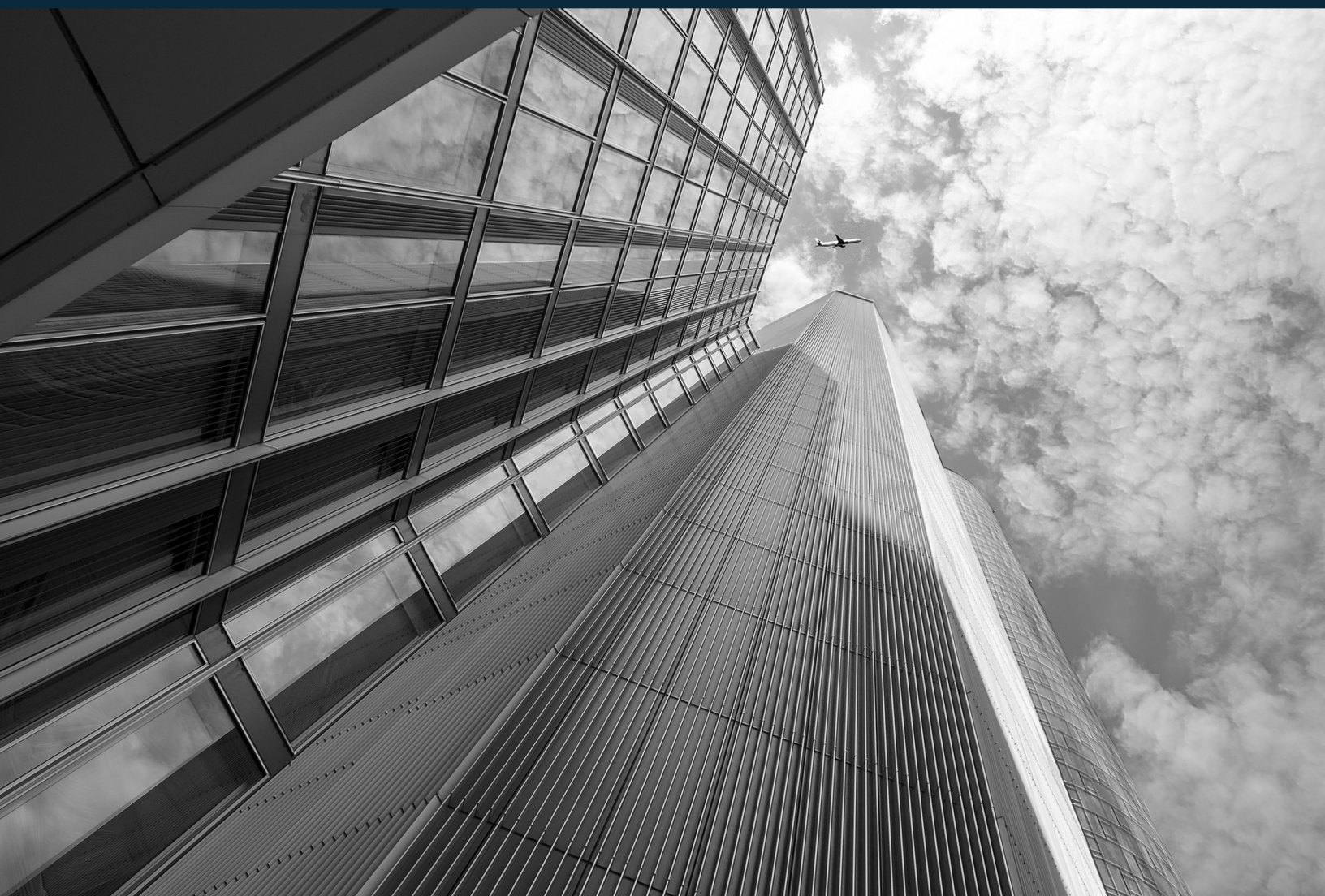


# PURPOSE TRENDS REPORT

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



**November 2023**

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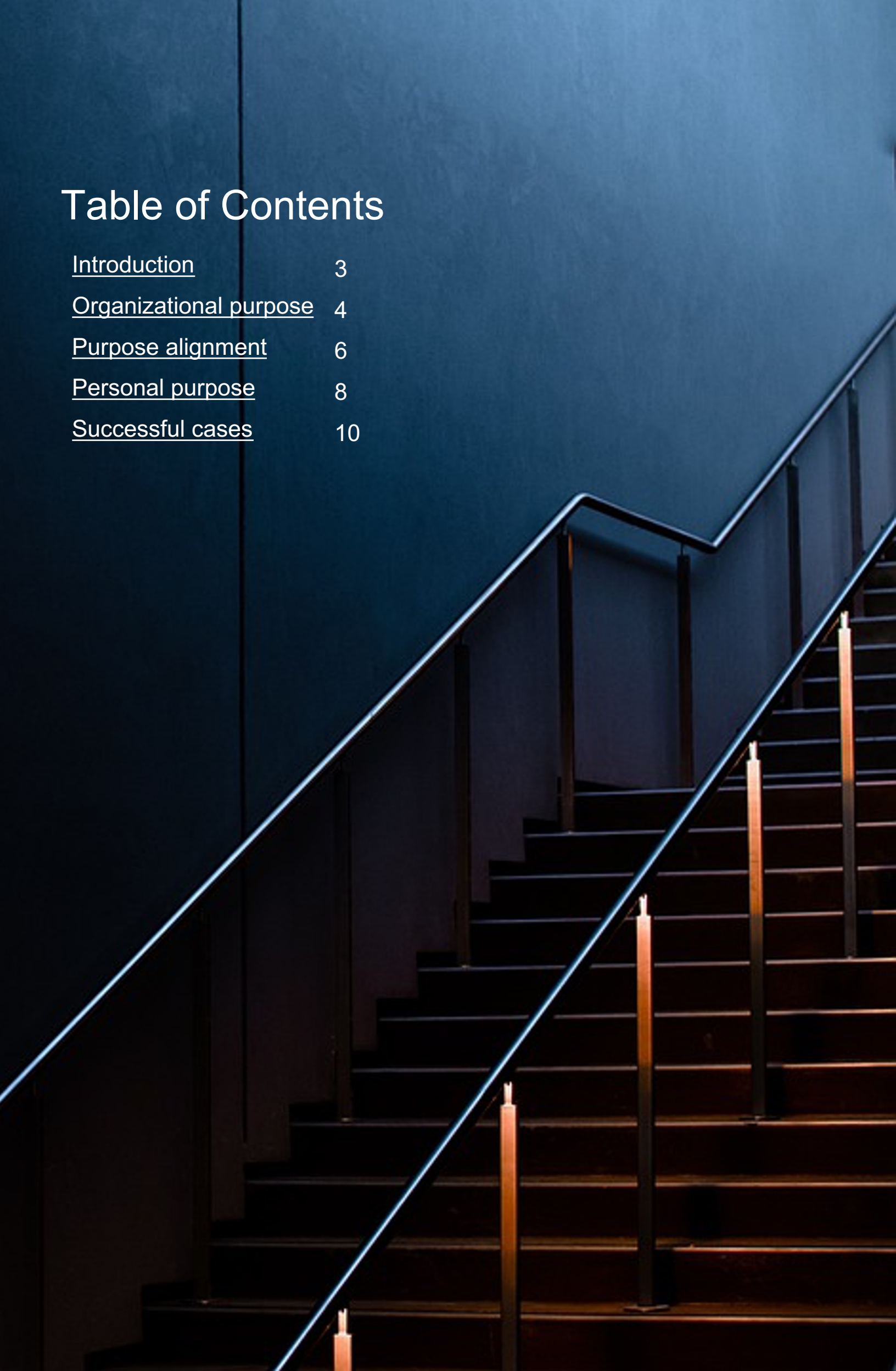
Purpose Trends Report ISSN 2952-1157  
<https://doi.org/10.15581/025.2023.011>



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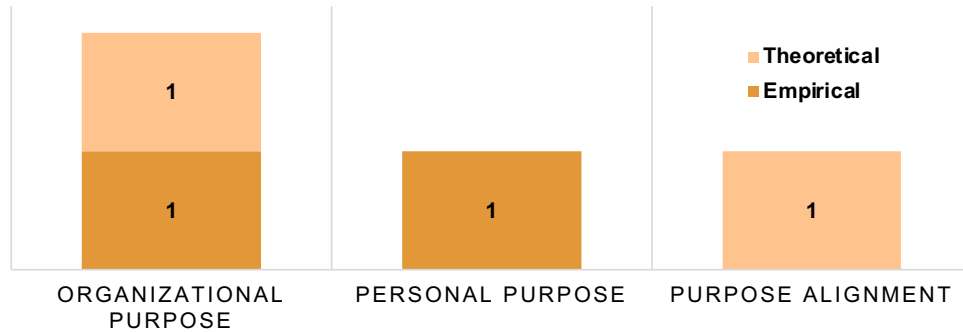
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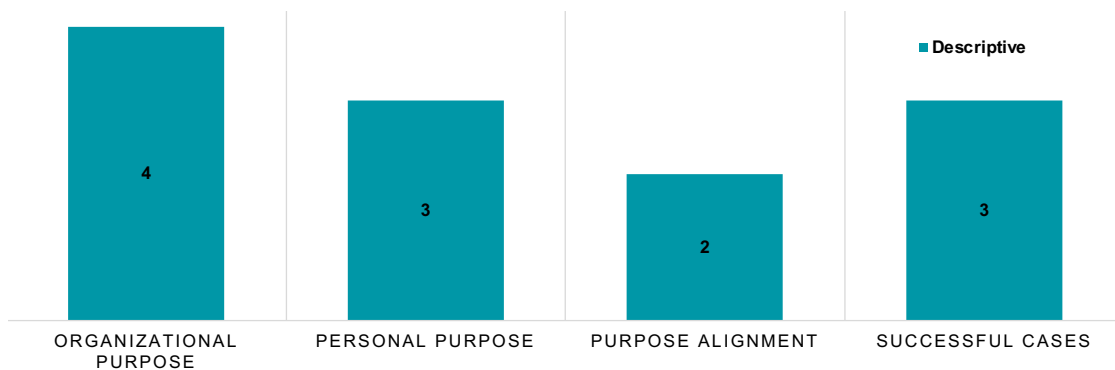
# INTRODUCTION

In this report, we want to synthesize the most relevant about corporate purpose published in November 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. Below, we present statistics about the selected literature.

## ACADEMIC PUBLICATIONS - NOVEMBER 2023



## ARTICLES AND REPORTS - NOVEMBER 2023



Academic inquiries into digital identities on social media and a revised understanding of profit inform a comprehensive view of organizational purpose. This aligns with articles emphasizing authenticity's role in corporate impact, bridging executive rhetoric with frontline resonance, and fostering organizations as moral communities.

Some studies delve into how information sharing can make dual-purpose manufacturers more profitable and how young entrepreneurs adopt "zebra" identities with a dual economic and social purpose. Building upon this, articles emphasize the value of organizational purpose in navigating ESG turbulence, connecting individual jobs to a larger purpose, and achieving purpose congruence.

Further, some academic studies on proactive personality's impact on customer-service performance and the longitudinal association of meaningful work with mental well-being contribute to a nuanced understanding of personal purpose within organizations. Articles expand on these findings, providing strategies for organizations to maintain connections between individual jobs and organizational purpose, narrowing the gap between company and employee purpose, and exploring the transformative potential of purpose in human experiences.

Finally, leaders such as Cargill CEO Greg Page and Unilever CEO Paul Polman showcase the impact of connecting employees to a larger mission. MX Technologies exemplifies a transcendent purpose, aligning values with operations, while REI's iconic move to close on Black Friday illustrates a strategic alignment with purpose, building enduring customer loyalty.

## *Academic publications (2)*

### **Who are we? Analyzing the digital identities of organizations through the lens of micro-interactions on social media**

Technological Forecasting and Social Change, JCR Q1 [see online](#)

**Abstract:** Firms' activity on social media may enhance stakeholder engagement and improved communication between firms and their customers through dialogue and interaction. This study fills the information gap related to organizational identity in the digital age, using a mixed-methods approach to explore organizational identity in the digital environment in order to address the paper's research question: How do firms develop their digital identities through social media? Micro-interactions on social media were used to analyze corporate identity at a macro level. Ten firms were chosen randomly from a purposefully selected dataset which included the largest enterprises operating in Poland. The firms had communicated with stakeholders through 113,236 posts collected between January 1st and December 31st, 2021. Considerable differences can be observed in the ways in which corporations communicate with different external stakeholders through social media. The most variance in social media micro-interactions can be seen across four dimensions: control, direction, values, and consciousness. Consumer interaction is confined to quick micro-interactions, disregarding other more permanent factors.

### **Reflections on corporate purpose and performance**

European Management Review, JCR Q3 [see online](#)

**Abstract:** We are encountering growing crises that derive from a misconception of the nature of business. A revised understanding of profit should lie at the heart of the purpose of the corporation, namely, that it derives from producing solutions not problems for others. Firms should not profit from producing problems for others. There is a limit to the extent to which either competitive markets or regulation can ensure that. Instead, it must be intrinsic to the purpose of the business and, in the absence of this, both markets and regulation fail. Furthermore, public policy in the form of corporate taxation and public expenditure can be used to promote problem-solving common purposes around shared prosperity. This has significant implications for business practice as well as policy.



## Articles (4)

### How Authenticity Unlocks Corporate Impact

Maggie Schear & Rich Hutchinson, BCG [see online](#)

The article asserts that, akin to a seismic swarm in geology, corporate sustainability has faced considerable shifts. It emphasizes that corporate leaders must embrace authentic action rooted in company purpose, strength, and core values amid a complex global landscape. The importance of authenticity in corporate impact is highlighted, shaping a new model centered on capability, conviction, and opportunity. The piece argues that genuine commitment, transparent communication, and alignment with the company's origin are pivotal for authenticity, fostering trust and value generation.

### How To Make Corporate Purpose More Than A Poster

Ira S. Wolfe, Forbes [see online](#)

The article explores the disparity between executive commitment to corporate purpose and its resonance with frontline employees. It contends that purpose, often confined to boardroom rhetoric, must permeate the entire organization. Drawing on Maslow's hierarchy, it explains how executives, focused on self-actualization, may overlook the survival concerns of employees. To bridge the purpose gap, the article proposes a five-step strategy, including purpose profiling, alignment, leadership embodiment, integration, and continuous renewal. It argues that this approach transforms dissonance into a harmonious symphony, benefiting both individuals and the organization's bottom line.

“ You can't preserve and grow a culture of purpose unless your people share common values. ”

### A Strong Purpose Can Make Your Company a Magnet for Talent

Claudio Fernández-Aráoz, HBR [see online](#)

Employees around the world choose, stay with, and give their best to organizations when they feel connected to a collective purpose. To find and make the most of this talent, companies need to be good at five disciplines: strategic hiring, zero tolerance for people who violate their ethics, a focus on potential, alignment of HR processes, and values-based succession at the top.

### Unifying Your Company Around a Moral Goal

Ranjay Gulati, HBR [see online](#)

In turbulent times, companies need a reliable anchor to guide decision-making. When organizations become moral communities, underpinned by purpose, they provide that stability for stakeholders as well as a reassuring sense of hope, solidarity, agency, and meaning. Three strategies can help. First, tell a big story about what your organization believes in and what it is trying to accomplish. Second, treat purpose as an organizing principle that guides company structure, strategy, and culture. Third, model courageous, purpose-driven leadership yourself.

## *Academic publications (2)*

### **Retailer information strategies with a dual-purpose manufacturer**

Transportation Research Part E: Logistics and Transportation Review, JCR Q1 [see online](#)

**Abstract:** While the information issues among for-profit firms are well known, the extent to which the presence in the market of dual-purpose manufacturers, defined as companies that focus on social welfare as well as their own interests, affects the information strategies of retailers is unclear. A better understanding of this relationship could shift the thinking on the disadvantages of the dual-purpose firm model. This study investigates how a retailer's information strategy may differ for a for-profit manufacturer compared with a dual-purpose one. By analyzing an established mathematical model, the results indicate that by sharing information, a retailer can make a dual-purpose manufacturer more profitable than a for-profit manufacturer. This may occur when the retailer proactively shares market information with the dual-purpose manufacturer and when the dual-purpose manufacturer uses an information compensation fee lower than that for the for-profit manufacturer to incentivize the retailer to share such information. Further, both social welfare and the consumer surplus are higher in the former case than in the latter, implying that the presence of a dual-purpose manufacturer in the market can promote win/win results by benefiting both itself and society. This study's findings enrich theories of information sharing and dual-purpose enterprises as well as suggest that information sharing is a useful management tool for practitioners to fully realize the development potential of dual-purpose enterprises.



Evolutionary purpose is an attitude of perpetual generative listening to what the organization wants to become.



### **In the jungle, the mighty jungle, the zebras are teal tonight: investigating the organizational forms of Generation Z-driven Italian start-ups**

Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development, JCR Q1 [see online](#)

**Abstract:** Purpose: In light of the new way of interpreting work spearheaded by Generation Z, the objectives of this study are to investigate (1) whether young entrepreneurs identify their start-ups with “zebras” – that is, as a concrete response to the evanescence and fantasy of “unicorns” based on the simultaneous pursuit of profit and social value, mutualism and resilience – and (2) whether they adopt a “teal” organizational configuration – that is, one characterized by evolutionary purpose, self-management and wholeness. Design/methodology/approach: Through a qualitative approach with 41 interviews, this study focuses on start-uppers and companies that are particularly innovative and promising in the Italian context, as selected by Forbes magazine in its ranking of the brightest entrepreneurs, leaders and stars under 30. Findings: The results suggest that young entrepreneurs recognize the importance of the common themes of the zebra movement and therefore identify their startups with zebras. More specifically, Generation Z entrepreneurs: (1) pursue a dual (economic and social) purpose, (2) are mutualistic and (3) build their organizations with resilience and capital efficiency. In addition, the interviews show that the organizational approach taken follows the paradigm of teal organizations, particularly in terms of evolutionary purpose, distributed leadership and decision-making power, and employee wholeness and empowerment. Originality/value: This is the first study to analyze the evolutionary trends of animal entrepreneurial “species” led by Generation Z entrepreneurs and organized on the basis of the teal paradigm.

## Articles (2)

### **The Value of Corporate Purpose**

Witold J. Henisz, HBR [see online](#)

Competing in today's global digital economy requires increasingly complex contributions: Employees need to be motivated to go above and beyond; customers need to be inspired, and their feedback needs to be incorporated; and the demands, opinions, and goals of civil society and government are also critical. The value of organizational purpose is to help coordinate activity among stakeholders in this complex system. The author's research suggests that when a company and its management make it clear that their purpose is harmony in their stakeholder system — i.e., an intent to grow the pie for everyone — stakeholders make larger contributions and engage in less conflict. Firms are better able to weather crises, and total value created and distributed is enhanced — including to shareholders.

### **Let Corporate Purpose Guide You Through ESG Turbulence**

Robert G. Eccles, John Streur, & Timothy Youmans,  
HBR [see online](#)

In the midst of divergent ESG (environmental, social, and governance) practices between the U.S. and Europe, companies face a challenging landscape. While U.S. stakeholders push for reduced ESG efforts, European regulations demand more stringent sustainability measures. The key to navigating this complexity lies in a corporate “statement of purpose.” This statement provides clarity and direction in balancing profitability with social and environmental solutions. It helps companies address stakeholder interests, create value for investors, and navigate regulatory differences. Despite varying opinions on ESG's impact on investor returns, a clear, stakeholder-inclusive statement of purpose can guide companies toward innovative, profitable solutions for societal and environmental challenges.



## *Academic publications (4)*

### **Linking proactive personality to proactive customer-service performance: a moderated parallel mediation model**

Humanities and Social Sciences Communications, JCR Q1 [see online](#)

**Abstract:** Drawing on the job demands-resources model and positive organizational scholarship, this study examines proactive personality as an antecedent of frontline employees' proactive customer-service performance (PCSP). It also investigates the potential mediating role of positive psychological states on the relation between proactive personality and PCSP and the potential moderating role of the service-failure recovery climate (SFRC) on the relation between proactive personality and positive psychological states. To test our hypotheses, we used a moderated parallel mediation model and data obtained from 62 branch managers and 358 frontline branch employees of three well-known appliance households and 3C (computers, communications, and consumer electronics) chain stores in Taiwan. The results of multiple-regression and SPSS PROCESS macro analyses indicate that proactive personality was positively related to manager-rated PCSP via employees' work engagement and perceptions that their work was meaningful. Further, the positive relationship between proactive personality and PCSP through both work engagement and meaningful work perceptions was moderated by SFRC. These findings shed light on the effect of frontline employees' proactive personality as a personal resource driving their PCSP; the roles of positive psychological states as mediators that help explain the potential intermediary mechanisms; and a boundary condition of SFRC that may weaken the positive relationship between employees' proactive personality and psychological states. The implications, limitations, and future research directions are included.

### **The longitudinal directional associations of meaningful work with mental well-being – initial findings from an exploratory investigation**

Humanities and Social Sciences Communications, JCR Q1 [see online](#)

**Abstract:** An increasing number of studies reveal that more meaning in life is positively related to mental well-being. Meaning in life can be derived from different sources, including the workplace. The aim of this study was to explore the longitudinal directional association of meaningful work with mental well-being. Prospective data from 292 persons at two timepoints (two-week interval) were used to estimate the cross-lagged relationship and directionality of meaningful work with mental well-being. Results: The cross-lagged panel model had a good fit to the data ( $\chi^2_{ms(90)} = 150.9; p < 0.001; RMSEA = 0.048; p = 0.576; CFI = 0.984; TLI = 0.979; SRMR = 0.040$ ) and showed that levels of meaningful work at t1 had a positive effect on mental well-being at t2 ( $\beta = 0.15, p = 0.010$ ). But mental well-being at t1 did not affect meaningful work at t2 ( $\beta = 0.02, p = 0.652$ ). Sub-analyses revealed the effects to be mainly driven by women (as opposed to men) and white-collar workers (as opposed to blue-collar workers). This study confirmed a directional association of meaningful work on mental well-being, indicating that more meaningful work has beneficial mental well-being effects.

### **When the going gets tough: Stressors and purpose in life among social and commercial entrepreneurs**

Journal of Business Venturing Insights, SJR Q1 [see online](#)

**Abstract:** Described as the presence of significance, meaning, and goal-directedness in one's life, purpose in life has received much attention in psychology and well-being research due to its association with psychological well-being. However, research on the relationship between entrepreneurship and purpose in life remains nascent. In this study, we explore differences in purpose in life between social entrepreneurs and commercial entrepreneurs. We find that social entrepreneurs, on average, exhibit higher levels of purpose in life than commercial entrepreneurs. We further find that social entrepreneurs are more likely to retain purpose in life in the face of hindrance stressors than their commercial entrepreneur counterparts. We discuss theoretical implications for social entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial well-being literatures.



## Articles (3)

### **Don't Let Your Corporate Purpose Get Lost in the Daily Grind**

Lisa Earle McLeod & Elizabeth Lotardo, HBR [see online](#)

When leaders establish a clear line connecting individual jobs to an organizational purpose, it enables everyone to see their part in the larger whole. In their work on purpose activation with more than 150 firms, the authors have developed three strategies to help employees maintain that connection. The first is articulating the ripple effect of people's work. Encourage employees to reflect on questions like: What happens as a result of my work? The second strategy is to reframe your measures of success. Think about the difference between "number of accounts added" and "number of people we are helping to improve their finances." Finally, celebrate external impact in addition to internal achievement. Make the connection between why an internal "win" mattered to a stakeholder outside the organization.

### **Narrow the Gap Between Company and Employee Purpose**

Isaac H. Smith & Maryam Kouchaki, HBR [see online](#)

Achieving "purpose congruence," the alignment of corporate and individual employee purposes, is essential for organizational success. Rather than imposing a uniform corporate mission, businesses should foster environments where both personal and organizational purposes harmoniously coexist. To advance this congruence, organizations should: 1) Facilitate "purpose discovery" during recruitment and onboarding. 2) Promote "purpose sharing" to enhance collaboration and find mutual goals. 3) Encourage "purpose integration" by tailoring roles that align individual and company aims. 4) Implement "purpose reminders" in regular activities. By personalizing purpose, businesses can boost productivity and job satisfaction, benefiting both the company and its employees.

### **The Hidden Power Of Purpose: The Nation Of Artists And AARP Explore Health And Longevity In A New Compelling Documentary**

Afdhel Aziz, Forbes [see online](#)



The article explores 'The Hidden Power of Purpose,' a documentary by Nation of Artists and AARP. Elliot Kotek, Nation of Artists co-founder, discusses the project, shedding light on its ethos and the profound impact of purpose on individuals. The documentary features diverse stories and expert insights, emphasizing the transformative potential of purpose across various dimensions of human experience. Kotek highlights key takeaways, including the significance of motivators, the accessibility of purpose, and the distinction between purpose and happiness. The documentary aims to inspire and is available on major streaming platforms from November 23.

“ Identifying a purpose is not just for those with enough time or resources to pursue it. ”

## Articles (3)

### To Solve Big Problems, Make Everyone Feel Included in Your Mission

Thomas W. Malnight & Ivy Buche, HBR [see online](#)

It's human nature to want to spend our days working on something more than a paycheck, and the best leaders find ways to connect their teammates' work to something bigger. This is the case of Cargill CEO Greg Page or Unilever CEO Paul Polman. Everything starts by making everyone feel included in the mission. If your team feels connected to the mission, then making big bets and solving big problems will always be within your reach. In this article, the author discusses how several prominent leaders instilled their teams with a sense of the organization's larger purpose, and how you can do the same



### 4 Strategies to Cultivate an Authentic Corporate Purpose

Shad Morris, Nate Gardner, & Isaac H. Smith, HBR [see online](#)

In today's corporate sphere, a growing disparity exists between companies' declared values and their actions, leading to stakeholder skepticism. This divide prompts discussions about the feasibility of genuine societal contributions within capitalist frameworks. Companies can tread three paths: transactional (profit-focused), toxic (misaligned actions under a guise of societal benefit), or transcendent (true alignment of values and operations). This article introduces four pivotal strategies to help businesses achieve a transcendent purpose, building on MX, the leading U.S. fintech company.



### How An Empty Store On Black Friday Shows The Power Of An Iconic Move

Dev Patnaik, Forbes [see online](#)

REI's decision to close its stores on Black Friday since 2015, encouraging #OptOutside day, exemplifies an Iconic Move. These are powerful actions that define a company's purpose, often at a short-term cost but with long-term benefits. Iconic Moves, like Volvo giving away the seat harness patent or CVS stopping tobacco sales, align with purpose, building customer and employee loyalty. These moves, grounded in authenticity, not only contribute to societal good but also set companies up for enduring financial success.



