

foreword by **brian halligan**,  
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# the marketing agency blueprint

the handbook for building  
hybrid pr, seo, content,  
advertising, and web firms

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founder and CEO of PR 20/20

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# chapter 10

## Pursue Purpose

*It is purpose, not profits, which defines an agency.*

### STAND FOR SOMETHING

Success is not about money, or at least it should not be. We all have basic financial needs that must be satisfied, but no amount of money, fame, or power will bring happiness. In fact, my experiences have shown me that they often have the opposite effect on people. In order to find happiness, we must be a part of something greater than ourselves, something that we truly believe in.

The same holds true for businesses. Although for-profit companies exist to make money, the most important organizations, the ones that have the potential to change industries and our world, are often started because the founders believe they have a higher calling.

They build, out of passion and an undying belief that they can create something of great and lasting significance, what others are not willing or able to. True entrepreneurs will never be satisfied with riches alone. They have to affect change and will risk everything to make their visions reality.

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They had a great sense of purpose, which is a prerequisite for anyone who is nutty enough to want to start a company. That burning sense of conviction is what you need to overcome the inevitable obstacles.

—David Vise, *The Google Story: Inside the Hottest Business, Media and Technology Success of Our Time*, p. 65.

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## THE PURPOSE PYRAMID: A NEW PLANNING PARADIGM

We are programmed to set revenue goals, target growth rates, and measure our importance and value based on financial returns. We compare ourselves to industry benchmarks, flaunt our client lists, and tout our awards because they create the perception of success and make us feel good about ourselves.

There is nothing wrong with having financial goals and achieving milestones, but these are simply means to an end. If you believe that your agency exists solely to make money, then you likely are falling short of your potential and cheating your employees of opportunities to realize theirs.

It is purpose, not profits, which defines an agency.

### ***What Is Our Agency's Purpose?***

Have you ever stopped to ask yourself or your employees this question? You will not find the answer in the *Blueprint*, or any other book for that matter. Purpose comes from within, often originating with the founder, and is perpetuated through the agency's actions and professionals.

An agency's purpose may be innate and unspoken at first, residing in the minds of its leaders. However, over time it becomes essential to involve employees. Purpose evolves as the agency and its employees mature, and their perspectives and priorities change.

To recruit and retain top professionals, you must instill in them a belief that their time and energy is contributing to the pursuit of a greater goal that transcends standard business measurements and personal achievements and enriches their lives.

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The most successful people . . . often aren't directly pursuing conventional notions of success. They're working hard and persisting through difficulties because of their internal desire to control their lives, learn about their world, and accomplish something that endures.

—*Daniel Pink, Drive: The Surprising Truth  
About What Motivates Us, p. 60.*

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### ***Finding Purpose: A Personal Journey***

I started PR 20/20 with aggressive growth goals and a grand vision. I do not think that, at the time, I understood the agency's purpose, but I had a business plan and the freedom to find my way. Everything seemed so perfect. Then life happened, and it turned my world upside down.

In a 20-month span, two of the most important people in my life tragically passed away. I quickly realized that our personal and business lives are inextricably bound. For me, nothing has been the same since. The future I thought I knew changed. My life began to take on new meaning, and so did the agency.

These personal experiences have had a direct and lasting impact on my goals for the agency, the people that I choose to surround myself with, and the decisions that I make every day on where to focus my time and energy.

My situation is not unique. We all have our challenges. Our priorities and perspectives change, and that affects how we view the world, our careers, and our businesses.

### ***Planning for Purpose***

In September 2010, I found myself looking for direction. PR 20/20 was on pace for a record year as we approached our five-year anniversary, and I was about to be honored with an Innovation in Business Rising Star Award from *Smart Business*. It was an incredible time with tremendous promise for the future.

We had assembled a remarkable team of talented and amazingly driven professionals, and had achieved so much together, but something was missing. I was beginning to feel that somewhere along the road, I had lost my way. I had gotten so caught up in pricing, services, staffing, infrastructure, growth, and profits that I had forgotten to focus on what really mattered.

In an effort to organize my thoughts, I wrote, “The Pursuit of Purpose” on my dry erase board, and sketched a pyramid with five levels—pursuit, people, process, performance, and purpose.

At the time, I had no idea what I would use it for, other than as a daily reminder to remember why the agency existed, and to keep my priorities straight. As I wrote the *Blueprint*, the pyramid started taking on new meaning for me. I realized that it was the missing, intangible piece to building an agency that truly matters.

Figure 10.1 is a snapshot of how the pyramid works, and how the five levels support and build on each other.

**Pursuit** The first level of the pyramid is pursuit. This is where you define your agency’s vision, mission, and values, and establish the financial metrics and growth goals that will enable your agency to recruit and retain talent. You look internally to determine if you truly have the passion and drive to succeed, and you make a commitment to be great.

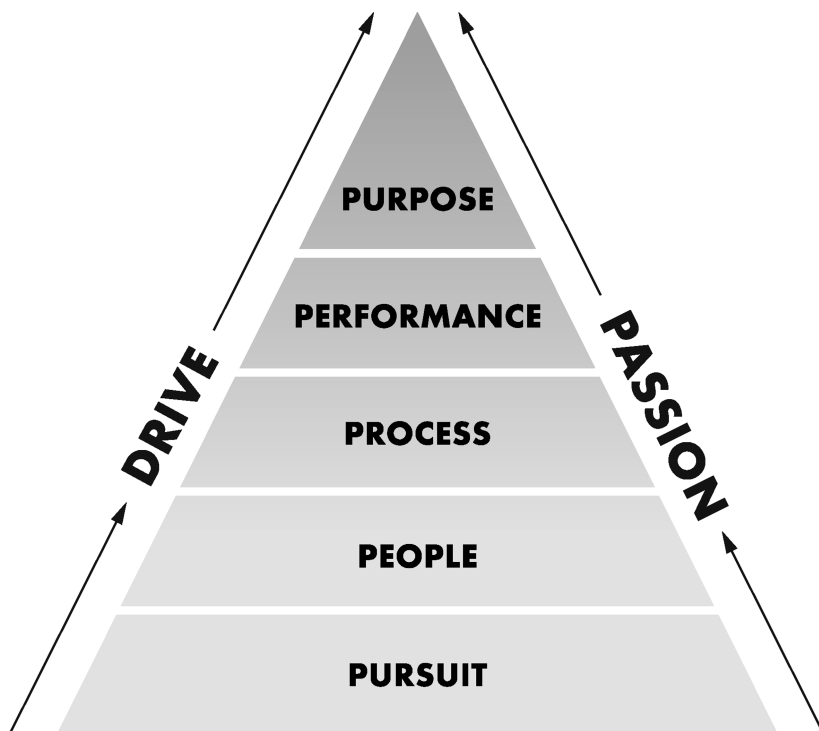


Figure 10.1 The Purpose Pyramid

This is also an opportunity for agency leaders to define their personal goals. What are you willing to sacrifice? How will you find balance in your life to remain focused and continuously bring the positive energy needed to motivate and inspire your team?

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Why try for greatness? If you're doing something that you care that much about, and you believe in its purpose deeply enough, then it is impossible to imagine not trying to make it great.

—*Jim Collins, Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap . . . and Others Don't, p. 208.*

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**People** This is possibly the most important level in building an agency, and it is the focus of Chapter 3. Once you know where you are going, you can better identify the type of people it will take to get there. This includes employees, strategic partners, clients, advisors, and any other professionals who will influence your agency and its ability to succeed.



To create an enduring brand, you need to assemble a team of talented and intrinsically motivated employees, build partnerships with like-minded organizations, and surround your agency with clients who value your professionals and services.

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Together, we had built a business that combined profits, passion, and purpose. And we knew that it wasn't just about building a business. It was about building a lifestyle that was about delivering happiness to everyone, including ourselves.

—Tony Hsieh, CEO of Zappos.com and author of *Delivering Happiness*<sup>1</sup>

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Great organizations . . . are filled with people who are absolutely determined to see the organization succeed, whatever the odds against it.

—Alan Murray, *The Wall Street Journal Essential Guide to Management: Lasting Lessons from the Best Leadership Minds of Our Time*, p. 82.

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**Process** Much of the *Blueprint* has focused on process, which in large part determines your agency's efficiency, productivity, and profitability. It is the systematic way in which you construct and manage your agency.

I tend to segment process into logical business units—operations, human resources, finance, technology, and marketing—but it includes elements such as pricing, services, hiring, training, marketing strategy, sales systems, and client services.

Success itself is a process. It requires persistence, perseverance, and an uncommon drive to achieve remarkable things. There are no shortcuts, and no guarantees. You have to be able to find satisfaction and motivation in incremental progress over days, weeks, months, and years. You have to be willing to outwork your peers and competitors. It is not about rewards or recognition; it is about an internal burning desire to improve.

If you are not putting in the time and energy to succeed, someone else will, and you have no right to complain when they take what was yours. It is acceptable to be mediocre, but if that is the path you choose, then alter your expectations about what life will give you in return. Success is not easy, but things worth achieving never are.

**Performance** These are the outcomes that fuel growth and success. Performance is the achievement of business objectives such as lead volume, customer conversions, client loyalty, employee advancement and retention, efficiency, productivity, revenue, and profits.

People and process drive performance, which enables agencies to focus on their purpose.

**Purpose** The truly transformational agencies, the ones that will thrive and lead in the new marketing services ecosystem, will pursue purpose. Think of purpose as your agency's compass. Purpose is not necessarily measureable, but it provides direction and meaning. Every action and decision should align with this ultimate pursuit.

Purpose eases the pain of the long hours and gives you the fortitude to fail. It makes menial tasks meaningful, and serves as the pivotal piece of your employee recruitment and retention strategy.

Purpose is aspirational and, in most cases, something that is never fully realized. In other words, the pursuit itself is the end game.

Purpose is:

- Steve Jobs of Apple, in 1983, famously saying to John Sculley, then president of PepsiCo, "Do you want to sell sugar water for the rest of your life or do you want to come with me and change the world?"<sup>2</sup>
- Brian Halligan and Dharmesh Shah of HubSpot building a software company to disrupt and transform the marketing industry to match the way consumers shop and learn.
- Larry Page and Sergey Brin of Google and their unending desire to create the perfect search engine that understands exactly what you mean and gives back exactly what you want.<sup>3</sup>
- Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg and his commitment to make the world more open and transparent, in order to create greater understanding and connection.<sup>4</sup>
- My mom, Judy Roetzer, starting a cookie bouquet franchise because a bouquet she sent as a gift had brought a smile to the face of a terminally ill friend. After 20-plus years as a preschool teacher, she ventured into the unknown because she believed that her purpose was to bring that same happiness to others.

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If you're going to do something, do something that matters.

—*Fried and Hansson, Rework, p. 32.*

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## FATE, DESTINY, AND THE BUSINESS OF LIFE

Life is full of joy and pain, opportunities and obstacles. This is what we are given. It is our fate. Many people choose lives of fate, dwelling on what they have lost and living within the limitations that they believe control their existence. However, life also gives us choice. It gives us free will to create our destiny.

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If you want to keep good people, work needs to provide them with a sense they are doing something important, that they are fulfilling their destiny.

—Alan Murray, *The Wall Street Journal Essential Guide to Management: Lasting Lessons from the Best Leadership Minds of Our Time*, p. 28.

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Everything that we are given, and everything that we create, can be taken away in the blink of an eye. That is what unites us—our mortality. It is the decisions we make and the actions we take in the time we are given that define who we are and what we will be.

### ***Life Lessons of an Entrepreneur***

I leave you with a collection of life lessons I have learned along the way. I hope they play a small part in helping you discover and pursue your agency's purpose:

- Fate is what we are given. Destiny is what we make. It is up to you which path you choose.
- Our business and personal lives are inextricably bound. Finding balance is the key.
- We live life in days, weeks, months, and years, but we remember it in moments. Seek to create, embrace, and cherish them.
- Everyone has a story, a unique set of circumstances and experiences that make them who they are. Take the time to listen and understand before you judge.
- Your energy is best invested in positive people whom you trust and respect and who challenge you to be a better person and professional.
- Negativity will destroy relationships and ruin the chemistry and culture within companies. Build your personal network and business around positive people.

- Loyalty and trust are invaluable traits of friends, employees, and coworkers.
- Integrity takes a lifetime to build and a moment to lose.
- We all need to be inspired. Discover the people, places, events, books, and music that inspire you.
- We are all mortal. Money, fame, and power mean nothing in the face of death.
- Get out of your comfort zone. Some of the most memorable experiences in life happen when you let go of your fears and anxieties.
- Life is full of noise, interruptions, and distractions. It will pass you by if you let it. Take the time to quiet your mind, and find your direction and purpose.

#### CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

- In order to find happiness, we must be a part of something greater than ourselves, something that we truly believe in.
- Purpose comes from within, often originating with the founder, and it is perpetuated through the agency's actions and professionals.
- In order to create an enduring brand, you need to assemble a team of talented and intrinsically motivated employees, build partnerships with like-minded organizations, and surround your agency with clients who value your professionals and services.
- Success itself is a process. It requires persistence, perseverance, and an uncommon drive to achieve remarkable things.
- If you are not putting in the time and energy to succeed, someone else will, and you have no right to complain when they take what was yours.
- People and process drive performance, which enables agencies to focus on their purpose.
- Purpose eases the pain of the long hours and gives you the fortitude to fail. It makes menial tasks meaningful, and serves as the pivotal piece of your employee recruitment and retention strategy.



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