

50 WAYS
TO DRIVE
**BRAND
CULTURE**

[APOLOGIES TO PAUL SIMON]



Ideas and activities to align brand purpose and organizational culture in your CDFI.

ESTABLISH CLARITY

1. **Develop your “why” statement or brand purpose statement.** No strong, compelling brand exists solely to make money, though most strong brands generally do make money. Your purpose statement must be “bigger than yourself.”
2. **Create a common language.** These are narratives and mantras that can be telegraphed inside and outside the organization. Use a system of tools like Thoma’s Brand Leadership Frames, Patrick Hanlon’s primal branding framework or similar.
3. **Codify your organization’s core values, aligning them with the brand purpose.** For individuals and organizations, values are the guide rails for behavior. Your brand’s core values set up the system of expected and desired behaviors for the organization and its people.
4. **Be explicit about the behaviors that align with cultural mores.** Distill cultural values to specific behaviors; be clear what actions are aligned with purpose; publish guidelines (often in concert with a core value reward program so it is received in the right spirit).
5. **Commit to hiring, managing, rewarding and firing based on core values.** Build cultural fit into your employee screening process and employee performance

reviews; this underscores the high regard the organization places on its culture and those to live it.

6. **Publish a book of brand.** This document should go well beyond the common graphic identity standards manual often referred to as brand standards. It should elaborate the philosophy of the organization, explain its point(s) of differentiation and elucidate the core values. Think of it as a manifesto for your brand.

COMMUNICATE CONSTANTLY

7. **Launch your brand framework inside the organization with a big bang.** Pull everyone together for a common experience that is scripted and produced to roll out the new mantras, distribute the brand book, launch the core values program or deliver other news. Your event is driven by your bank's place on its brand journey. If offices are spread out across extensive geography, create a virtual meeting or take your executives on a road show to deliver the message.
8. **Deck the halls:** affix decals or murals to the walls in employee spaces--bathrooms, entryways, breakrooms. These serve as continual reminders of the brand's core messaging, and they are hard to ignore!
9. **Develop a poster campaign to keep brand culture ideas front and center.** Unlike decals or murals, posters can evolve and revolve, keeping fresh messages in front of your team.
10. **Press your cultural mantras into the hands of your people through innovative and unexpected media:** mirror clings in the bathrooms, sticky notes in the kitchen cabinets, coasters, badge pulls, keychains and badge tags. The more ubiquitous your message, the more memorable it is.
11. **Take 2 minutes in staff, departmental and other standing meetings to connect to purpose;** remind each other of the mission of the bank that goes beyond checking, savings and CDs.

12. **Leverage office technology creatively.** For example, collaborate with IT to push messages via screensaver and voicemail blasts to all staff.
13. **Develop and publish a CEO's blog that is geared to employees;** leave it open for comment to generate a two-way dialog with the top.
14. **Push it further with monthly or periodic video messages posted for employees.** Inform everyone about the vision and direction for the bank, connecting activities and initiatives to purpose.
15. **Create mnemonics.** The easier your mantras and messages are to remember, the faster they can be internalized and faster they can be spread. Remember Sunrise Banks' "Big Bigger Blind Do Woo Wee" and Southern Bancorp's "One Southern One Mission" and "R.A.I.S.E. Recognition" program.
16. **Use major meetings to underscore the value and imperative of the brand positioning and core values.** Start with why and align content of company-wide, regional or interdepartmental meetings with brand purpose, values and mantras. Anytime a large group of employees is gathered, you have an incredible opportunity to create a memorable shared experience.

CREATE A CULTURENET

17. **Create an intranet or develop a "culture-corner"** in the intranet you have to feature useful, memorable content about your brand of banking and the people who make it happen. Bring your brand alive to employees within your "culturenet."
18. **Use the intranet to foster internal conversations about the brand;** ask and answer questions; integrate your rewards program; complete employee profiles and include comments on brand-centric questions like, "why do you like working here?"

19. **Gamify your intranet experience.** Post contests and challenges; let people compete for modest prizes and maximum glory. For instance, when building out a company-wide directory of people and personalities, award prizes to the offices who reach 100% completion first.
20. **Use your intranet to amplify and propagate many of the other ideas you're executing.** With the distributed nature of banking, it's a powerful tool to shrink your organization and jump over geography. When *anything* of cultural import happens *anywhere* in the company, be sure it's recorded on the intranet for all to see.

KEEP SCORE!

21. **Survey employees periodically to evaluate their alignment and engagement with the brand purpose.** Alignment is "I understand what makes my bank different and desirable to do business with." Engagement is "I'm an advocate and evangelist for our unique brand of banking." Alignment is heads, engagement is hearts. Win both!
22. **Use the Net Promoter Score (NPS) question** as a simple one-question proxy to monitor brand strength (especially loyalty) among both employees and customers.
23. **Using NPS data, proactively identify and seek to transform Passives and Detractors into Promoters;** use NPS responses to discover and recover from service failures and pinpoint sources of employee disaffection or dissonance.
24. **Establish cultural KPIs** such as target employee NPS scores, employee satisfaction, alignment and engagement scores to focus internal branding efforts on highest payoff activities. Focus your culture team on moving the needle and monitoring the impact. The more you succeed the more you succeed.

DEVELOP CULTURAL CHAMPIONS AND AMBASSADORS

25. **Identify and equip an internal culture champion who holds accountability for shaping and developing brand culture.** It can be a role of the Chief People Officer, the Chief Marketing Officer, the Chief Operating Officer or another position. And don't say, "culture is everybody's job." Of course it is, but what is everybody's job is nobody's job.

26. **Help the senior team—especially the CEO—understand and value the role of culture in expanding organizational potential and driving business success.** At the end of the day, the CEO has the most powerful influence on culture simply by dint of the position.

27. **As cultural initiatives develop, engage the senior team directly in championing, supporting and communicating the culture work.** Coworker influence propagates culture through the organization; executive sponsorship gives it moral authority.

CREATE A CULTURE COUNCIL

28. **Create an Employee Culture Council** to spread culture like a virus throughout the organization. Peer-to-peer cultural transmission is persistent and consistent; top-down commands are episodic. Top-down can drive compliance; peers can drive commitment.

29. **Select Culture Council participants from the “natural leaders” in the organization,** regardless of job title or role power; they are the established influencers who will spread the message best. Be sure they represent the diversity, geography and functions of the organization. Use this definition to identify your Culture Councilors: “leaders are the people others want to follow.”

30. **Convene your Culture Council at least quarterly.** Create activities, messages and objectives for your Culture Council to shape and direct the work; leave a lot of room for their own creativity and innovation to shape the outcomes.

TELL STORIES!

31. **Tap the power of story to teach and telegraph brand values.** Introduce a 2-minute story time in standing meetings; elicit stories from your team and spread them via this grapevine.
32. **Share impact stories via any means possible.** The CEO and executives should periodically tell stories, especially in all-hands or large team meetings.
33. **Put them on the intranet.** Publish a book; email them around.
34. **Create a story-gathering initiative to build your story library.** Capture stories through the rewards and recognition program, through departmental leaders, via the intranet.
35. **Teach employees how to spot impact stories** featuring customers, communities, businesses, jobs and similar value created by the bank's work. In many mission-driven organizations employees become inured to their impact, rationalizing "that's my job; I do it every day."
36. **Incentivize employees to submit impact stories** by gamifying the process with contests, challenges and rewards for spotting and sharing a great story.
37. **Document great impact stories in video vignettes** that are posted on the bank's intranet or shared in staff meetings via tablet or smartphone. Don't get high-centered on technology or production values. Especially for internal consumption, your people with their iPhones is all the production studio you'll need. Your bank's impact, told through the eyes of your customers, can have a profound emotional appeal to your teammates.
38. **Crowdsource video.** Ask all employees to submit short videos on "why I work here" and assemble an inspiring composite. Ask employees to ask customers

“why you bank here” and do the same. Share these everywhere in the bank. (Oh yes: have fun; create a contest!)

CELEBRATE YOUR CULTURE AND YOUR IMPACT

39. **Culture is fun!** Get creative and let your hair down to celebrate your bank’s uniqueness. Have a culture party where everyone brings a food item inspired by a core value.
40. **Celebrate a core value of the month.** Tap someone in each branch/office to bring treats, decorations or an activity illustrating the core value.
41. **Gamify culture!** Design a game illustrating the core value of the month or the core values as whole. Move the game from location to location throughout the month. Post videos on the intranet of employees playing the game.
42. **Create a brand culture quiz and ask senior team members to visit each location.** They quiz each employee and confer awards on those who are familiar with bank trivia, history and values. Come up with some funny prizes for winners!
43. **Celebrate successes.** When the bank achieves key objectives and milestones, create company-wide celebrations and tie them to the brand core. This integrates culture closely with the business strategy and mission objectives of the bank.
44. **Turn your annual report/impact statement into a company-wide celebration.** Give your people the first copy, explore the meaning in the document, pull out and lift up hero stories and community impact and make sure you thank them for making the year happen. Tie the bank culture to the impact delivered—one doesn’t happen without the other.

INTEGRATE CULTURE WITH REWARDS AND RECOGNITION

45. **Create a rewards and recognition program expressly tied to cultural mores.**

R+R should acknowledge and reward behaviors that are specifically aligned with brand values and the bank culture you're building.

46. **Be specific about what the R+R program is designed to do:** identify, recognize and reward specific behaviors deriving from the brand values. If your core values statements evoke and imply action (e.g. "go the second mile" vs. "service"), you can expect better results.

47. **Roll out the R+R program with a big splash,** and make sure managers and executives are well-coached and perfectly clear about the objectives and mechanics of the program. A successful practice is a live or video message from the CEO, broadcast system-wide, followed by the department or branch manager explaining the mechanics, criteria, rewards.

48. **Incorporate means for peer-for-peer recognition as well as top-down recognition.** There are thousands of opportunities every year for people to "catch each other being good."

49. **Ensure that the R+R program lifts awardees to bank-wide visibility;**

"recognition in the public square" is much more powerful than a pat on the back from a manager in private. Further, highly public recognition serves to underscore culturally aligned behavior for everyone on the team.

50. **Keep it fresh.** Recognize that when anyone plays a game for a long time, it becomes old-hat. Find ways to refresh and enliven your R+R program—new rewards, new ways of featuring winners, new ways of nominations (e.g. opening it to customers). At least every couple of years, find some way to pivot to keep employees engaged and excited about living your brand.