Relationships Underpin Success

Legacy is cemented in relationships. The way we learn from each other, relate to different experiences and viewpoints and interchange our philosophies, form the basis of humanity. Our position in the world becomes defined by our association to others. To our ancestors, our present circle and our imagined future selves. These connections, and their power to shape who we are, leave a significant indent in our life’s course – in our legacies.

Words Ruby Kraner-Tucci & Sarah Markey-Hamm

INSPIRING TRANSFORMATION

Former CEO and now Executive Chairman of Starbucks, Howard Shultz, powerfully spoke to this idea. He emphasized how authenticity inspires transformation: “In this ever-changing society, the most powerful and enduring brands are built from the heart. They are real and sustainable. Their foundations are stronger because they are built with the strength of the human spirit.”

Examples of harnessing aspects of success outside financial liability are constant. McDonald’s, perhaps one of the biggest symbols for corporate greed in our Western world, has this year pledged to use renewable, recyclable or accredited materials in all packaging worldwide by 2025. Last year, Google’s global operations became fully powered by renewable energy – and they became the world’s largest corporate buyer of renewable power. Tesla is skyrocketing to the top of the chart, gaining undesirable attention for its abuse of power when it comes to sustainability and ethical sourcing, global retail giant H&M has redirected its negativity. They have committed to supply chain transparency by publishing an up-to-date list of suppliers’ names and addresses on their website each quarter.

Close to home, Kathmandu became the first brand in the Southern Hemisphere to receive accreditation by the Fair Labour Association in 2018, offering tools to help companies better protect and aid their workers. Other retailers, like The Body Shop and Cotton On, offer support through donations and regular collaborations with international and domestic charities and community organizations.

CHANGING THE LEGACY

While these actions have been at the forefront of our decision making for a while now, it is still critical in highlighting the importance of relationships. Without hesitation it is easy to suggest that the purpose of business is financial success and stability. Turning focus towards aiding the environment and conducting ethical practices for example, despite its cost, thus becomes highly significant. Organizations are emphasizing the connection they hold with their consumer, their partners and their global reach – and they are listening to how the world is changing. They are altering their course based on how we are responding. They are changing their legacy because of the intangible necessity relationships have towards their growth.

Larry K. Karte, made famous by his work with General Motors, sums this idea perfectly: “The fields of industry are strewn with the bones of those organizations whose leadership became infected with dryrot, who believe in taking instead of giving... who didn’t realize that the only assets that could not be replaced easily were the human ones.”

Relationships are foundational. The treatment of staff by their leader, consumers by a company and altogether on the personal front, cements our track in life. Our connection with others alters how we see the world and our place within it. They force us to step out of our comfort zones. They make us feel supported, loved and empowered. Business practices will only become fairer if we continue to hold each other accountable and strive towards treating people, and our environment, fairly.

To create a legacy within an association, it all starts with our engagement with others – a sustainable legacy of respect and admiration is only sure to follow.