



## **Profit on Purpose**

*Building a fully human organisation 'on purpose'*

### **An introduction to purpose**

*"The two most important days of your life, are the day you are born  
and the day you find out why." Mark Twain*

I believe that deep down we all want to find our 'why' – our purpose - particularly with regards to our career. We all want to do work that lights us up and makes a difference.

Companies across the globe are experiencing a culture crisis like never before and they're finding it tougher than ever to attract and keep the best and brightest people.

I believe **the only real solution to this problem is to radically rebalance profit with a 'higher purpose'**. The successful leaders of tomorrow will be the ones to awaken purpose in themselves, their company and their people.

This paper provides evidence of the imperative of purpose in business and offers fresh ideas on how to ignite purpose in your organisation and your people.

If you like what you read, please share it and invite me to speak on the topic of **Profit on Purpose**. There's more about me and 'why I do what I do' at the end of the paper.

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### **My own path to purpose**

In 2010, I was burnt out marketer. After a 20-year career in the corporate world and in my own business, I came to the blinding realisation that I'd totally fallen out of love with my profession and my business.

So within 90 days, I gave everything up and started over. I closed my business, sold our home in Sydney and went to live with my 12 year-old-son Billy in beautiful Aix-en-Provence in the south of France.

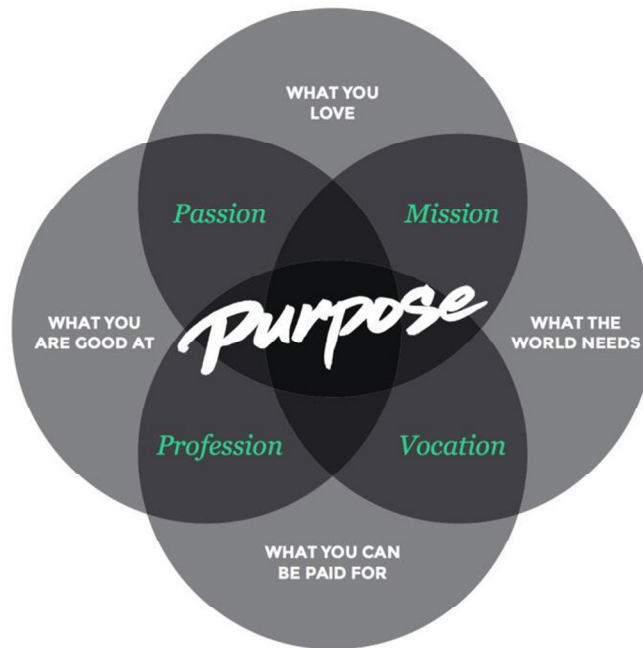
This time in France changed everything for me.

Mostly because it gave me the 'career circuit breaker' I needed to explore my purpose – my 'why' – particularly with regards to my future livelihood.

## What is purpose?

Purpose is about living and working at the intersection of your talents, passions and strengths in service to yourself and in service to others. It's about feeling content in the knowing that what you are doing makes you feel more human, more alive and more valuable.

There are many paths one can take to finding purpose. I use this model when working with employees, entrepreneurs and companies.\*



Firstly, let's start with the **'what you can be paid for'** circle. People only working in this circle are turning up for a pay cheque and are unlikely to be using their real skills and talents.

Next, let's move to the **'what you are good at'** circle. This is where your strengths and talents are being utilised and you're being sought out for them. You're experienced and knowledgeable but you're mostly operating at a rational and functional level.

At the intersection of what you are good at and what you can be paid for, you have a **'profession'**. You're probably not passionate about your work and you might feel stuck. (This was me in 2010 before going to France).

Now let's move to the **'what you love'** circle. You're doing work you're good at that makes you money and you're working on projects you love. It's moving beyond the rational and functional, where the first two circles keep you. It's moving into serious 'heart' territory. It's where you start to lose track of time and are inspired by your work. (This is how I feel when I write.)

And now to the final circle, '**what the world needs**'. This is when your work is also of service to others. It's no longer about 'me'. It's about 'we'. It's about how your work makes a difference.

Most of us only play in one or two of these circles at a time. Our opportunity is to start gently exploring all the circles to arrive at a livelihood that taps into each circle, so that we may fulfill our full potential, in service to ourselves, and others.

*\* The source of this model is unknown. There are many derivations of this purpose model.*

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### Why we need purpose

Today, millions and millions of people around the world are burnt out and disengaged at work. In fact, a 2012 Gallup Poll showed that:

- 13% of employees are 'engaged' at work - they are committed to their jobs and likely to be making positive contributions to their company
- 63% are 'not engaged' - they lack motivation and are unlikely to put discretionary effort into their work
- 24% are 'actively disengaged' – they are unhappy and unproductive at work and spreading negativity across the organisation.

One could surmise then, that 87% of us are not in jobs that have meaning - that **87% of us are making a 'dying' instead of a 'living' at work. The secret to bringing 'life back to work' lies in reorienting people towards their purpose.**

This theory is supported by the work of Psychotherapist Victor Frankl. He wrote the seminal book on purpose called *Man's Search for Meaning*. The book chronicles his experiences in a German concentration camp where he practiced a form of analysis he called logotherapy – a therapy that reorients people towards the meaning of their life. Logos is a Greek word denoting 'meaning'. He argues that our search for meaning is our primary motivation in life.

He goes on to validate this theory after the war by conducting a survey at the John Hopkins University with 7948 students. They were asked what they considered most important to them on leaving university - 16% of students said it was 'making lots of money' while a staggering 78% of students said it was 'finding a purpose and meaning'.

So if purpose is so important, why is that so many of us have not pursued it? I blame The Industrial Age.

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### The Industrial Age killed Purpose

While **The Industrial Age** brought us many wonderful innovations, it also cheated us out of finding our purpose. This age was all about factories and the assembly line.

The economic system was built on the mass production of **products** where demand was fuelled by mass **promotion** and advertising in the single-minded pursuit of **profit**. **People** and our **planet** earth were commoditised and dispensable in industrialisation.

**The Industrial Age**  
**Product + Promotion = Profit**

The system turned us all simultaneously into both workers and consumers. The more we consumed, the more we needed to earn and so the more we needed to work. This vicious consumption cycle dulled us to our true potential and diverted us away from our purpose.

But The Industrial Age is over. We're now firmly in the grip of **The Technology Age**. Companies are taking their technology endeavours very seriously. They're seeing it as the 'new oil' and they're investing billions in it to remain relevant and competitive.

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**The Human Age – Here Now!**

What many companies are ill prepared for however, is the age we're rapidly moving into right now, **The Human Age** - the age where **meaning is the new money** and where **purpose prevails**.

In The Human Age, a higher **purpose** unites and inspires **people** to build a great company that is in deep consideration of the **planet** while ensuring everybody is **prosperous**, not just the few at the top.

**The Human Age**  
**Purpose + People + Planet = Prosperity**

It's from this platform that companies build the most enduring and essential **products** that require no mass **promotion** because people buy your why - they buy what you stand for, not just what you sell.

**The biggest disruption in the business world in the next 10 years will not come from advancements in technology, but from advancements towards purpose, where technology will simply be the great enabler of purpose.**

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**The Company Purpose**

Purpose answers the most fundamental core truths of your company; Why are you here? What is the contribution you are making? How is the world better because you exist?

Many companies are tackling 'purpose' with genuine enthusiasm and commitment. They're investing valuable resources into creating their purpose statements. Statements like these:

Telstra	To create a brilliant connected future for everyone.
KeepCup	To kick-start the demise of the disposable cup.
IAG	We help make your world a safer place.
BNP Paribas	The bank for a changing world.
WakeUp	To awaken the best in people and organisations.
Interface Carpets	To become fully sustainable with zero negative impact by 2020.
Patagonia	To build the best product, cause no unnecessary harm, use business to inspire and implement solutions to the environmental crisis. (My personal favourite.)

Having a purpose statement is one thing. Living and breathing it is quite another. For many companies, the execution of purpose will fall way short of the promise. The statement may become passive and static as the company struggles to infuse it into the fabric of their culture, values and behaviour.

There is a very real risk that the purpose statement is seen as a pithy advertising line instead of the *raison d'être*. An investment in purpose can actually do more harm than good if the talk is not walked and it becomes viewed with cynicism by employees, customers and the public.

To be clear, this is **not about sacrificing profit in the name of purpose but about 'profiting on purpose' by bringing your company back to its humanness.**

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### The difference between purpose and mission

Many companies confuse purpose with mission. The purpose becomes a simple revamp of the old mission statement instead of something entirely new and real that can turn the whole organisation around.

A mission, according to a recent HBR article, describes what business the organisation is in (and what it isn't) both now and projecting into the future. Its aim is to provide focus for management and staff.

Purpose, on the other hand is both the glue of your organisation and the guiding north-star. It is forever pursued but can never be fully realised or even measured. Unlike the more functional and rational attributes of a mission which is more head-centred, the purpose stems from emotional and spiritual attributes and is heart-centred. Everyone sees it, hears it and feels it and they witness it being enacted by leaders.

**A heart-felt purpose has the power to bring humanity back to your organisation. It's as essential to a company as breathing is to us humans.**

## Two essential purpose strategies

There are two essential strategies to ignite and embed purpose in a company:

### 1. Make the company purpose a truly 'collective purpose'

A solid purpose statement is a collective statement that paints the picture of a better world - for everyone, from your staff to your suppliers. Defining your new purpose statement should not be the domain of your advertising agency, your executive team or that expensive consulting firm.

#### **A great purpose must be co-created *with* your people and *for* the people.**

Patagonia's purpose is a great example of a collective purpose. It's aimed at inspiring everyone, even their competitors, to do better. Everyone has a hand in creating and activating a collective purpose and everyone holds each other accountable to it. Everyone takes responsibility for it.

### 2. Enable BYO Purpose\*

As we embed the company collective purpose, we then add another rich deep layer to the purpose equation. We invite people to bring their own purpose to work (BYO Purpose). This is where the company becomes both the arbiter and curator of purpose in their people.

Recently I gave a talk to the staff of a large finance company. After the talk, Karen, a financial adviser in the audience, contacted me. She told me her real passion was health and wellbeing and that she'd been studying nutrition for the last two years. She shared with me that she had two years to go and that I'd inspired her to continue her studies despite the enormous stress and pressure she was feeling at work.

What if her company were to look beyond the KPI's, the job descriptions and the sales targets to invite Karen to bring her own purpose to work? What if the company funded her studies and gave her time off to study? What if, in time, she was able to combine her nutritional advice with financial advice for clients? This would make absolute sense, as we all know that poor health can be financially devastating.

*\*With permission from Matt Perfect, Slow School Founding Member and founder of Something Great who first coined this term.*

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## Purpose, People & Culture

Carrots and sticks no longer work for employees today. A higher purpose intrinsically motivates people to *be* more and *do* more for themselves and the company. This is the secret to transforming a culture and attracting and retaining the best people.

Sadly, in the case of Karen, she'll most likely become one of the thousands of soul-searching corporate escapees I meet every day. She'll runaway from work to start her own purpose-driven business.

The reality is that entrepreneurship is not for everyone. It's financially tough and the failure rate is high. There's a myth out there that we can all be entrepreneurs. Companies could save themselves millions by supporting people like Karen and save her a lot of heartache in the process!

Also Gen Z's (those born just before the millennium and our future workforce) simply won't work for companies that aren't putting purpose before profit. Higher purpose will be the essential ingredient required to recruit these talented and creative young people.

**A deep purpose rooted in the emotional and spiritual needs of your people is the most direct way to engagement and retention.**

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### **Purpose & Marketing**

In my book *Conscious Marketing*, I show how marketing centred in purpose can totally differentiate your company and change your approach to the messages you deliver, the medium you employ and how much money you spend.

Conscious Marketing is all about building something so fundamentally good and compelling right into the heart of your company so that everyone wants to join up and your products sell themselves. It's about reorienting your company towards purpose so you require less investment in mainstream promotional activities and more investment in people and products.

In the book I share ten ways for companies to shift their marketing mindset:

1. From profit-driven to purpose-driven
2. From company-centric to customer-centric
3. From price-driven to value-driven
4. From competitive to collaborative
5. From interruption to attraction
6. From duplicity to honesty
7. From complexity to simplicity
8. From masculine to feminine
9. From unintelligent to intelligent
10. And finally...from fear to love.

Companies centred in purpose have the power to radically shift their whole approach to marketing, advertising and communications – internally and externally. They can make marketing joyful again, for everyone, from the marketing department to the overwhelmed consumer. And it could save millions in advertising!

## Purpose & Storytelling

Storytelling is the most powerful way to demonstrate that your company is centred in purpose. Stories are handed down from generation to generation. They live on in hearts and minds. They are shared through the power of a blog, a public talk, a video and in the media.

**Stories help spread a purpose worth sharing.**

Everyone has a story in them, absolutely everyone. Unearthing the stories of your people, the stories that matter most to them and your company, is the best way to show (not tell) the 'why' behind what you do.

Companies that are serious about purpose will invest heavily, both in time and money, in building a storytelling culture. This will be the key to engaging hearts and minds and it will be the single biggest thing to differentiate your company from the competition.

Stories like this one simply and beautifully explain the power of a collective purpose:

*In 1962, President Jack Kennedy was taking a tour of NASA. At one point during the tour he broke away from the tour group to approach a janitor sweeping the floors. As they shook hands the President said 'Hi I'm Jack Kennedy, what are you doing?' to which the janitor replied instantly 'I'm helping put a man on the moon Mr. President'.*

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## Actions to Unearth Purpose

These are the lessons I've learnt on my own path to purpose and in building our business school, The Slow School of Business. They are useful for individuals and companies alike.

### 1. Be courageous

Oscar Wilde said *the riskiest thing in life is taking no risks at all*. Don't stay rooted in the old system and mission. Finding a higher purpose beyond profit requires a little uprooting and a whole lot of courage. Set the intention and invite your people in.

### 2. Be curious

It starts with a gentle sense of curiosity. Who are the passionate purpose-driven companies and leaders and what are they doing? Revisit why your company was started in the first place (there was no doubt a higher purpose way back when). Host small chat groups with staff. An informal and mindful approach is best.

### 3. Go slow

It can be tempting to throw a task force at this purpose thing and set a rush deadline for delivery. Good things take time and great things take the longest time. Don't rush it. The most enduring purpose will come from everyone participating in the fullness of time and with everyone being recognised and valued in the process.



**4. Be creative**

The path to purpose is almost always a creative one. There is much to learn from the arts and nature on the purpose journey. Sing. Travel. Write. Meditate. Photograph. There are a million and one creative practices that your people can work with to tap into their personal purpose and the collective company purpose.

**5. Unlearn and relearn**

Review your L&D programs to assess both 'what' is taught and 'how' it's taught. Adopt a 'we're all teachers and we're all students' mindset. Look at the myriad of new learning options available that are teaching new systems thinking. Invite The Slow School of Business in for a chat. 😊

**6. Get comfortable with being uncomfortable**

It would be unnatural not to feel mighty uncomfortable and vulnerable at times on this journey. Go with it. Accept it. Don't give up. If you're not feeling uncomfortable regularly you're probably not digging deep enough. Allow your staff to be uncomfortable and vulnerable too.

**7. Action precedes clarity**

It is necessary to take action to get clarity on your why. Test a proto-type product that is aligned with purpose. Talk to your suppliers about what they value most. Find out the absolute truth about your environmental impact. Ask the younger generation (your future workforce) their wish for your company.

**8. Get a purpose coach**

The quality of the questions you ask yourself around purpose will determine the quality of the outcome – not just in articulating the purpose but also in enabling it in your company. This requires an experienced coach and advisor, someone willing to sit with you and dig deep.

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**In closing**

I'm mindful that the pursuit of purpose at work (as described in this paper) is a privilege denied to millions of people fighting for survival. For these people, this paper would seem trite, almost an insult.

That's why, for those of us that can, we have an obligation to live and work on purpose - a purpose that is in service to you, in service to others and those that have no choice.

I for one, want my son Billy to know that I tried to do my bit to fix the damage that's been done to humanity and the planet. My deepest desire is to be a wicked role model for him and to inspire him to passionately pursue his own purpose.

And the same goes for you and your company. I want your company and your people to be firmly focused on your purpose too.

**The Human Age** is here now. **Meaning is the new money** and **'Profiting on Purpose'** is the only answer. We owe it to the planet, to future generations, but most importantly we owe it to ourselves.

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### **About the author of this paper, Carolyn Tate**

Carolyn is an author, educator, speaker, strategist and coach. Her purpose is to help build purpose-driven and prosperous businesses that make the world a better place. She combines her talents and passion for purpose digging, conscious marketing and storytelling to help companies reorient themselves towards purpose.

She is the founder of The Slow School of Business, a people-powered learning community of independent educators, facilitators and professionals who come together to co-create customised learning & development programs for companies. All programs such as their flagship program Talk on Purpose, are highly experiential and transformative.

As a brand and marketing specialist with a long history at both Westpac and Merrill Lynch and in her own business, she is uniquely placed to help companies articulate and share their purpose.

Carolyn is the author of Small Business Big Brand, Marketing your Small Business for Dummies, Unstuck in Provence (a personal memoir) and Conscious Marketing. She is also writing her fifth book on 'Purpose' to be published in 2017. Carolyn is a founding member of Conscious Capitalism Australia and her company is a Certified B Corporation.

**To book Carolyn to speak at your next event on 'Profit on Purpose' or 'ConsciousMarketing' contact Marg and the team at Great Expectation Speakers and Trainers on 1300 55 64 69 or [marg@greatexpectation.com.au](mailto:marg@greatexpectation.com.au)**