

Establishing a Higher Purpose: Step One in Becoming a ConvergentCompany™

By John R Boyle, CEO **Convergency**Partners

A dream you dream alone is only a dream, but a dream we dream together is reality. —John Lennon and Yoko Ono.

This quote has always resonated with me. The importance of dreaming and its value to an organization, we'll get to this further down in the message – let's start with some perspective on higher purpose.

Pure economic and operating models are often broken and certainly not enough to differentiate a company in an enduring way. Yet, when we measure, manage and report out, it is often the financial and operational metrics that trump all others. Don't misunderstand me – the focus on execution and results remains, and always will be critical in running a business, however, those companies with a visible higher purpose demonstrate a commitment to their customers, communities and their employees that go beyond financial and operational impacts.

The higher purpose of an organization is grounded in passion, and a feeling of goodwill and social responsibility. Being socially just and economically feasible has become the new standard for business performance – it can be the fiber that bonds an organization's leadership, culture and strategy.

Higher purpose is cemented in what you, the CEO, and the team at the top stand for. It is characterized by what you believe to be your personal and collective “higher ground” as an organization. It is emotional and compelling; it is aspirational and consequential. It provides intrinsic meaning for people who have a relationship with the company. It influences every decision made in the organization and it implores everyone in the organization to stand up and be counted.

Let us be sure we stay aligned here – higher purpose is not a soft concept – nor is it something that later stage companies evolve to. It is foundational and formative. A company with a visible higher purpose profits from experiences. At the core, it is about building a viable and aligned business that ignites the possibilities in all it touches. It is about strengthening your products, services and solutions and how you work with your customers; it's about your employees and how they orient to the work and each other; and most of all, it's about you and you're ability to dream, think big and connect.

When you break it down, higher purpose is about execution and results, and so much more: imagine a business whose people and culture are completely connected by common values, aligned by clarity of expectations and fueled by the passion of the value your company offers to the world.

The impacts of having an expressed and visible higher purpose are significant in several ways. Most importantly by creating sustainability – ensuring the company sticks around and thrives in creating and delivering value. It spreads higher levels of engagement with employees and how employees involve themselves; it helps blur the line between a company’s customers and its employees. It positively impacts perceptions of the company in the marketplace as well as the loyalty of its customers. And one of the more powerful outcomes is that it positively impacts people’s discretionary effort and commitment; and, categorically affects the attraction and retention of key people.

CEOs and organizations that “get” the importance of living a higher purpose also understand that to make it happen, they need to be a “purpose-driven” organization. And, that the higher purpose is grounded in the organization’s most basic asset, its core competency and people. They also understand that at the end of the day in a purpose-driven organization, people need to align themselves with “like-driven” people which stimulates a feeling that “we’re all in this together” – so, who is chosen to become a member of the organization’s “family” is paramount. And, ultimately these same CEOs know that when an organization is enabled by a common higher purpose, every person does the right thing and is led by heart.

Now back to the opening quote and dreaming. Without the drive and capacity to dream, dream big and dream together an organization will not find or live out its higher purpose – and miss out on important business opportunities, and those that are likely most critical to the resilience, endurance and longevity of the organization. Only the team at the top has the scope and impact that can ignite the possibility that inspires the whole organization, its customers and the communities in which you work, live and play. Executive teams that don’t dream and act on those dreams and who focus primarily on the financial, operational and tactical issues miss this key piece.

You might wonder about the higher purpose of **Convergency**Partners . . . it’s something we’re all passionate about and informs all that we do . . .

To leave an indelible mark on the world by taking a stand for collective, transformative leadership that is generative and has lasting impact long after we are gone.

Stand up and be counted. What’s your dream?