

Chobani's Brand Purpose Is Centered Around Humanity

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The last couple of months of 2019 will be a busy time for Peter McGuinness.

The Chobani president will be joining us in California for our Brandweek event Nov. 3-6. From there, he'll hop over to Twin Falls, Idaho, where he'll be visiting some of the yogurt company's factories and plants as he oversees the production of about 38 new products coming to dairy coolers over the next year.

We got to chat with McGuinness about how the company looks at new products, but also how it operates its messaging in an always-on world.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Adweek: How do you navigate marketing and advertising in the always-on, social media instant feedback loop world we live in?

McGuinness: Restraint. Even brands that have a lot to say have less to say than you think. Similar to people's personal social media, brands can fall into that same trap of oversharing. I think restraint is the way to operate in today's always-on world.

When you have something to say that's very meaningful and relevant, say it. And when you don't, don't post things for the sake of posting or for the quantity or frequency. Quantity and frequency [are] not a strategy and won't get to the

results you need and can backfire. I mean, two-thirds of what I see out there is just not compelling; [it's] irrelevant.

So, who's oversharing?

I'm not going call names out, but I think the vast majority of marketers today are oversharing. They'd be better served with more restraint and fewer posts and less frequency. [Posts] around more meaningful topics and themes would serve a brand better and would get better results and would drive more affinity with consumers.

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Does that lead to you think that brands should use advertising and marketing through social around this idea of cause marketing or purpose-driven marketing?

Five, 10 years ago the buzzword was "integration." Now the buzzword is "purpose." That's all everyone talks about. Brand purpose. And I think purpose is amazing, don't get me wrong. We've been a purpose-based brand, a belief-based brand, from the beginning. So it's part of our playbook for sure.

But I think it's a massive industry buzzword. And I think purpose needs some definition. One brand's purpose is not another brand's purpose, and one marketer's view of what purpose means is not necessarily a consumer view of what purpose means. So I think you have to define purpose a little bit more.

What's Chobani's purpose, then?

At the core, we're a human company. Humanity is our purpose. And that is whether or not you're an immigrant or a refugee or LGBTQ. ... Humanity is at the essence of what our brand is about.

We're yogurt makers, but we really are about humanity. We do the right thing, and we have a million examples of that—not only in our hiring practices but just how we operate as a

company day in and day out. We do things like pay off school lunch debt, and we'll wade into disaster relief, whether it be forest fires or tornadoes or hurricanes. And we do food bank stuff all the time, and we did a hero batch to give back to vets; we did a farmer batch to get back to dairy farmers. We try to help people in need.

Humanity is at the core of everything you do. Even our food philosophy: better food for more people, democratizing better food. Good food is a right, not a privilege, which is why we decided not to be bicoastal or in specialty stores and [instead] decided to put our product at a low price and high quality everywhere in the country.

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