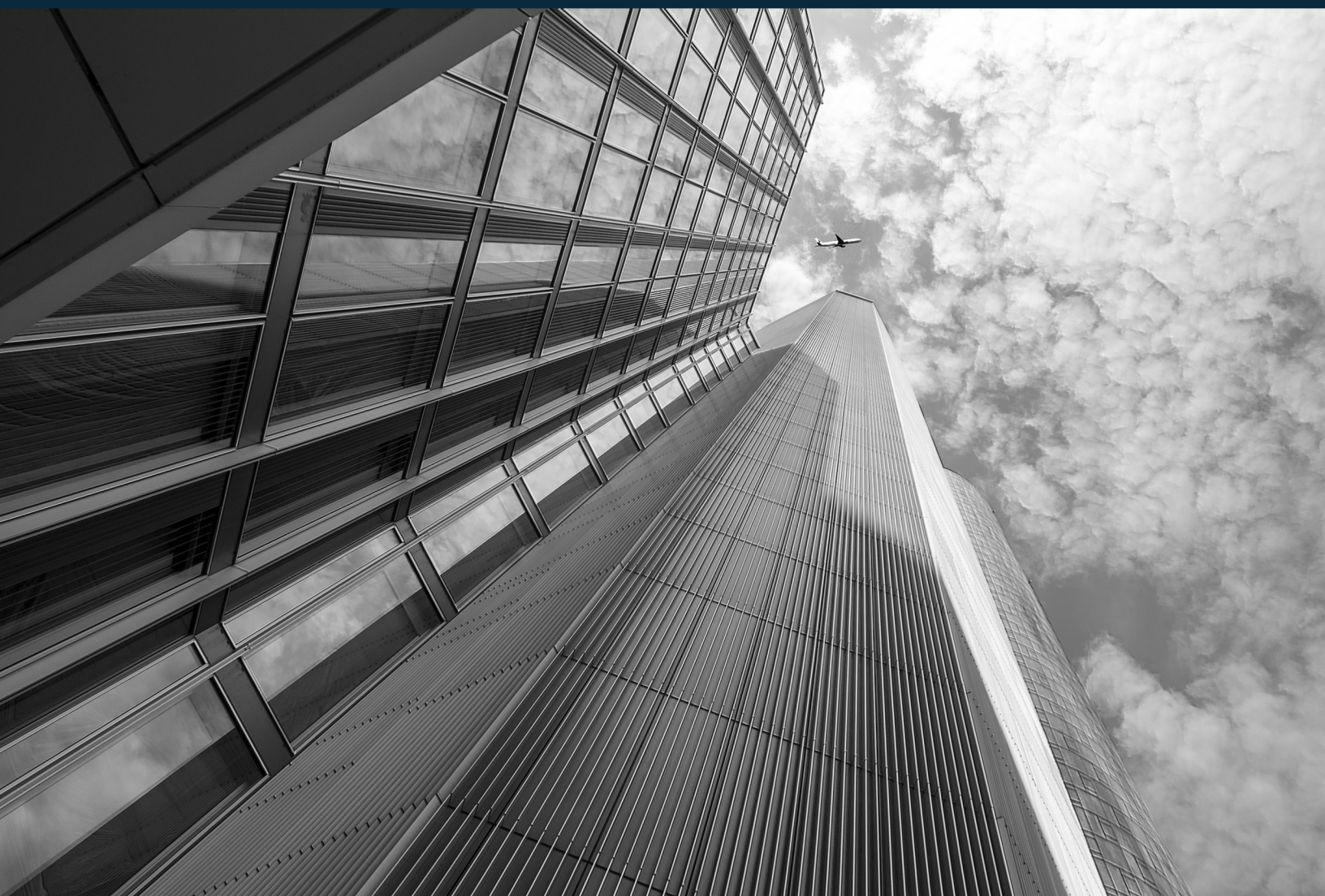# PURPOSE TRENDS REPORT

A selection of what has been published about Purpose in December 2023

December 2023

Garcia, T.; Florez-Jimenez, M.P. & Lleo, A.
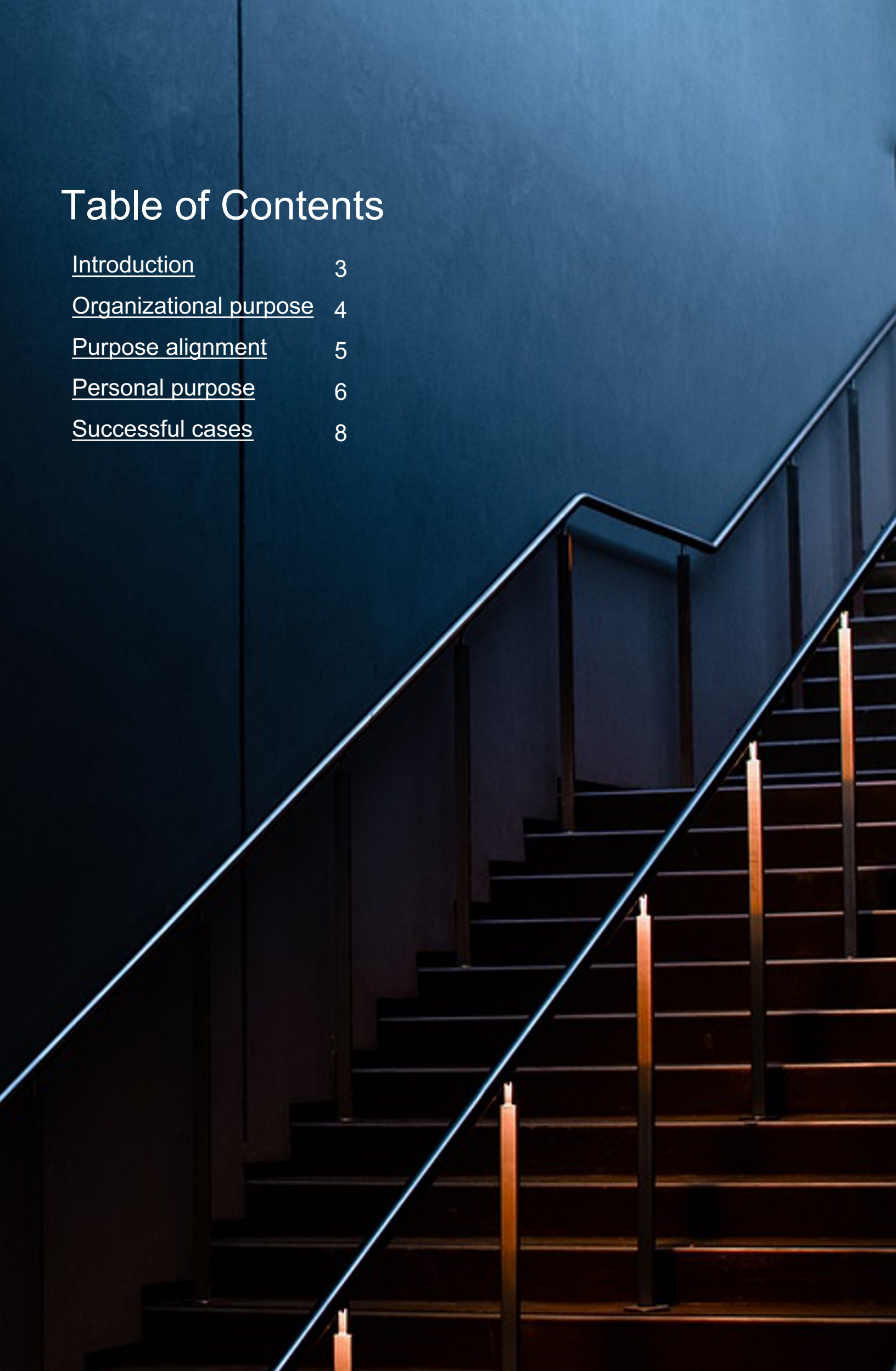School of Economics and Business. University of Navarra

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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

*In this report, we want to synthesize the most relevant about corporate purpose published in December 2023. For this aim, we did a content search (using selected keywords) in Scopus and Google Scholar for academic publications; and diffusion magazines and other trusted sites for articles and reports. We selected relevant publications about organizational purpose, purpose alignment, and personal purpose. Also, we include successful cases that show how corporate purpose has been implemented. Bellow, we present statistics about the selected literature.*

ACADEMIC PUBLICATIONS - DECEMBER 2023

	Theoretical	Empirical
Organizational Purpose	1	
Personal Purpose	1	1
Purpose Alignment	1	1
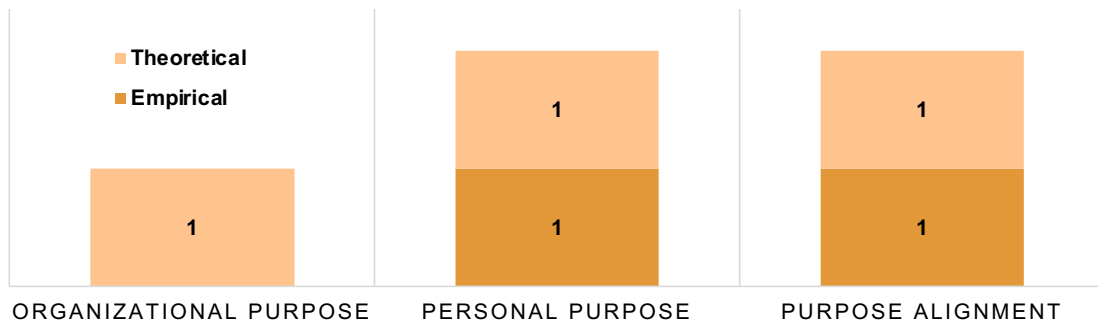
ARTICLES AND REPORTS - DECEMBER 2023

	Interview	Descriptive
Organizational Purpose		1
Personal Purpose		2
Successful Cases	2	1
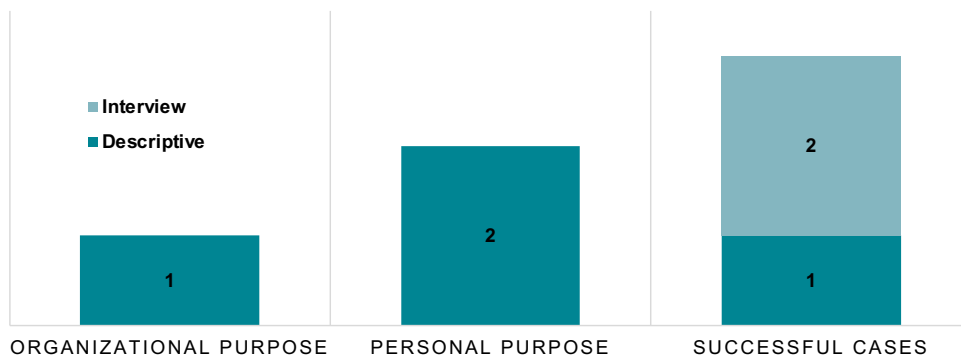
In the organizational purpose domain, the synergy of academic research and practical applications unveils a path toward sustainable business models. The intersection of Industry 4.0, circular economy principles, and organizational social practices offers a blueprint for multinational enterprises. This convergence not only propels them toward social and environmental sustainability but also fosters ethical cultures.

In understanding organizational identity dynamics, studies compare employees' and citizens' perceptions of a highly visible public organization, which reveals a misalignment between employees' and citizens' views, impacting organizational identity. Besides academic papers suggests a dynamic view of corporate purpose based on external economic conditions. Historical snapshots demonstrate shifts between shareholder-centric and stakeholder governance models.

Further, academic exploration of meaningfulness in paid care work unveils the influence of relational others on careworkers' ability to perceive and speak about meaningfulness. Another paper challenges conventional notions of work in response to AI, proposing a nuanced understanding beyond economic necessity. In the realm of personal development, articles introduce a strategic approach to crafting a meaningful life.

Finally, the successful cases validate academic theories on purpose and also provide practical insights. They showcase that purpose is not merely a theoretical concept but a dynamic force that, when integrated effectively, can drive cultural transformation and contribute to long-term business success. The integration of purpose across Arxada, Palo IT, Boxgreen, and Waymo exemplifies the universality of purpose-driven strategies in diverse organizational contexts.

Academic publications (1)

Industry 4.0 towards social and environmental sustainability in multinationals: Enabling circular economy, organizational social practices, and corporate purpose

Journal of Cleaner Production, JCR Q1 see online

Abstract: The advent of Industry 4.0 (I4.0) technologies has ushered in a transformative era for multinational enterprises (MNEs), propelling them toward a future characterized by social and environmental sustainability. In this introductory piece for our special issue, we explore the intersection of I4.0, circular economy principles, organizational social practices, and corporate purpose within MNEs. By amalgamating these concepts, this research delves into the synergistic potential of I4.0 technologies to drive the transition towards sustainable business models. It also explores the pivotal role of organizational social practices in shaping ethical dimensions and fostering corporate cultures that prioritize social responsibility, employee wellbeing, and stakeholder engagement. The findings of this study have implications for academia, policy, and industry. Scholars will gain a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted dynamics shaping sustainable practices in the context of I4.0, while practitioners and policy-makers receive actionable insights for fostering socially responsible and environmentally conscious strategies within MNEs. As the global community grapples with pressing social and environmental challenges, this research serves as a beacon, guiding multinationals toward a future where technological innovation converges with social and environmental stewardship, thereby catalyzing a paradigm shift toward a more sustainable and equitable world.

> " Purpose flows from leadership to employees and from employees to the end user. "

Articles (1)

How To Build An Organization That Makes An Impact

Rhett Power, Forbes see online

The article outlines the evolving landscape where companies are increasingly compelled to compete on social purpose. It emphasizes the challenges faced by leaders seeking genuine purpose in the digital era and the rising demand for purpose-driven brands. The piece suggests that authentic purpose, aligned with organizational ethos, is essential for making a meaningful impact. It provides practical insights for leaders, including incorporating mindful leadership, creating a community-focused brand, and letting purpose drive innovation to enhance overall impact.

Academic publications (2)

Identity resilience in times of mediatization: Comparing employees' with citizens' perceptions of a public organization

Public Relations Review, JCR Q1 _see online_

Abstract: Some organizations are highly visible in the media. This media coverage informs employees about others' perceptions of their organization. Consequently, perceived visibility may be related to how employees think about their organization and how they construe organizational identity. This study empirically tests this proposition. It therefore combines aspects of Hatch & Schultz' model of organizational identity dynamics with mediatization to understand to what extent employees are sensitive toward their environment when forming an organizational identity. In two online surveys comparing employees' (N = 109) and a representative sample of citizens' (N = 1417) views on a highly visible Dutch public organization from the crime sector, we disentangle the identity-reputation process considering the role of perceived media impact. We further compare identity perceptions of two intraorganizational sub-groups. We find that citizens view the organization more positively than employees, which points to a misalignment between employees' and citizens' perceptions of the organization. In one of the two organizational sub-groups, the findings show that the larger the misalignment between construed reputation (how do employees think that citizens perceive their organization?) and actual reputation (how do citizens in fact perceive the organization?), the weaker employees' perception of identity. Furthermore, employees appear to be sensitive toward the media coverage of their organization and citizens' reputation perceptions. Yet, this environmental sensitivity does not impact on their organizational identity. We interpret this as a resilient identity, which represents the maneuvering of employees between their organizational identity perception (what they perceive as central, distinct, and enduring) and external stakeholders' (i.e., the media, citizens) perceptions of the organization that over time positively distinguishes what the organization is and will remain.

Toward a Dynamic View of Corporate Purpose

European Corporate Governance Institute, SSRN _see online_

Abstract: Scholars debating the corporation's role in society generally advance the view that there is only one desirable orientation for corporations and their management. Specifically, proponents of a stakeholder governance model contend that focusing management on a broad set of corporate constituents maximizes overall welfare, while advocates of a shareholder-centric directive counter that prioritizing shareholders creates social welfare by rendering the firm most profitable. This Article offers another view: It suggests that the welfare-maximizing purpose for corporations could change depending on external economic conditions, which both of these positions assume away. Specifically, shareholder primacy is likely to promote welfare in a first-best world, where the government regulates corporate externalities, ensures competitive markets, and responds to inequality. Once these assumptions are relaxed, however, the case for stakeholder governance improves.

The Article supports this theoretical insight with a detailed analysis of two historical periods in which the dominant view of corporate purpose in society changed dramatically. Specifically, it describes two corporate purpose "moments" of flux in the U.S.—one that occurred after the great stock market crash of 1929, and another following a period of economic stagflation in the 1970s —in which the pendulum swung from one governance model to the other, impacting scholarship, business practice, and law. These historical snapshots reveal that departures from a shareholder-oriented model have been preceded by extreme external economic conditions, consistent with the theoretical insight offered here. This analysis also sheds light on the present moment, in which inequality, corporate concentration, and environmental degradation have generated heated debates about the corporation's role in society once again.

Academic publications (2)

"I Only Tell Them the Good Parts:" How Relational Others Influence Paid Careworkers' Descriptions of Their Work as Meaningful

Management Communication Quarterly, JCR Q3 see online

Abstract: The occupational images associated with paid care work for older adults range from a job carried out by earthly angels to a form of stigmatized dirty work: This ambiguity makes maintaining a committed long-term care workforce challenging. Encouraging careworkers to view their work as meaningful has been touted as a potential solution. Moving beyond a purely subjective approach to meaningfulness, we explore how careworkers construe their work as meaningful and how relational others influence careworkers' ability to speak about meaningfulness. Others' messages matter, although their importance depends on relational others' knowledge of care tasks and involvement in the care relationship. By documenting how others' accounts both enhance and compromise careworkers' ability to speak about meaningfulness and moments of meaninglessness, our study identifies sources of meaningfulness for careworkers, a socially essential workforce under-examined by meaningful work research, and extends meaningful work research in contexts where relationships are central to occupational identity.

Expanding Understandings of 'Work' in Response to AI

Management Communication Quarterly, SJR Q3 see online

Abstract: The increasing adoption of automated technologies in the world of work results in starkly opposing predictions. Some scholars argue that these technologies could lead to the utopian emancipation of society from economic necessity and meaningless work (Srnicek and Williams 2015, Bastani 2019, Danaher 2019); other scholars warn of the unintended technological unemployment and dystopian social upheaval that these technologies threaten (Ford 2015; Jones 2021; Mueller 2021). In either instance, the increasing presence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and automation in the world of work is forcing us to consider conceptions of work beyond economic necessity: but the drive to remove necessity as a whole from the human condition can lead to unintendedly bleak and inhuman futures, where meaningful work might be made redundant by the very technologies intended to provide it. In response, this paper will critique conceptions of work as paid employment, while also highlighting the limits of adopting wholly technological means to remove economic necessity. I will offer an alternate understanding of work beyond paid employment, as two distinct modes of activity: labour and work. In doing so, I will recontextualise necessity in work beyond economics, and provide a foundation for pursuing meaningful work, both now and into the future.

Use Strategic Thinking to Create the Life You Want

Rainer Strack, Susanne Dyrchs & Allison Bailey, HBR see online

In corporate strategy projects, executive leadership teams work through a series of questions to determine how their businesses can succeed. Individuals can use a similar process to figure out how to live a meaningful life. It starts with defining what makes a great life for you and then outlining your purpose and vision. You must also look at your current "portfolio" — the areas in which you spend your time and energy — to see if you're investing the best of yourself in the activities most important to you. You should consider what research says about how people tend to find meaning and joy in life. Finally, you'll want to identify areas where you need to make changes, and then ensure you follow through with objectives and key results. This program, Strategize Your Life, has been tested with more than 500 people around the world. With a few hours of work, you can develop a personal life strategy and summarize it on a single page.

Nurturing Meaning And Fulfillment In The Contemporary Workplace Through Technology

Nitish Shrivastava, Forbes see online

The article argues that the pursuit of happiness alone in the workplace is insufficient, emphasizing the importance of meaning. It states that true fulfillment arises from belonging, purpose, work transcendence, and narrative-shaping. Technology, including data analytics and AI, is proposed as a key enabler to enhance these pillars. Virtual spaces, AI platforms, and advanced analytics are seen as tools to foster belongingness, align skills with organizational goals, induce work transcendence, and shape professional narratives. The piece concludes that, when employed thoughtfully, contemporary technologies can elevate workplace experiences, promoting significance, fulfillment, productivity, and job satisfaction.

> " Just as corporate strategy is an integrated set of choices that positions a company to win, *life strategy* is an integrated set of choices *that positions a person to live a great life.* "

SUCCESSFUL CASES

Articles (3)

To Craft a Purpose That Motivates Your Team, Balance Pragmatism and Idealism

Darren Ashby & Atif Sheikh, HBR see online

While many leaders strive to energize and motivate their teams to do work that matters, the unfortunate reality is that employees often feel disconnected from their company's core purpose. Purpose statements, if they exist at all, tend to be too vague or too lofty, or both. To use purpose to drive business, leaders need to balance idealism and pragmatism. This article discusses how to develop and implement a purpose for your business that is both clear and demanding, and that stretches between current strategy and long-term plans. As an illustration, it presents the case of Arxada, the global chemical company specialized in industrial products and microbial solutions.

Why effective leadership is key to driving corporate purpose

Raja Aiman, Eco-Business see online

Leaders play a pivotal role in setting a clear vision, motivating employees, and ensuring alignment with the company's purpose. A study by EY and Harvard Business Review found that 89% of workers prefer companies with a shared purpose. The success stories of Palo IT and Boxgreen illustrate the impact of corporate purpose on brand reputation, employee retention, and overall business success. Companies benefit from ecosystems like B Corp and NVPC, fostering a purpose-driven culture and accountability for social and environmental impact.

The Case For Putting Your Mission At The Heart Of Your Strategy

Kevin Kruse, Forbes see online

The article argues for making purpose a central element of a company's strategy to drive growth and stakeholder engagement. Waymo, the autonomous driving technology company, exemplifies this approach with a mission to enhance road safety. The company's culture prioritizes mission-driven values, safety, and collaboration. Initiatives like "The Waymo Way" and "WaymoServe" contribute to sustaining this purpose-driven culture, emphasizing accessibility and just-in-time learning for first-line managers.