THE TREND ACTION GUIDE

HOW TO USE A CUSTOMER JOURNEY MAPPING TREND WORKSHOP

"GREAT BRANDS ARE MEANT TO BE GREAT AGGREGATORS. WE'RE MEANT TO BE THE ONES THAT ARE OUT THERE LISTENING TO WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE WORLD ... AND AGGREGATING IT.

—KEVIN PLANK, CEO of Under Armour

Visionary leaders have the ability to get inside a consumer's mind.

They understand what people want, sometimes even before the consumers themselves realize it. Yet intuition is a hard thing to quantify, and an even harder thing to duplicate. Mapping a customer journey step by step is a process anyone can follow whether they happen to have a finely tuned intuition for consumer needs or not.

In this chapter, you will learn how to combine a map of your customer's journey with a knowledge of important trends to inform how you might change the way you reach that customer. Ultimately, the aim is to offer them a better solution, capture their attention more easily, and stand out among your competitors.

What Is Customer Journey Mapping?

A customer journey map is a diagram that illustrates the progression your ideal customer goes through when interacting with your brand, from consideration to purchase and loyalty.

If this progression sounds familiar, it is because most business or marketing courses in school teach this same model, calling it the "purchase funnel" or the "buying cycle." No matter what you call it, the *phases* of a customer journey will typically come down to the following six distinct moments for any brand or product:

THE SIX PHASES OF A CUSTOMER JOURNEY

PHASE 0 – Customer doesn't know they need the product or service
What to call this phase: pre-awareness, pre-service, need generation

PHASE 1 – Customer has a need and starts seeking potential solutions
What to call this phase: awareness, consideration, researching

PHASE 2 – Customer finds solutions and starts comparing alternatives
What to call this phase: consideration, comparison, shopping, evaluation

PHASE 3 – Customer buys product, receives it and initially uses it
What to call this phase: purchase, buying, conversion, delivery, installation

PHASE 4 – Customer uses and experiences the product
What to call this phase: usage, engagement, experience, activation

PHASE 5 – Customer talks about product to others or considers repurchasing
What to call this phase: advocacy, loyalty, retention, sharing, recommendation

Depending on your product or service, this model may immediately seem too complex. Usually, if some of these phases seem as though they don't exist for your situation, it may only be because they happen so fast that it seems you can't influence them.

When a customer buys a Snickers bar, for example, the idea that they are comparing alternatives may seem like over-analysis. How much consideration really goes into an impulse buy? Yet, even in that split-second decision at a checkout aisle, a customer is still going through the progression of their customer journey and thinking about each phase.

OBJECTIVE: When Should You Use This Workshop?

The customer journey mapping workshop is ideal for helping you to define specific tactics that you can implement in various parts of your business immediately to reach consumers at the most opportune times in their buying process. While other workshops can help you focus more on business strategy or overall brand messaging, this one is focused on small changes to implement quickly in order to impact how you sell and deliver experiences to your customers.

PREPARATION: What to Do Before the Workshop

Prior to this workshop, it is important to have a well-defined idea of not only who your customers are, but the journey they currently use.

Building out a customer journey map can sometimes be the result of real field research with consumers. Other times, it is developed with a separate workshop model intended to help illuminate the entire journey that your customers typically go through.

In particular, here are a few elements that have value to develop prior to running a trend workshop on customer journey mapping:

1. **Customer Journey Maps** – The visual customer journey map is a valuable asset to have as you work to understand your customer(s). The aim of the customer journey mapping trend

workshop is not to develop this map in the workshop but rather to use it as a blueprint upon which to add strategies and tactics for using trends. For that reason, this is perhaps the most important element of preparation to develop before the workshop. In case you need help to do it or have never completed one of these, see later in this chapter for a list of resources to help you get started.

2. **Personas** – Personas allow you to create a model for a typical customer that is more human and descriptive so it helps the entire team to picture *someone* rather than a segment of people or a demographic when considering tactics. Often these personas are written in narrative format, and a corresponding visual image of the customer to make it even more real. Personas are most often built from existing customer research or from a customer already profiled or interviewed.

3. **Stakeholder Maps** – A stakeholder map lets you consider audiences outside of customers, such as board members, the media and partners. The idea of visualizing or listing out those stakeholders allows you to have a filter from which to consider new ideas and ensure they are aimed at the right people.

4. **Customer Segments** – Most businesses rarely have a single type of customer at all times. Instead, they have multiple segments based on product lines, regional considerations or even various times of year. Knowing these segments can also help you to define that customer journey and to see how much it might vary from segment to segment. Many times, a similar approach can work across segments. Sometimes, you may need to divide a workshop to treat segments completely separately.

PARTICIPANTS: Who Should Be Involved in the Workshop?

There is no set rule about who needs to be involved in a particular workshop, but even if you are working in a small business with only yourself

or one other person, using a workshop model may still have great value for you.

The list below is based on the ideal number of participants for this workshop, if you can manage to get the right people involved and have a large enough team or extended circle of participants:

1. **Facilitator (1)** – The facilitator is the leader of the conversation and is responsible primarily for keeping the session on track, posing big questions, probing further when needed, ensuring no single participant dominates and summarizing the session and some of the discussion's big takeaways.

2. **Scribe (1)** – The point of having the task of recording notes separated from the facilitator role is so the facilitator is free to focus on the conversation. The scribe, however, must do more than simply record what is said. He or she needs to be able to apply enough insight to capture the essence of ideas and connect them in real time.

3. **Participants (2–12)** – Taking on a fairly straightforward role, these are the people who will be part of the workshop and deliver ideas and value. The ideal number of participants ranges from 6–12 for most of these workshops I have run in the past, but it is heavily dependent on the preferences of the facilitator and the people in the room.

4. **Voice of the Customer (1)** – It is important to try and involve someone who is closer to the customers and their journey, and who can represent the voice of the customer in the room at all times. This person may also play another role as well, but it is important to nominate *someone* to be the customer's advocate during the workshop because they can also offer a mindset that is easy to forget.

5. **Graphic Facilitator (Optional)** – One of my favorite additions to this workshop, because it is so visual, is a graphic facilitator to capture the conversation through illustrations

on a large board in real time. While this is typically offered by a third-party group and may require some extra budget, the value of doing this can be transformative in how much impact the workshop can have beyond the immediate participants.

FORMAT:
How Should the Workshop Be Structured?

Rather than recommend one model for every situation, I am including the descriptions of three common models that I have used in different situations based on the people in the room to help map out how trends can affect your customer journey.

You can select one of these methods, or develop your own style for how to structure the conversation. Any one can work, as long as you are building the right type of experience tailored to bring out the best in the participants you are working with.

1. **"Day In The Life" Customer Journey Mapping Trend Workshop** – This model focuses on taking a step-by-step approach to reaching a customer at various points throughout his or her day. Based on the customer persona, the participants can build a schedule of a consumer's average day. Then, the ideation can focus on how trends shape each customer's day differently and what that means for changing how the brand currently interacts with the customer in those moments.

2. **"Customer Of The Future" Customer Journey Mapping Trend Workshop** – The discussion in this workshop focuses on contrasting your customers' existing journey against the how it may be changing due to the trends you have uncovered. The aim is to develop ways to better reach and influence these customers in the midst of this change.

3. **"Early Adopter" Customer Journey Mapping Trend Workshop** – This workshop is built on the premise of spotlighting and applying lessons from your earliest customers and

looking at them in the context of trends to create a model for what to do first and whom to target.

RESULTS: What Is the Benefit of the Workshop?

In a customer journey mapping trend workshop, the ultimate aim is to apply trends to change the way that you interact with customers or understand their needs and desires. Beyond shaping an overall strategy, this workshop is also likely to generate many ideas for how to change small aspects of your customer experience to leverage trend insights and be ready for the changing world of consumers.

CASE STUDY: Imagine You Own a Local Hiking & Outdoor Activities Store

Like most others, you have challenges to your business coming from larger competitors and the growing ranks of consumers who turn to the web for one-click ordering of just about anything.

How do you compete?

This workshop could help you develop a strategy to do that. Assuming you don't already have one, the first thing you would do is develop a map of your customer's usual journey by either asking a targeted series of questions either directly to consumers or developing a list and then answering it based on observing how they behave.

Here are a few example questions you might ask:

- Do they have a trip planned before they come to your store with specific needs or do they simply browse before booking a trip?
- If they have a trip planned, how soon are they typically leaving, within a day or a week or a month?
- Do they come for expert advice and then go off and seek a better price offline or follow expert advice and buy immediately?

- What situations are they commonly in where it might be appropriate for them to talk about your store with others?

You can immediately see how these sorts of questions give you a strong sense of their journey, and you can use the resources shared at the end of this chapter to map out this customer journey if you haven't already.

From there, you can start to apply your knowledge of consumer and business trends to this journey to build a plan of action to better compete in the coming year. Here are a few examples of how to start to map the trends to the insights you already have about your customers:

1. **How to Use *Everyday Stardom*** – Just as some Thai restaurants feature a "wall of flame" for those few customers who finished a bowl of curry with a spice level of 10, you might offer something similar to create an emotional reason for customers to continually come back and see you during the *usage phase* (Phase 4).

2. **How to Use *Reverse Retail*** – How robust is your online store when it comes to giving consumers an online alternative rather than simply price checking Amazon when they are in the *buying phase* (Phase 3)? Making it easy and directing them online can be the best of both worlds, highly convenient for them, and allowing you to keep less inventory in store.

3. **How to Use *Mass Mindfulness*** – What if instead you could offer a compelling experience that appeals to your customers' view of the world? If your customers love the outdoors, could you offer a class or new product demo as a way to connect and offer more value for them? Doing this proactively can help you reach potential customers during their *consideration phase* (Phase 1) or even in that phase when they haven't yet decided to buy anything and are *not looking* (Phase 0).

These three trends were selected randomly and I used them to illustrate how trends can be applied directly to a business. Depending on your industry, you may not need every trend, or you may use trends that you have uncovered in your own research rather than those in this book.

Either way, using your customer's journey as a starting point can help you to generate your own valuable ideas for how to apply these trends to better promote your business or share your message with the world.

RESOURCES:Where Can I Learn More about Customer Journeys?

I recommend the following valuable resources to those seeking to learn more about Customer Journey Mapping. You can also share them with a broader team to help everyone achieve alignment before hosting a workshop:

1. **Smaply (www.smaply.com)** – Perhaps the most complete software available online to be able to easily create customer journey maps and a number of other resources discussed in this section like stakeholder maps and personas. Highly recommended.

2. ***Unfolding the Napkin* by Dan Roam** – Learning to visualize a problem is a particularly important skill for customer journey mapping and this workshop, and Roam's book is a favorite resource I often recommend to my students in order to help them learn the art of visual thinking and drawing.

3. ***Smashing Magazine* (www.smashingmagazine.com)** – Though created as a website primarily for web designers and developers, *Smashing Magazine* has a wealth of content on creating customer journey maps as well as visual thinking and just about anything else relating to creating powerful design and digital efforts. When it comes to design resources to help you think better, this one is at the top of the list.

For an online list featuring these resources and many more, please visit the link below:

WWW.ROHITBHARGAVA.COM/NONOBVIOUS/RESOURCES

HOW TO USE A BRAND STORYTELLING TREND WORKSHOP

"WHEN YOU WANT TO MOVE SOMEBODY, YOU HAVE TO SAY TO YOURSELF: 'I'M IN THE EMOTIONAL TRANSPORTATION BUSINESS. I GOTTA MOVE THEM, EMOTIONALLY.'"

—PETER GUBER, Hollywood producer
and best-selling author of *Tell To Win*

A powerful story is a reason to believe in your brand and products—and it always matters.

Trends can also have a big impact on how you tell your brand story. For example, in Chapter 7, I focused on the trend of *Branded Benevolence* and how it also describes the increasing importance consumers are placing on the ethical practices of brands. These are examples of the elements of a brand's story and they are critical to inspire more loyalty and consideration among consumers.

This chapter will explore some models for hosting a brand storytelling workshop that takes the lessons from recent trends and applies them to how you can tell a stronger and more emotional story for your business.

Sometimes, this may mean adding an element to an existing story you already use for your brand. Other times, it may require you tell an

entirely new story influenced by the trends. Either way, the techniques in this chapter will help.

Why Does Brand Storytelling Matter?

Brand storytelling means sharing the story of your brand in an emotional way in order to inspire belief and increase engagement with your customers.

There is a growing body of evidence that shows just how powerful and necessary these stories happen to be.

To illustrate why stories matter, consider the example of Significant Objects, a website two writers named Joshua Glenn and Rob Walker created in 2012. As an experiment, the creators asked a hundred noted authors to craft stories for products purchased at a garage sale for an average of $1.29 each.

The resulting stories helped them sell the corresponding objects on eBay for more than $8000 dollars, illustrating how much difference a story makes in how much people are willing to pay for a product.

Unfortunately, all this attention on the necessity of storytelling for marketing and promoting a brand doesn't always lead us towards *good* stories. The web is filled with boring "About Us" pages that share little more than a timeline of activities, mergers, office moves and notable hires. None of these is the same as a story.

Unfortunately, if you don't have a well-described brand story behind your mission and your products *already*, running a workshop to update or inform your brand story won't help you.

In my first book, *Personality Not Included*, I featured a model for learning how to develop and share your brand story inspired by techniques from Hollywood screenwriters and filmmakers. If you need to start with developing or updating your own brand story first, see the end of this chapter for a link to a page of resources that includes several free excerpts and downloads from that book to help you.

You may choose to use one of the five models I present in *Personality Not Included*, or develop your own story independently. Either way, it is important to be sure that you have a well-constructed brand story *before* you start with using this particular workshop to improve and inform it with current trends.

OBJECTIVE:
When Should You Use This Workshop?

Customer sentiments are always changing and no matter how powerful your brand story, there is always going to be a need to go back and make sure it is still as current and valuable as it could be. This workshop is ideal to consider using on an annual basis to review your existing brand story, the way it is shared and what could be optimized for the coming year based on the current trends.

Apart from annually, this can also be particularly valuable if you are in the midst of launching a new product series or shifting the focus of your business in some way that may require you to reconsider how you have previously been sharing the story of your business with the world.

PREPARATION:
What to Do Before the Workshop

The most important piece of preparation for this workshop (aside from *having* a brand story!) is to collect and audit the different channels and assets that exist to share your brand story. This includes everything from websites and landing pages, to brochures and reports, to packaging materials. Anything that supports your brand story could be relevant, and having an audit of all these materials is important so you can focus the scope of your workshop.

The other thing that can help you prepare for this workshop, depending on the structure you choose to use, is research on competitor messages and stories that are being used in the marketplace as well. The more you

know about what stories your competitors are telling, the more you can work to build a strategy that stands out as being unique.

PARTICIPANTS: Who Should Be Involved?

Like the customer journey mapping trend workshop, there is no set rule about who needs to be involved in a brand storytelling workshop. Once again, if you are working in a small business with only you or one other person, following this process can still offer some valuable outputs for you to consider.

The list below is a recommended starting point based on my previous experiences running this type of workshop:

1. **Facilitator (1)** – The facilitator is the leader of the conversation and is responsible primarily for keeping the session on track, posing big questions, probing further when needed, ensuring no single participant dominates and summarizing the session and some of the discussion's big takeaways.

2. **Scribe (1)** – The point of having the task of recording notes separated from the facilitator role is so the facilitator is free to focus on the conversation. The scribe, however, must do more than simply record what is said. He or she needs to be able to apply enough insight to capture the essence of ideas and connect them in real time.

3. **Participants (2–4)** – For a storytelling workshop, working with a smaller group is preferable because storytelling can be so subjective. The reality is that most of the time a core group of people will usually work on building out most of the storytelling on behalf of a brand anyway, so having the most important people in the room instead of every possible stakeholder is more efficient.

4. **Content Creators (1–2)** – Based on the results of this workshop, there will likely be some people who then need to go

and produce content in some form (written, audio or video). Having at least one of those creators involved in the workshop can have a lot of value in making sure the decisions and conversations aren't lost in translation. The other benefit is the content creator feels invested in the process and empowered to add value as well.

FORMAT: How Should the Workshop Be Structured?

Brand storytelling workshops are often the most unique and creative, which makes them particularly interesting and exciting. Unfortunately, they can also hold the greatest potential for losing focus and turning into less valuable diversions. To ensure that your workshop stays on track, it is important to use a structured approach for exactly *how* the participants will be talking about storytelling.

The following two models share examples of approaches that have worked in the past for encouraging ideation and discussion without getting off track. When paired with a strong deliverable at the end of the workshop (particularly if working in teams to solve challenges) then these can be very effective:

1. **"Origin & Backstory" Brand Storytelling Trend Workshop** – Perhaps the most frequently read story behind most brands is the story of how the company or products first came together. What was the inspiration behind your brand? Does it connect with consumers in this modern media landscape? This workshop model tackles those questions by focusing the dialogue on the founder(s) and origin story of your brand, and then asks questions related to how the new trends might change or inform that story.

2. **"Customer As Hero" Brand Storytelling Trend Workshop** – Another way to think about the brand story is by painting a picture of your employee as the real hero and voice behind your brand. In this model, you work to use trends to inform how your story can be told from a customer's point of view

and how that might shift given the new consumer, culture and media trends identified in the market.

RESULTS:
What Is the Benefit of the Workshop?

The ultimate aim of this workshop is to optimize your brand story in a way that uses the latest trends to be more powerful, believable or effective. Doing that requires an understanding of how the story is currently being told and the touch points either in the story itself or in the channels you use to share it that can be adapted.

When done right, this workshop can help you bring your existing story into the future and deliver it in a way that maximizes how effective that story is likely to be.

CASE STUDY:
Imagine You Work at a Mid-Sized Law Firm

You work with individuals (B2C) and businesses (B2B) and have several different specialty practice areas. When it comes to communication, you are also dealing in a very serious and regulated area, where every piece of communication must be deliberate and there is little appetite for wild innovation or unproven experimentation.

How can you use trends to more authoritatively tell your story to the world without breaking industry conventions or being too informal?

The first step in storytelling is to break out of the feature-biased way that most of us think to describe ourselves. **A list of bullet points is not a story.**

Instead, think about why your clients trust in your brand and what they believe when they choose to work directly with you. Do they select you based on the reputation of your partners? Do they come based on personal recommendations? Do you have various client groups with wildly different reasons for doing anything?

Asking these sorts of questions can lead you toward thinking through how to apply specific trends to your brand story as you currently share it. For example, here are a few ways that *2015 Non-Obvious Trends* might transform how you share your brand story:

1. **How to Use *Glanceable Content*** – The shrinking human attention span is a truth to be faced in any industry, but in the world of professional services it also means that you need to deliver the story of your benefits and unique value more quickly and with less fanfare. This could mean rewriting headlines on print brochures or websites, but it also might lead to a shift in how legal documents themselves are prepared, and a company-wide focus on using more plain language.

2. **How to Use *Unperfection*** – No one likes to admit mistakes, and in the legal world this type of admission could lead to liability. Even so, using this trend to demonstrate the humanity of your colleagues and firm can help to inspire *more* trust instead of less. Consider, for example, if lawyers shared a bit of quirky personal information in their executive bios to add more of a human element. Prospective clients seeking representation by humans instead of legally trained robots (in other words, most people) can much better connect with real people. This approach may lead them to see your firm as being easier to work with and more desirable.

3. **How to Use *Branded Benevolence*** – Most firms have some type of philanthropy program, but any discussions of it is typically limited to how many hours were donated by employees or how much money was donated by the firm itself. Instead, why not encourage more everyday acts of kindness, such as small donations from employees to individual crowdfunding campaigns or applauding stories of employees' personal philanthropic efforts. These stories go much further than bullet points to illustrate the real principles your firm believes in and why you may be worth doing business with.

Every law firm, just like any brand, has an appetite for new innovation and different ideas. Yours may fall low or high on the spectrum of innovators. Regardless of how forward-thinking you consider your business to be, the trends are only a framework to allow you think about what you need to do or change next in how you currently operate.

The examples above are selected at random and applied to a very specific type of business (a mid-sized law firm), but the broader picture this example provides is just how flexible these trends can be to lead to changes in your brand story to help you inspire more belief and advocacy from your customer base.

RESOURCES:Where Can I Learn More about Brand Storytelling?

The following are several valuable resources to help you with developing or adapting your brand story:

1. ***Resonate* by Nancy Duarte** – This is one of my favorite resources to recommend when it comes to developing an amazing presentation to deliver on stage or build a more powerful brand story. Not only will this book help you develop graphics to visualize your story, it will also give you a proven blueprint for making any story as effective as possible.

2. ***Tell to Win* by Peter Guber** – Guber's book is filled with anecdotes and personal stories from his meetings with some of the most amazing storytellers in the world. This book will take you inside conversations with masters like David Copperfield and the Dalai Lama and distill those lessons into valuable nuggets of wisdom you can use in your own storytelling efforts.

3. ***Lead with a Story* by Paul Smith** – The research bias behind this book makes it a particularly valuable read to help you quantify and improve your ability to not only share stories with consumers, but also to use them for leadership and inspiration for your employees and the people closest to your brand who are in the position of sharing your story on your behalf.

For an online list featuring these resources and many more (including a free chapter on storytelling from *Personality Not Included*), please visit the link below:

WWW.ROHITBHARGAVA.COM/NONOBVIOUS/RESOURCES

HOW TO USE A BUSINESS STRATEGY TREND WORKSHOP

"HOWEVER BEAUTIFUL THE STRATEGY,
YOU SHOULD OCASSIONALLY LOOK AT THE RESULTS."

–WINSTON CHURCHILL, British prime minister

What if you had to change the way that you sell your products or services overnight?

The most powerful potential of using trends is that they can sometimes lead you to make a big shift in the strategy of your business itself, rather than just how you promote it. The inspiration for this workshop, therefore, comes from brands looking to evolve their business models and approaches to meet changing consumer demands.

In previous years, broader business trends around the collaborative economy or the rise of apps have enabled new ways to sell and buy. One of my 2014 trends described this shift in terms of *Subscription Commerce*, where brands in multiple industries from movie theaters to auto manufacturers started using subscriptions as new ways to sell products or experiences previously sold only a la carte.

In this chapter, we will look at the different elements of a business strategy and how you can start to think about applying trends to the strategy you use for running your business. Whether you have a well-scripted

business strategy or the idea of a business strategy seems like overkill, this chapter should help you think about how the latest business trends might apply and be worth thinking about.

What Is Business Strategy?

Of course you already know what business strategy is, but my reason for posing the question here is to make sure we have a shared understanding of a few *components* of strategy that this workshop can help you to address.

Your business strategy is more than just a statement of what you sell.

Here are five specific elements of your strategy that doing this workshop may be helpful with:

1. **Mission** – Why you do what you do (and what you believe in).
2. **Positioning** – What makes your brand unique compared to your competitors.
3. **Business Model** – How you charge your customers and make money.
4. **Products and Services** – What you sell to your customers.
5. **Innovation for the Future** – Which new products or services you may offer later.

The rest of this chapter will share some techniques and methods to review these five elements and how they may be changing for your business when you think about the impact of trends on them.

OBJECTIVE:
When Should You Use This Workshop?

While there is no set timetable within which you need to review your business strategy, it may be a valuable thing to do on an annual basis simply because many trend reports and new research come out at the start of the year that could be worth considering.

Apart from that, here are a few other situations when it may make sense to review your overall business strategy:

- A new competitor is changing the landscape of your industry.
- There are new or different regional challenges to your business.
- Technological innovation has advanced the way your industry generally operates.
- Consumer expectation has shifted dramatically in your industry.
- You have a new innovative product or service to introduce to the market.
- Leadership at your organization has changed, and the new leader wants to make his or her mark.

There are likely many other situations where this workshop may be helpful, but this list includes some of the most common.

PREPARATION: What to Do Before the Workshop?

Preparation for this workshop depends on the type of focus it will have, however the more information you can collect about the way you currently do business and how you make money, the better. It is also useful to collect any publicly available information about the mission of your organization and those used by your competitors.

Having any sort of visual or description of your business model as well as a map of all your products and services (both existing and planned) can also help in this workshop.

PARTICIPANTS: Who Should Be Involved?

The roles for a workshop with this trend are fairly similar to those in earlier workshops. The key difference for a strategic workshop is that it tends to work better with fewer participants because a strategy session tends to

accomplish more real decisions in the actual workshop as opposed to generating a framework for later work and implementation.

Given this recommendation, here is suggested list of participants:

1. **Facilitator (1)** – The facilitator is the leader of the conversation and is responsible primarily for keeping the session on track, posing big questions, probing further when needed, ensuring no single participant dominates and summarizing the session and some of the discussion's big takeaways.

2. **Scribe (1)** – The point of having the task of recording notes separated from the facilitator role is so the facilitator is free to focus on the conversation. The scribe, however, must do more than simply record what is said. He or she needs to be able to apply enough insight to capture the essence of ideas and connect them in real time.

3. **Participants (2–4)** – When discussing business strategy, working with a smaller group of participants is preferable because it is easier to reach a consensus and map out real decisions during the workshop. Ideal participants in this workshop may also include outside advisors, investors or others who may not be part of the day-to-day operations of a business but have a valuable point of view to share at a higher level.

FORMAT:
How Should the Workshop Be Structured?

The best business strategy trend workshops start with a clear idea of the challenge or issue you are working to solve. Articulating a good question to start your workshop will lead you toward better solutions and strategies coming out of the workshop. While the challenge you focus on could be almost anything, here are a few common challenges or business issues that might inspire you to hold a business strategy trend workshop:

- You are losing market share or sales for some reason (known or unknown).
- One of your competitors is growing rapidly and affecting your business.
- You have some resourcing challenge around hiring or retaining the best people.
- There has been some new regulation or industry change that creates a new opportunity.

Once you know your business challenge, you can focus the conversation during a workshop to think about how you can shift your business strategy to address it. To do this, there are two models for workshops I have typically used to help brands rethink their business strategy:

1. **"Model Recreation" Business Strategy Trend Workshop** – Every good trend has examples of brands and organizations that are using the trend well. These success stories can offer the perfect backdrop for a workshop discussion on how your own brand could apply exactly the same lessons. To use it, select a company (or several) that use a business strategy your team considers to be innovative. Use those brands as templates to think about how your company could try to do *exactly* what they do. Then, you can step back and discuss how to make it practical and build from this extreme vision to something more customized.

2. **"Tagline Roulette" Business Strategy Trend Workshop** – One of the most shocking things you can do to start any discussion about brand positioning is compare your company tagline with those from your competitors. Most of the time, it is hard to tell which is which. Building from this list of surprisingly generic taglines (as they usually are), challenge workshop participants to use trends to think differently about how to describe the unique value of your business with language that your competitors aren't using. This challenge often leads to reconsidering the business strategy behind it.

RESULTS:
What Is the Benefit of the Workshop?

The business strategy trend workshop is designed to help you think about big elements of your business, from your overall brand positioning to what products and services you offer. By reviewing trends in relation to your business strategy overall, you can start to rethink the way that you approach your business and make the changes necessary to compete in the new world and ensure you are as unique as possible.

CASE STUDY: Imagine You Work at a Dental Surgery Office…

Most of your patients come from referrals and you rely on dentists and family doctors to send their patients to you. Unfortunately, you also happen to be offering a type of service that 100% of your patients hope to *not* need.

Visiting your office is a sign that something went wrong, and there's usually going to be pain involved after they leave. How do you turn this short-term negativity in a long-term positive experience that they will recommend to others?

At least you have the benefit of necessity on your side. Chances are, everyone who comes to see you really *needs* to see you. Keeping this in mind, how could trends shape the strategy of your business when you offer such a straightforward service that is mainly promoted through the willingness of other doctors to refer their patients to you?

The first key is deciding which trends to start your workshop brainstorming with, and the second is to develop valuable ideas for using them. Here are a few examples of how to do it based on three trends from this year's report:

1. **How to Use *Microconsumption*** – The same principle of a comedy club charging per laugh, could apply to your services as well. For example, what if you offered a price and time guarantee that patients would be able to get back to work within four hours of seeing you or you would give them a discount? Or,

you could partner with a valet car service and charge customers a small premium for a VIP drop-off service. The main point of this trend is rather than paying in one lump sum, patients are becoming accustomed to different payment models that take money in bursts and provide better value in the process.

2. **How to Use *Selfie Confidence*** – The culture of instant sharing means that you will have some patients who want to share what they can about an experience as it happens. The problem is, getting dental surgery is rarely a high-confidence moment. So how could you change this? One way could be to let patients use an app like Facetune while in your waiting room to create an image of what their new smile will eventually look like. Another could be to use interesting displays and backdrops in your office to encourage sharing while allowing these selfies to feature more of the background and less of themselves.

3. **How to Use *Mood Matching*** – Using the well-documented impact of mood on how people perceive an experience is a powerful trend to consider in the context of a dental surgery office. For example, what shades do you paint the walls to put patients at ease? How can you get them into a good mood when they first see you so they will be more likely to remember the overall experience as being less unpleasant or painful than they expected? Answering these questions alone could have a big impact.

RESOURCES:Where Can I Learn More about Business Strategy?

To build or rethink your business strategy, here are a few of my favorite resources to use and recommend to others:

- ***Business Model Generation*** **by Alexander Osterwalder and Yves Pigneur** – This highly useful, illustrated book is a collection of insights co-created by 470 practitioners, and features

lots of helpful charts, diagrams and methodologies. It is the ultimate reference book for business models—not to be read cover to cover, but rather more useful if you flip through and look for ideas to inspire you serendipitously.

- ***Positioning* by Al Ries and Jack Trout –** Though a modern business classic, this book remains one of the most powerful and actionable books that you will ever read about developing a brand positioning, go-to-market strategy and standing out in the marketplace. It needs to be on your bookshelf if it isn't already.
- ***Different* by Youngme Moon –** Few business books are simultaneously profound, useful and beautifully written—but this one qualifies. Built around a fundamentally simple idea that the key to success is being different, popular Harvard professor Youngme Moon shares a surprisingly unique point of view on one of the most commonly discussed ideas in business.

For an online list featuring these resources and many more, please visit the link below:

WWW.ROHITBHARGAVA.COM/NONOBVIOUS/RESOURCES

HOW TO USE A CORPORATE CULTURE TREND WORKSHOP

"IF YOU GET THE CULTURE RIGHT, EVERYTHING ELSE WILL FLOW NATURALLY."

–TONY HSEIH, CEO of Zappos

It's never been a better time to be an employee.

Every week there are new stories of companies outdoing one another with new benefits designed to make them a friendly and more generous place for people to work.

Starbucks recently announced a new program to pay a portion of college expenses for baristas. Nestle has built an ambitious eight-month training program in digital marketing to inspire high performers and potential leaders. Nearly every major Silicon Valley tech company offers everything from free food to in-house massages in a desperate attempt to hold onto their best people.

All of these may seem like only the trappings of a real company culture, but they are powerful symbols of a new reinvestment from business into employees and the internal culture of an organization. In this chapter, you will learn some techniques for assessing your current corporate culture and using trends to think differently about how to inspire your workforce, or be inspired if you happen to *be* part of that workforce.

What Is Corporate Culture?

For all the talk about corporate culture, it can be widely misunderstood as simply the policies and guidelines that are in place for employees. Culture is more than a list of dos and don'ts.

There is a reason Zappos has become the *de facto* standard of an amazing corporate culture. Not only do employees of the brand contribute to a *Culture Book* hundreds of pages long, but they are widely known to be so fanatical about getting the culture fit right that they offer a cash incentive for newly hired employees to leave if the fit *isn't* right.

Does your business invest that type of time and attention toward getting the right people and creating a culture to keep them? It is a worthwhile question to ask, but very difficult to imagine how to affect in ways that are not too complex or costly to implement.

The workshop models shared in this chapter will tackle that issue from the angle of new trends shifting how employees connect (or don't) with the brands they work for. By understanding the trends, you can start to focus your thinking on how to improve very specific aspects of your culture—and realize the benefits in terms of being a more desirable place to work and retaining your best team members.

OBJECTIVE:
When Should You Use This Workshop?

There is no bad time to focus on corporate culture, however it may be more urgent for you if you are in a situation where you are about to hire a significant number of new employees or, perhaps, if you have a leadership change or several employees who have left within a short period of time.

Rethinking a corporate culture can also be a wonderful way of inspiring more productivity, getting the best out of the people you already have on a team, and just creating a more positive daily working experience for everyone involved.

PREPARATION:
What to Do Before the Workshop?

The best input before launching this workshop is always to start by collecting some feedback about your existing culture, both from employees and, perhaps, customers as well. You might choose to use a survey or questionnaire, or hold some sort of roundtable event to listen to suggestions or descriptions of your current culture.

Whichever method you choose, here are a few sample questions you might consider using to evaluate your current culture, and they are equally valuable if you can use and answer them honestly for yourself:

- Do you know what the company stands for and do you believe in that mission?
- Do you feel like you have the tools and skills required to do your job every day?
- Do you feel that you are trusted to do your job independently?
- Would you recommend our business as a place for your friends to work?
- Do you generally like your coworkers?

As you have no doubt noticed, most of these questions are designed to get an employee to evaluate a corporate culture based on empowerment, camaraderie and belief in the company's overall mission.

Aside from this informal approach, if you want to take a more detailed look at your corporate culture in preparation for a workshop, here are some of the best online tools and assessments you could use beyond the relatively simple method of a question-based survey:

- **Culture That Works (www.culturethatworks.net)** - A simple and easy-to-use downloadable individual assessment test from organizational culture consultants Jamie Notter and Maddie Grant.

- **The Oz Principle (www.ozprinciple.com)** – This companion website to a trio of best-selling books on corporate culture

features a vast array of free online resources, webinars, software and extended information on how to assess and improve your corporate culture.

- **Zappos Insights (www.zapposinsights.com)** – This site has plenty of resources from Zappos, including the *Culture Book*, webinars and other free advice on how to assess your culture.

PARTICIPANTS: Who Should Be Involved?

This workshop focuses on methods to use trends as a framework for creating a stronger employee corporate culture. As a result, it is usually valuable to have the right combination of influencers and implementers, as they will have ideas for how to change the culture, and also be in a position to help evangelize any changes or ideas that come out of the workshop as well.

Using this method, here is a suggested list of participants:

1. **Facilitator (1)** – The facilitator is the leader of the conversation and is responsible primarily for keeping the session on track, posing big questions, probing further when needed, ensuring no single participant dominates and summarizing the session and some of the discussion's big takeaways.

2. **Scribe (1)** – The point of having the task of recording notes separated from the facilitator is so the facilitator is free to focus on the conversation. The scribe, however, must do more than simply record what is said. He or she needs to be able to apply enough insight to capture the essence of ideas and connect them in real time.

3. **Corporate Culture Head (1)** – For any corporate culture to be evangelized and focused on, someone needs to take the responsibility to own it. For some organizations, this may be the leader of the entire company, and for others there may be a formal or informal role for someone to take on the

challenge of being a chief culture officer. It is vital to nominate this person before the workshop and ensure he or she is participating in it.

4. **Employees (2–4)** – In order to maintain a realistic point of view and evaluate ideas against the real life situation of your business, it is important to have some unbiased employee participants in this workshop. The ideal employees are confident enough to voice their opinions directly, and also influential enough that they will be able to command their co-workers' respect as they share the ideas from the workshop.

FORMAT: How Should the Workshop Be Structured?

If focusing on corporate culture is a relatively new topic for you or your colleagues, this may seem like a tough topic to get people to take seriously. With all the other important things that everyone has to worry about, the first challenge with setting up a workshop about corporate culture is to make sure that all the participants see and understand the importance of holding it.

Aside from this initial hurdle, the effectiveness of the workshop will be greatly improved if there is a strong structure in place to run it. To that end, here are two models that I have used in the past that may be worth considering:

1. **"Rethinking Hiring" Corporate Culture Trend Workshop** – Great cultures start (or continue) by hiring great people, so clearly the first place to start this type of workshop is with the process for how you recruit, interview and hire new team members. Is this process scripted? Does it vary by position type? Do you use external help? These sorts of questions can help you build a process flow for how you typically hire. Then, you can start to think about the trends that may impact each step of your recruiting and hiring process and how to use them.

2. **"Living The Mission" Corporate Culture Trend Workshop** – No matter the vision and mission behind your company, the obvious first step is to have a great articulation of it that everyone understands. Trends, however, can have an impact on how likely employees are to believe it, or how you might go about evangelizing it. Therefore, in this workshop, the focus is on taking the mission and using trends to make it more powerful, urgent, necessary and desirable, giving everyone more compelling reasons to believe in it.

RESULTS: What Is the Benefit of the Workshop?

So many organizations have never really focused on building a powerful corporate culture, and this offers the chance to finally correct that oversight while still using the trends as a backdrop for what to shift and why. More importantly, if you can come out of a workshop about corporate culture with a new way to share that mission with your employees by leveraging the latest trends, you will be poised to help your business be even more effective and bring on stronger talent in the coming year.

CASE STUDY: Imagine You Work at a Software Services Company

Standing out in a crowded market where there are several other companies offering similar services is your biggest challenge. You have plenty of technical experts at your company, but you're in an industry that faces rapid turnover and your competitors are ready to poach your best people at any moment.

Adding to the complexity is the fact that you have multiple locations and more than half of your employees have been with the company for less than two years. The good news is you have a founder who is still engaged with the company, and people are generally happy with the work that they do.

How do you take a nascent corporate culture and apply some of the latest 2015 trends to rethink how to engage employees to build a stronger culture for your software services company? Here are some specific ideas to illustrate what you might do:

1. **How to Use *Experimedia*** – When media increasingly features real life situations and social experiments to illuminate our behavior and how things work – it presents an opportunity to do the same in your software business. Rather than technical manuals or boring PowerPoint webinars, why not record and share live video of willing customers learning your product and using it in real life? Not only do "day in the life of" videos engage people on a different level, they also help you stand out by humanizing your product through featuring the people behind it.

2. **How to Use *Engineered Addiction*** – Instead of trying to get customers addicted to your software, you could use some of the principles of addictive design to improve the user experience. Rethinking your onboarding process for new customers could also generate similar benefits by hooking users on the simplicity or functionality of your solution right from the first moment they use it.

RESOURCES: Where Can I Learn More about Corporate Culture?

In addition to the resources shared earlier in this chapter, here are a few more that I have found particularly valuable to understanding the importance of building a powerful corporate culture:

- ***Let My People Go Surfing* by Yvon Chouinard** – Far before corporate culture was even a topic people discussed, Patagonia founder Yvon Chouinard was building a mission-driven organization with passionate employees. Today, his lessons and insights are even more valuable.

- ***The Carrot Principle* by Adrian Gostick and Chester Elton** – There is a reason this book is a classic in the world of leadership and corporate culture. The number-one reason people leave a job is because they don't feel appreciated. This book is filled with valuable reminders and ideas for how to create an empowered and supported workforce that always feels valued.
- ***Taking People with You* by David Novak** – This book crosses between leadership and corporate culture, but when you consider that the author runs a company that employs more than 1.4 million people globally (Yum! Brands), his insights are worth considering. This book is a surprisingly useful collection of tips and tricks from a field CEO who has spent his career leading in person rather than from the boardroom. That alone makes this book worth reading.

For an online list featuring these resources and many more, please visit the link below:

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