

BEYOND
AUTHENTICITY
BUILDING BRANDS WITH
CHARACTER

Kelton

October 2016



Character Counts



Character is about who you are at your core

– the set of values that each behavior is judged against, and the foundation on which true authenticity is built.

In Beyond Authenticity: Building Brands with Character, we'll explore the consumer-driven shift from authenticity to Character, the primary dimensions of Character-ful brands, and how you can cultivate Character within your organization.

Kelton Global is an insights and strategy consultancy with offices in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and London. We blend consumer and cultural insights to identify emerging trends.

In our Cultural Insights work, we uncover macro-shifts in culture that impact brands across sectors, including the consumer-driven desire for brands to move beyond authenticity.

Bullshit is Everywhere



Consumers today are smart, savvy and skeptical. They've been duped by brands before, can quickly sniff out lies, and can easily amplify their opinions on social media.

Brands and advertisers recognized this need for 'real' and labeled it authenticity - the act of being true to both stated and insinuated promises. But lately, the veneer of authenticity is wearing thin. Why? **Consumers crave a more authentic authenticity. In short, they crave CHARACTER.**

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a silver crown and a sparkling dress, is holding a large bouquet of red roses. She has a surprised expression on her face, with her mouth open and hands near her face. The background is blurred, showing other people in formal attire.

The trouble with authenticity...

- It's static. It hinders brand evolution.
- It's one dimensional.
- It lacks a core set of beliefs.

Over time, authenticity becomes something that brands protect at the expense of being interesting.



How can you be...

Consistent yet
Multi-dimensional?

Authentic yet **Adaptable?**



CHAR·AC·TER

(noun)

The indispensable factor or influence that gives something its strength and vitality. A driving force; a vital spark.

The richer, deeper set of values that define a brand and provide a powerful sense of purpose.



Show Your Character



THINK BIG(GER)



TAKE RISKS



**TRANSCEND
TRANSACTION**



**BE HONEST, EVEN
WHEN IT HURTS**



BE COURAGEOUS

Think Big(ger)

Operate from a guiding purpose that transcends business and helps you to navigate change.



Seventh Generation lives up to its motto that “business can be a force for good in the world.” By continually demonstrating a genuine commitment to consumer health and the environment, the brand proves that it is motivated by more than its bottom line.



Be Honest, Even When it Hurts

Fully embrace consumers' expectations for complete transparency, and act accordingly.



DiGiorno Pizza committed a major social media fail when they accidentally incorporated a hashtag tied to domestic violence awareness into a promotional tweet. But they immediately and candidly fessed up to their failure to look into the hashtag's context, and wrote sincere, "no excuses" apologies to Twitter users that were offended.

NO DRAMA

Take Risks

Don't be afraid to try new things if they are true to your core and fulfill your brand's ultimate purpose.



Best Buy received backlash for wishing shoppers “Happy Eid Al-Adha,” an Islamic holiday, back in 2009. Despite initial negative reactions to the ad, Best Buy's decision ultimately helped the brand to gain new consumers and earn valuable brand advocates.

Transcend Transaction

Today, consumer/brand relationships go well beyond one-off purchase decisions. Invest in those relationships by reciprocating loyalty and partnering with your customers.



Etsy's energy consumption and shipping practices were running counter to their brand's mission of rethinking commerce for a "more fulfilling and lasting world." They decided to live their brand truth by transitioning to renewable electricity, and are committed to developing a carbon neutral marketplace.

Be Courageous

Take short term risks that align with core values to build long term trust. You'll earn brand advocates for life.



CVS: In September 2014, CVS decided to make good on its mission to help customers achieve better health and stopped selling cigarettes. The brand made a strong statement about its character, proving that it values consumer health over its own profits.

Character Building

Character-ful brands aren't built overnight, and they certainly don't evolve in a vacuum. Consumer Research is a critical input to character building. Leveraging insights will ensure that brand actions consistently reflect core brand values, while also aligning with consumers' changing views.

These are some of the strategies we've used to successfully uncover, define, and demonstrate our clients' unique character propositions:



Articulate Character

Use insights about brand equity to develop a robust brand narrative that encompasses comprehensive and broad touch points.



Track Character

Move beyond awareness and attributes to monitor indicators of character, and understand how these indicators relate to shifting perceptions.

Character Building



Listen to the Cultural Conversation

Use Social Listening to tap into of-the-moment conversations, and Cultural Insights to learn what will be important to your customers in the future.



Reframe Responsibility

Character means CSR with impact. Research uncovers the social issues that are both important to your customer and relevant to your brand, and help you to develop effective CSR and communications strategies.



Get Comfortable Being Uncomfortable

Take risks with confidence. Use Design Research and Insight-Driven Strategy to explore new ideas and understand nuanced consumer reactions.

When it comes to authenticity, Character is key

If Authenticity is a constrictive foundation, Character is how we evolve in smart, compelling ways. We believe that tomorrow's brands are Character-ful, and we are proud to have helped many brands uncover, evolve, and live out their core values.

We can't get enough of this conversation. If you'd like to talk more about Character, drop us a note at keltonhq@keltonglobal.com

Thank You.

+1.310.479.4040 | keltonglobal.com

Visit keltonglobal.com/subscribe for more exclusive Kelton e-books and downloadables.

Kelton