Cultivating common sense

How to build a culture of humanness and openness in your company

10 practices and a roadmap

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Instructions or humaneness?

Do you feel that your company is entangled in guidelines that act like shackles? Let's be honest — almost all companies are like this. They have systems of regulations, instructions, and restrictions dictating everything from dress codes to how they communicate with their clients.

When employees are constantly required to follow strict rules and orders while ignoring whatever their inner voice tells them, they renounce their humanness and lose their ability to be independent. Moreover, talented persons may feel they just cannot make the right decisions without breaking some absurd rules. Such rules are a surefire way to stifle creativity, which is a prerequisite for innovation.

In this booklet, we present useful thoughts, advice, and practices that will help you initiate change in your company and finally get rid of impeding

limitations and regulations. You will build a culture of common sense and humaneness — a culture for people.

In the end, improved efficiency, productivity, morale, and happiness all come back to how much common sense there is inside an organization.

— Martin Lindstrom,
global branding consultant and the author of *The Ministry of Common Sense*

Common sense helps businesses

The true problem that brings about low morale, sub-par productivity, client disappointment and invariable lack of innovation lies in the demise of common sense in companies that once had it in favor of meaningless systems and processes.

This ultimately affects both the quality of servicing and sensitive and responsive attitude to their needs. Companies become so deeply buried in their own internal problems, which are only worsened by a multitude of formalities in employee's minds, that they loose sight of the main goal and, naturally, pay a high price for this.

The good news is that by restoring common sense to organizations, employees are beginning to see the world through more human eyes and, along the way, to rebuild their companies' brand and customer loyalty.

Common sense is the sum total of our ability to separate right from wrong, efficient from inefficient, useful from pointless, valuable from worthless, orderly from sloppy. Common sense is practical. It's reasonable. It's dynamic. It's obvious or, rather, it's supposed to be obvious. When it's working, common sense often leads to a sense of happiness, productivity, and an improved quality of life. When it's not working, you want to tear your hair out.

Look at this example of lacking common sense.

To facilitate the scheduling of meetings, a major corporation installed an online calendar system. That way, employees could easily find their colleagues' open time slots. People eagerly began booking meetings with one another, which had the effect of clogging up everyone else's calendars. So, to prevent complete strangers from booking their time, employees also began plugging in fake meetings, resulting in no more open time slots. As a workaround, thousands of employees got together to create a paper version of their secret calendars, where they keep track of their real appointments.

So, where's the common sense in installing an expensive online calendar system when it leads to less productivity and employees now having to literally call one another to find out if they have any time available?

We encounter such situations at work daily. But considering how much we're exposed to common sense throughout our lives, why is it so scarce in most organizations?

Five reasons why common sense disappears

Several factors can lead to the disappearance of common sense in the business world. Let's explore this issue with insights from *The Ministry of Common Sense* by Martin Lindstrom.

1. (Bad) customer experience

Customer experience can be defined as every single touchpoint that enables a product or service to be delivered to a customer. Every employee contributes to great customer experience. The most successful brands think and act in the interests of their customers by always putting themselves in their shoes. But you'd be surprised how rarely this happens.

Most companies are accountable to Wall Street and their shareholders, period. They overlook the people who actually buy and use their products and services, forgetting that customer-centric organizations not only create value but drive sustainable growth. In this clash of priorities, common sense dies.

2. Politics

Whenever ego, hierarchy, power, money, and people are involved, organizational politics will follow. Politics are a problem in a company when:

- the business has multiple "levels";

- geographical distances exist between company offices and employees;

- bosses habitually change their minds and opinions;

- the culture is dominated by silos;

- frequent internal communication is lacking; and

- few employees know what anyone else in the organization is doing and are instead focused on defending and preserving their own turf.

3. Technology

The value and convenience that technology creates are obvious. But more than any other factor, tech is the enemy of common sense. It destroys empathy, compromises our agency, turns grownups into children, impedes innovation, and, worst of all, makes us doubt our own store of common sense (the human kind).

Here is an example. Getting cc'd means you're part of the conversation, no one would think of leaving you out, and the team assumes you care about the solution to the problem you're being cc'd on. But at last count, there are 158 emails in this thread, and you'd pay serious money to stop people from cc'ing you.

4. Meetings and powerpoints

Most meetings start late, end late, and amount to little accomplishment. And when the people there aren't doing everything in their power to impress their bosses and colleagues during a meeting, they're preparing for the next meeting, and the one after that, and the PowerPoint presentation that they have to do.

"Send me a deck". Is there anything more chilling than those four words? And when you do send one, chances are no one will read it. PowerPoints are mostly exercises in time wasted, productivity lost, and everyone simply going through the corporate motions.

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While making money is good, having meaningful work and meaningful relationships is far better

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Principles:
Life and Work

Ray Dalio