

How to Create a Business with heart

By Virginia Nava

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Creating a business with a heart is truly a creative process. It starts with the quest for finding the core of the business.

Did you know the word “core” in Latin is “Corazon” and means “heart?”

We need to start by defining what is the central and integral part of the business. So if we layered the business and took pieces of it, what would be what we cannot live without? This may seem like a simple exercise, but it's quite complex. In large as well as small organizations we often forget what is at the core of the business. We forget why people buy from us instead of a competitor. Why employees stay loyal to our organization. Why this organization is an authentic reflection of who we are.

Let's begin by making our company transparent and essential. Let's take away the frou frou and the long words and come back to the guiding lights the organization was founded upon. We should rediscover if our original purpose was to create a community; to create a sense of belonging; to make a difference; to help people in their daily lives. Tap into what it is that still drives what we do in the organization every day. Bring to light the reason it still makes sense for us to wake up and drive toward that organization. Hopefully, it's not because of the coffee or a paycheck but because what we do matters.

The core of the business is in the humanization of the business. The nature of the business doesn't matter; it could be a non-profit or a for-profit business, but what is its emotional connection to the world and how is it impacting others?

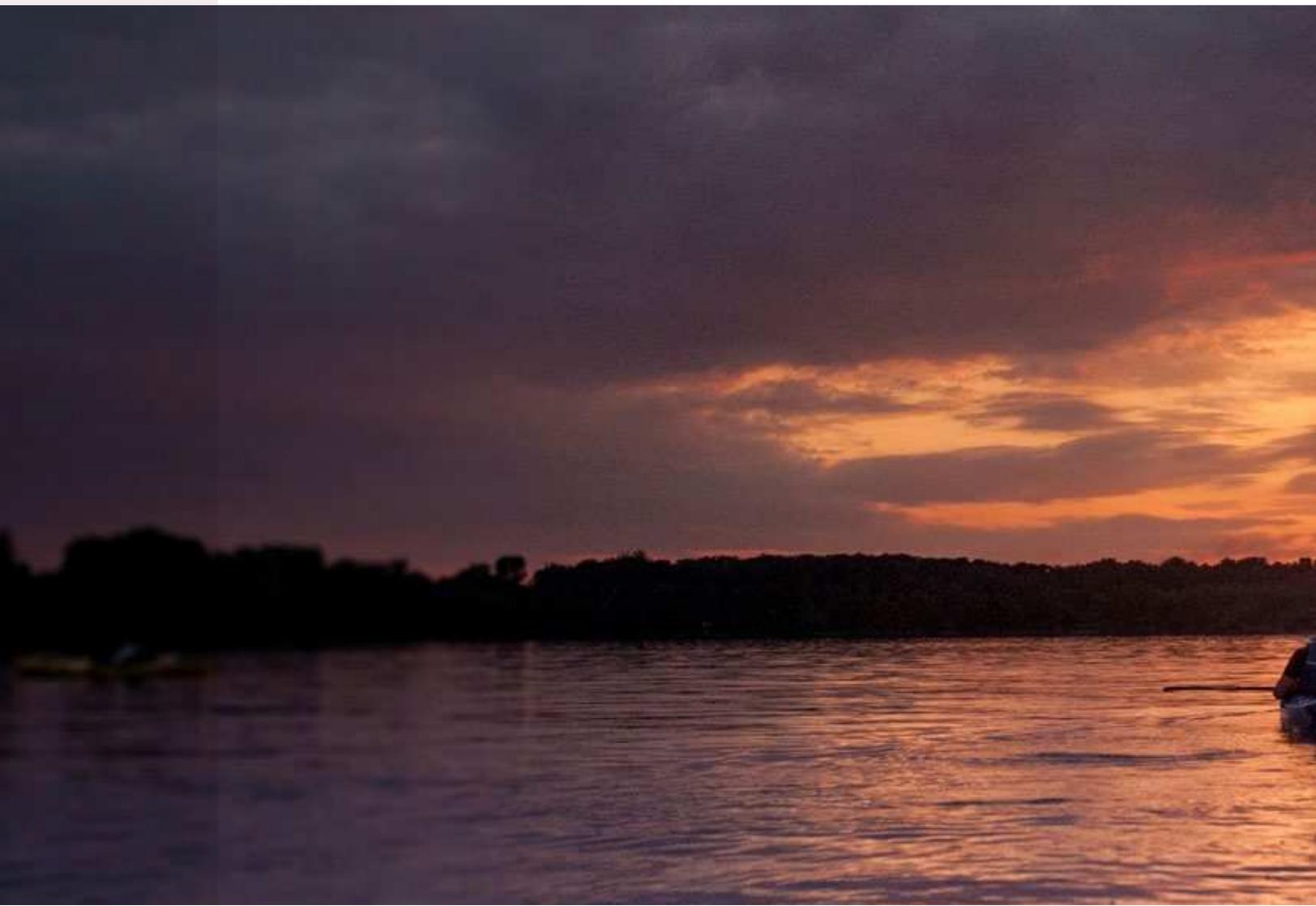
The core is the essence that the business cannot live without; it's the essential element of the organization survival. It's how businesses thrive. You can easily close your eyes and think to yourself as a customer which organizations reveals its core to you. It is fascinating to see that even though there are thousands of businesses and non-profits, still when we think of a business with a heart, we only tend to think of a few.



Why there are so few that are memorable is because the connection of the business heart and the customer that the core of the business is moved beyond a mechanized system to a heart system that interacts and connects emotionally with its customers as well as its employees.

Why is it so important to know the core of your business? Because if you don't know, nobody else will, either. If you don't understand it, nobody else will; if you don't value it, nobody else will. Believe it or not, an organization is like a person: When the person is guarded and covered by an armor, they are perceived as cold and detached. By contrast, a person who is warm, open and willing to have a conversation is more open to possibilities; people will relate to this person and will be more likely to have a relationship with them.

It is interesting to me that even companies who have had strong brands for many years don't seem to know themselves well. When you ask their employees, "What is the personality of the organization? How would you describe it if it were a person?", you may get several different answers. This shows that the organization has not taken the time to share its core internally—and therefore is not seen clearly in the external world. It happens in small business and with solopreneurs as well, where you would think it would be so much easier to see the core of the business, since it's driven by a single person without need for consensus and agreement.



Why is it so difficult to find the core or communicate the core of a business? Because a lot of mid- and high-level managers see business as non-personal, or as a set of practices that allow control over group performance. A lot of our business practices come from military systems that were adapted for the business world and based on cohesion and standardized processes versus a creative approach to performance. In the new DNA and era of humanity, where a single tweet can change a perception of your Organization from France to China in a second, the sense of control by geography and territory as if you were in a management of war is no longer as easy to achieve. When people can just easily buy systems in their TVs to remove advertisements and commercials from their recordings, the power to influence has become more diminished than ever before.

The conversation is moving from top executives to a bottom-up relationship where whether we want it or not, we'll hear feedback about our organization and will need to make the decision to move from control to vulnerability.

The companies that have the courage to communicate and engage with their customers by being authentic and real are the ones gaining territory while expanding brand recognition and loyalty. The companies that don't have the courage to communicate and engage with their customers have exchange-based customers where, randomly, their fans or non-followers will take turns leading the conversation about them. Which kind of organization is yours?



Business Heart Assessment:

- Are you interested in bringing more meaning to people's lives?
- As an organization that is interested in showing the heart of your business, are you ready to evaluate where you are today by asking some tough questions?
- Does your upper management really know your customer? Has your manager ever sat with a customer to have an one-on-one conversation? I don't mean a sales pitch, I mean a conversation where they learn about the customer's aspirations, wants, needs and future dreams. Is your mid-management involved in the customer interactions or is someone else—and does your manager just take notes from what other people say?
- Is your brand full of words such as "quality", "sustainability," "leadership" and "innovation"—words that only speak about the company internally versus externally?
- Does your organization know the heart of the business? The heart of the business is not quality, leadership or innovation, it's why people buy your quality and how your innovation helps make their lives better.
- Is your market research aimed with words to prove your innovation needs or is it aimed at understanding future needs?
- Can you create a system where you engage a conversation by asking employees what is at the heart of your business? What makes them come to work every day? What keeps them alive?
- Ask your clients how your product makes their lives better.
- If no one outside of the company can give you the answers, go back to your company's foundations: How was it created? What are the core values and are they still valid? Have they been reshaped or have they been lost in the process and need reconnection?
- How will you engage the new generations of talent within your organization to keep "pumping" the core of the business, to re-energize the business? Do you have a system to do this or is it all about people doing their "job" and that's it?
- Without a connected structure, you may have a heart but you may not have a circulation system that keeps it alive. Is your heart still pumping and thriving or does it need resuscitation?

