



## BEST PRACTICE #5

# Governance

“Governance” refers to the overarching structure surrounding brand and marketing projects. In order to be successful, brand and marketing activities require a clear organizational structure, decision-making systems, experienced practitioners and leaders, and rewards and incentives. Among the brands we reviewed in our case study series, we noted five qualities that contributed to strong governance, as outlined below:

**(1) A visionary leader who has continuity with the organization:** Half of the projects we reviewed have existed for more than ten years. Almost all of these have benefited from the visionary leadership of a passionate founder — someone who saw an opportunity to address an unmet need, had the leadership courage to bring their vision to life, inspired others to join the cause, and sustained the organization with consistent leadership throughout crises and triumphs alike. A few examples:

- Georgia Arnold, the Executive Director of the MTV Staying Alive Foundation and the Executive Producer of MTV Shuga, has been credited with the long-term success of both the Foundation and the show. Working at MTV over 20 years ago, she was inspired by a young HIV-positive community activist, had the idea to use the resources of the MTV brand to support his work, and made it happen, creating the MTV Staying Alive Foundation. Over 20 years later, the Foundation, which supports HIV activists through small grants and influences youth behavior and norms through real-life storytelling, has reached over 720 million households and has been associated with a significant increase in HIV testing.
- Rob Burnet, a media industry veteran, was motivated by the riots following the 2007 Kenyan presidential elections, started Shujaaz – a youth-focused comic and radio program that aims to create social and economic value for Kenyan youth. Burnet has led Shujaaz since its inception in 2010, where his industry experience, passion, and commitment have been the backbone of the Shujaaz brand. Shujaaz has been associated with positive outcomes in contraception, abstinence, and money hustles (i.e., income generation).
- Rajeev Juneja’s experience as a pharmaceutical representative in India led him in 2005 to create a new kind of pharmaceutical company that would focus on doctors and their patients in Tier II and III cities. Juneja continues to serve as Chairman, while his younger brother, who co-founded the company with him, serves as CEO. The two have shared overall responsibilities for the company and have guided its growth to a top 10 Indian pharmaceutical company by focusing on addressing underserved segments, cost management, disruptive marketing, and aggressive promotions.
- Brian Chesky, who co-founded Airbnb in 2008, experienced the loneliness of courageous leadership during the company’s first major crisis in 2011. Against the advice of experienced investors and advisors, Chesky (who was 29 at the time) accepted responsibility when a renter destroyed a property hosted on Airbnb. He issued a public apology and committed funds to reimburse renters whose homes had been damaged through Airbnb, restoring public confidence in the company, reinforcing company values, and setting an example for employees.

**Key take-away:** A visionary leader – often but not necessarily the founder – plays a critical role in creating innovative solutions to complex problems, inspiring employees, making hard decisions, and establishing an organizational culture.

**(2) Bringing the voice of the audience into the organization:** Audience understanding is arguably the most important best practice. Our case study analysis revealed at least three organizations that designed structures and systems to bring the audience perspective to the center of decision-making. For example, whereas many large

companies have a consumer or audience research team that serves as a support function for the organization, at Airbnb the research team is embedded directly into project teams; researchers partner with engineering, design, and other functions to create products and services. The A360 Kuwa Mjanja project brought the audience into the decision-making process directly. As the project moved out of the early stages, girls who had been participating in the design process transitioned to supervisory and feedback roles, where they advised on program implementation and ensured brand authenticity. Mankind took a different approach to bringing the audience into the decision-making process: family members who work at the company (four of the top six executives) have spent time in field sales roles, where they learned the needs and realities of the physicians who are their primary target audience.

**Key take-away:** Audience understanding is more than an up-front activity conducted to design interventions. Organizations that find ways to bring the audience perspective into ongoing activities seem most likely to make decisions that will resonate with the audience.

**(3) Employee Engagement:** According to an MIT study, organizations that rank in the top 25% in terms of employee experience achieve significantly stronger results than organizations that rank in the bottom 25% in employee experience – double the number of innovations, twice the customer satisfaction, and 25% higher profits.<sup>36</sup>

MTN recognized an opportunity to improve employee engagement. As described by CEO Rob Shuter, “We are a firm believer that to achieve the best customer experience, we have to start with our employees having the best employee experience.”<sup>37</sup> This belief inspired company leadership to create a unique program – the EX (employee experience) strategy -- grounded in three focus areas: performance management with care and empathy; experiential onboarding to enhance the first impression for new employees; and agile learning, which equips employees with skills for career growth and business impact. MTN’s strategy involved the creation of an employee experience center of expertise, internal audit, cross functional support beyond HR, and the creation a “global rewards day” during which 12,000 people were publicly rewarded and recognized across the organization. Similarly, PS Kenya identified the opportunity to strengthen the PS Kenya brand as part of its five-year strategic plan and focused on two enabling factors: having the right talent and making PS Kenya a great place to work. This led to the development of an Employee Value Proposition, with four key elements: quality of life, compensation and benefits, career and personal growth, and rewards and recognition.<sup>38</sup>

**Key take-away:** At the heart of every successful organization is a passionate group of employees who believe in the vision and are committed and enabled to go above and beyond to bring the vision to life.

**(4) Multidisciplinary teams, collaborative approaches, and stakeholder engagement:** We discussed the importance of multidisciplinary teams in the audience focus section of our report. Those projects that employed multidisciplinary teams excelled at audience understanding, likely resulting from the various perspectives and approaches that come from a diverse team. The second strength of the multidisciplinary approach is stakeholder engagement. Several projects in our series benefited from particularly strong support across multiple organizations and stakeholders (donors, government, other implementing partners, etc.). Human Centered Design (HCD), an approach that draws on the participation of multiple stakeholders (including the audience) throughout the design and implementation process, seems to be successful in establishing a strong, shared understanding of the issues and collaborative environment among stakeholders.

**Key take-away:** Projects designed and implemented through multidisciplinary teams have the benefit of diverse perspectives and strong organizational trust and collaboration.

**(5) A culture of continuous learning and adaptation:** Many of the projects we reviewed seemed to have an organizational culture that rewards learning and improving vs. implementing as planned. These teams allowed for

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36) Kristine Dery and Ina Sebastian, “Building Business Value with Employee Experience,” MIT CISR Research Briefing, 2017.

37) “The MTN Group Story, From Employee Experience to Customer Experience: Putting Meaning Back into Work,” YouTube, May 2019

38) PS Kenya Employee Value Proposition, [pskenya.org/careers](https://pskenya.org/careers)

time to test, learn, and adapt throughout the project, using tools such as rapid prototyping, social listening, etc. For example, A360 used an “adaptive implementation” approach, whereby the team adapted content based on audience feedback; the Truth Initiative conducted a weekly survey of 140 teens and young adults and used these data to refine campaign exposure targets, optimize the media plan, and confirm message relevancy. Likewise, Shujaaz has processes built into their approach, including message pre-testing, script revisions, and follow-up social media conversations, to assess audience understanding and address points of confusion.

**Key take-away:** An adaptive approach has many benefits: it allows for stronger programs and campaigns (by continuously learning and improving) and creates an organizational culture that fosters trust and rewards learning and growth.