘prep sessions’ for leaders to reassure their readiness for change. The pressure on leaders was high—as in most organisations today—and the value of sharing ideas, solving questions on forehand was appreciated by many leaders. Kantar consultants meet leaders who join these sessions each year to rapidly refresh their knowledge and get their minds around the internal process. Topics such as work life trends, engagement issues, customer focused behaviours, change leadership questions and how all of this supports or challenges the journey forward are commonly brought to the table.



Pulse—follow your progress

Pulse surveys come in many different shapes and sizes and at Kantar, we have come to see that it is utterly important that these are planned and thought-through with a clear purpose in order to deliver value. The Company in this case, driving a complete transition journey, were in need of pulse surveys to track the most important areas with a clear bearing on their ability to ultimately deliver on their promises to both employees and customers. The Company added two corporate-wide pulse surveys per year to track progress and support their understanding of whether they were moving in the desired direction at enough pace. To take the pulse of the organisation can be done in different ways.

Another client made the choice to direct pulse surveys only to the ‘lagging teams’—teams that were not performing to the same level as the rest of the organisation. The fundamental needs of this client was to reassure the experience was aligned and they were not frequently disrupting the business with too many questions. They also wanted to prioritise support and target activities where it was needed most. They had also understood the impact of quickly learning from their prime movers, which demanded this type of structured pulse programs where the participation is high (+80%). This allowed for a “both/and approach” – fulfilling strategic and local needs while being highly focussed on the way forward. Other clients in search of ideas, involvement in thoughts of various subjects or devoted to local initiatives are only using other types of pulse setups.

What we did:

Were people engaged and involved in the journey?

Was the purpose meaningful, and did people see how they could contribute?

Was the customer first promise a living reality in the working culture?

Was there trust in leaders and did leaders have the strength to drive the change?

Driving strategies and implementing new values and culture is long-term work, ‘nudging’ your way forward. So what did The Company learn?

The Company found that business leaders were not strong believers themselves to be able to communicate the way forward in a meaningful way to employees. More involvement of this group in strategic dialogues, improved coaching from their leaders and more communication support helped this group to make a shift. Once this group of business leaders were more engaged and involved, many employees could finally be reached. Another insight was that their investment in attracting new talents with competencies which were needed to advance the strategy forward did not work as well as planned. The on-boarding of new people was not working well enough, causing frustrated newcomers, to the point of leaving The Company.

The increased cost for recruitment and slow-down of efficiency was obvious. The risk of not fully realising the business growth when newly recruited key competence was at risk of leaving - and did in fact leave - increased the pressure. Rapidly improved local introduction programs were designed together with HR to simplify and support local teams to integrate new talents. This priority truly supported the business and also made the more inclusive company culture become even clearer. The new strategy required a leadership where managers could “coach” new competence from outside the company, while at the same time grow more people from within, to develop new competencies and behaviours, at a higher pace. The leadership feedback results showed with clarity that there was quite some work needed to achieve this.

Together with The Company, a leadership program was developed based on this insight. The program has now been ongoing for several years, where we have been able to support the client to follow the development of their investment. The Company has been able to more easily prioritize the most important development initiatives for their leaders, to focus the support efforts from other managers and HR. In addition, The Company redesigned their introduction and training for new leaders and updated their performance dialogue tools. Today’s leadership is something completely different from the past, and the growth in the business is brilliant.



The business impact

One of the largest changes experienced in The Company’s culture is the empowerment of people and the increase of ‘self leaders.’ Looking back, there was quite a large group of employees who felt uncertain and insecure about their individual decisionmaking, while at that time leaders were also operating in a more hierarchical way. Today, we can see that the climate has become much more open, innovative and geared towards truly empowering people. The values are a living reality in the day-to-day job, whereby people act more and more in alignment, supporting one company, supporting experience aligned, internally and externally. It is indeed a great asset working as one company, one brand, guided by the same values.

The change in culture is a driving factor behind much stronger pride in the company. The ambassadors have grown in number: employees are not only more proud of working for The Company, but the share of employees who would recommend The Company as an employer has grown by 11 percentage-points. In the competitive business environment, this became particularly visible when more people proactively started to connect to HR at The Company, expressing their interest in joining the company as a result of its visible and tangible transition. Another vital factor contributing to the positive journey and pride experienced is the dedication to providing great customer experiences. Leaders and employees at The Company are now strongly driven by a passionate focus on the customer experience. The transformation taking place in people and culture is also being confirmed by the customers – the customer NPS has improved year on year.

So what can be learnt from this journey?

A successful approach to build your brand from the inside and create an aligned experience for your stakeholders could be summarized as follow (see figure 2);

Twelve steps in summary

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| 1.
Strategy and direction
– Be clear on how to express your purpose and values. | 4.
Look at the People sourcing and strategic workforce planning. | 7.
Team development
–prioritise key areas connected to purpose and values. | 10.
Check all communication, external/internal – reflecting your purpose and values? |
| 2.
Set the performance standards –where do you want to be? | 5.
Review your total rewards. | 8.
Collaborate! | 11.
Keep nudging your way forward. |
| 3.
Design your strategic-survey model and program to drive transition and follow up wanted behaviors and KPI's. | 6.
Leadership development - leadership program for Group management, top leadership levels, all leaders aligned to new expectations. | 9.
What can be done about office design? | 12.
Use insights & analytics and tell your story – make the progress visible. |

Case study Contributors



Mathias Axelsson
Kantar | Client Director

E: mathias.axelsson@kantar.com



Katarina Önell
Kantar | Client Director

E: katarina.onell@kantar.com