



To Appeal to Millennials, You Need a Purpose

Urgent message: A sense of “purpose” is the primary motivator for many employees—even beyond compensation and benefits. That’s why successful companies leverage powerful purpose statements towards clearly articulating their mission and values, and cultivating an engaged and inspired workforce.

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Whether part of a larger cultural and societal shift, or due to the influence of a Millennial-dominated workforce, the importance of “purpose” at work has taken on a heightened significance in the last decade. In fact, many of today’s employees, regardless of generation, express a need to work for an organization that has a clear set of values and a reason for existing—in other words, an overarching purpose. And as many people enter medical professions because of a strong desire to “to help people” and “serve communities,” the idea of a clear purpose is especially relevant to an urgent care organization.

Purpose on a Global Scale

World news, economics, and politics magazine *The Economist* addresses the societal and cultural implications of companies and purpose in an article titled, *I’m From a Company, and I’m Here to Help*.¹ The article offers examples of companies—many of them large, global brands—that have stepped up to align their pursuit of profits with the desire to help solve pressing societal, economic, and environmental issues, especially in areas where the governments have fallen short. Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella, for example, declares that “a sense of purpose together with a mission that is aligned with what the world needs is a powerful way for the company to earn public trust.”

Many of the other corporate leaders cited in the article echo similar sentiments regarding climate change, inequality, or carbon neutrality initiatives, for instance, that they’ve espoused and aligned with their companies’



purpose and mission statements. For those companies, stakeholders may be just as important as shareholders insofar as who their larger purpose-driven efforts will serve the most.

Meanwhile, although the local urgent care may not be in a position to take political stands or become politically involved like those global heavyweights, *The Economist* article does underscore a growing activism that’s prevalent in larger companies, and which is beginning

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In your urgent care operation, nobody should have the orientation of being “just an RT” or “just an MA.” They are all members of a cross-functional team, focused on getting patients in and out of the center quickly, safely, and with good clinical outcomes.

to trickle down to smaller firms. Urgent care organizations should therefore be conscious that in a day and age of growing social concern, employees have a desire for their jobs to not only align with a higher purpose larger than themselves, but they also want to work for companies that are making a meaningful contribution to society—or at the very least, the local community.

The Power of the Purpose Statement

Similarly, an article titled, *Why Are We Here?* in the November–December 2019 issue of the *Harvard Business Review* (HBR) dives headfirst into the issue of purpose in the workplace.² Rather than look at workplace purpose from a societal, political, or environmental perspective, however, the article explores the power of a well-crafted purpose statement to capture the essence of the value a company provides to its customers, the very reason the company exists, and the guiding principles necessary for giving employees the sense of motivation, inspiration, and engagement they need to perform their jobs at a high level.

A workplace survey conducted by PwC’s strategy consulting business, Strategy&, cited in the HBR article underscores the importance of purpose: When surveying 540 employees worldwide, a mere 28% of the respondents reported feeling fully connected to their company’s purpose.² And more than half of those same respondents wouldn’t even describe themselves as “somewhat” passionate and motivated by their jobs. The power of purpose was further highlighted in the same PwC survey: Respondents considered purpose to be *more than twice* as important, on average, as traditional motivators such as compensation and career advancement. The survey also found that when purpose-driven companies clearly define and articulate the value they create for their customers, employee motiva-

What differentiates urgent care from other settings are not the medical services provided. Flu symptoms can be evaluated in a primary care office, drugstore clinic, via telemedicine, and any number of other options. Urgent care thrives by providing a “differentiated, branded healthcare destination” that becomes the patient’s “first choice” when a medical need arises.

tion and passion doubles on average, which of course directly translates into substantial growth and profits.

Hence, fulfilling the promise of purpose begins with the purpose statement. Rather than a vague recitation of well-worn generalities—ie, “We aim to be the industry leader” or “We provide the highest value”—a purpose statement should clearly answer the following questions:

- What is your company’s reason for existing?
- What value are you giving your customers?
- How is your firm uniquely capable of providing that value?

Additionally, an effective purpose statement will achieve two objectives: clearly articulate the company’s strategic objectives, and provide motivation, engagement, and inspiration to its workforce.

In short, a purpose statement is essentially a promise to your customers and employees (in urgent care’s case, patients and staff), and how well you fulfill that promise will be a huge determining factor in your success.

If employees view the urgent care center as just “another rinky-dink doctor’s office,” it will be unsuccessful in creating the types of patient experiences that spur word-of-mouth and repeat visits. Everyone in the center must believe it is different, and better, than competing options.

Beyond the Purpose Statement: Delivering on Your Purpose

No matter how well-crafted a purpose statement is, if your company doesn’t deliver on the promise the purpose statement declares, frustration, apathy, and cynicism will creep into the workforce—and your customers will definitely notice. With that in mind, here are four recommendations adapted from the aforementioned HBR article on how to execute your purpose in the context of an urgent care organization.

- **Focus on the right talent** – While every company wants to hire the most talented individuals in every single role, that goal may not be always realistic. There’s fierce competition to attract and retain talent in any industry, especially the medical industry. An urgent care operation should therefore decide which key roles should absolutely feature the best available talent for executing its purpose, and focus its efforts there. For urgent care, this will likely be the providers and the patient care team members.
- **Develop cross-functional teams** – In an urgent

care setting, this means cross-training whenever possible. Clinicians should be able to perform some front office tasks, for example, while MAs in many states can be trained to take basic x-rays.

Beyond the valuable and cost-saving streamlining of labor expense, cross-training helps separate departments gain a clearer understanding of the other department's roles and responsibilities, and how they each work together synergistically towards the same goal—a key for the urgent care executing the company purpose at a high level.

- **Invest in your purpose** – The *HBR* article recommends investing *disproportionately* in the capabilities that are most critical for executing your company's purpose. Because the single biggest determiner of patient satisfaction in urgent care is wait time, for your center that may mean technology and systems that speed up throughput or reduce waits via digital queuing systems and online registration, for example. If exemplary patient care is your primary purpose, then perhaps functional shifting of time-consuming administrative tasks away from the front desk staff (in order free up additional time for patient care) may be the area in need of greatest investment.
- **Leaders should model the company purpose** – Urgent care leaders must ensure that their words and deeds always align with the company purpose, as the staff is always paying attention. Whether through communication, feedback, resources allocated, and/or time spent, ensuring that your leaders are the personification of your company's purpose signals strong commitment, and constantly reminds the rest of the staff of the guiding principles that form the foundation of the company's purpose.

Wayne Automatic Fire Sprinklers manufactures automatic fire suppression systems. Their purpose? It's not high-quality sensors, pipes, and sprinkler heads. Rather, its "Minutes Matter!"³ Wayne demonstrates how, in a period of 3-4 minutes, a structure and its contents can be completely consumed. The "flash" that occurs brings temperatures of up to 1,200 °F, making survival nearly impossible. Especially when it takes 6 minutes or longer for the fire department to arrive. But Wayne provides extra "time" for families to escape. The higher purpose isn't manufacturing a product—it's saving lives.

Take-Home Points

- Urgent care organizations should bear in mind that in 2020 employees want their jobs to not only align with a higher purpose larger than themselves, but also to work for companies that are making a meaningful contribution to society—or at the very least, the local community.
- A purpose statement is essentially a promise to customers and employees—in the context of an urgent care center, patients and staff. How well you fulfill that promise will play a significant role in your success, or lack thereof.
- A well-written, well thought-out purpose statement should clearly answer the following questions:
 1. What is your company's reason for existing?
 2. What value are you giving your customers?
 3. How is your firm uniquely capable of providing that value?
- An effective purpose statement will achieve two objectives:
 - Clearly articulate the company's strategic objectives
 - Provide motivation, engagement, and inspiration to its workforce
- The following four steps can help facilitate execution of your purpose:
 1. Focus on the right talent
 2. Develop cross functional teams
 3. Invest in your purpose
 4. If you're a leader, model the company purpose

Conclusion

You can try to motivate your staff with compensation and additional perks, but if they don't have a clear purpose as to why they're coming to work and why it matters, you'll constantly struggle with engaging and inspiring your workforce. And although a clear, well-articulated purpose statement is the place to start, it won't solve everything on its own. Urgent care leaders must be fully committed to facilitating the execution of that company purpose through each key role, channel, and touchpoint throughout the organization if they want to truly deliver unique value and reap the massive benefits of a purpose-driven company. ■

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