



BRAND CULTURE INSIDE & OUT

INTERNATIONAL AND LOCAL
BRAND LEADERS DISCUSS THIS
YEAR'S CENTRAL THEME OF
REBELS AND RULERS.

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CMO North America
Capgemini

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Head of Global Brand Management
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Zitec

REBELS AND RULERS

THE GLOBAL FORUM FOR OPEN BRANDING

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Brand Culture Inside & Out

This special magazine precedes the 2019 edition of REBELS AND RULERS, where 20 of the savviest brand leaders worldwide will share their insights on brand culture, both inside and outside of the organization. Take a glance at what you can experience and learn if you join Eastern Europe's most relevant business and branding event.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE:

The interviewees were hand-picked by the editorial team, based on reputation, expertise, and relevance regarding the subject of brand culture.

There was no sponsorship involved and Brandingmag has maintained full rights over the content and editorial process.

Featuring

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EDITOR'S NOTE:

Some respondents have elected not to answer some of the questions and we have respected their decision.

Capgemini

Shade Vaughn, CMO North America



Shade Vaughn is Chief Marketing Officer, North America at Capgemini, a global leader in consulting, IT services, and digital transformation with more than 200,000 employees in more than 40 countries. Prior to joining Capgemini, he was the Global Head of Marketing for Publicis Sapient.

ING

Nanne Bos, Head of Global Brand Management



Nanne Bos leads the Global Brand Management team at ING Group in Amsterdam. In that position, he is responsible for defining and executing the global branding strategy and the growth of the ING brand which stretches across 40 countries.

Nanne has over 15 years of experience in branding, media, technology, and transformation with various companies including positions with Siemens, CMG, and Atos Worldline. In addition to his role at ING, Nanne is a member of the Supervisory Board of the International Brand and Reputation Community, INBREC and Regional Coordinator of the European Association of Communication Directors.

UiPath

Viorela Marcu, Employer Branding Leader EMEA



Viorela Marcu is very passionate about learning new things. In fact, this is the red thread of her entire professional career, which involved a lot of experimenting. In the last seven years, her playground included Change Management, Communication, Recruitment, and Employer Branding. She is currently leading the Employer Branding efforts for EMEA at UiPath, facing new and exciting challenges each day. She is also proud to be the co-founder of HR Hub, the biggest community for HR professionals in Romania.

Rusu+Bortun

Catalin Rusu, Co-Founder & CEO



Creative Director since 2007 at Cohn & Jansen JWT. Co-founder, Chief Creative Partner, and Chief Executive Officer at Rusu+Bortun (Brand Growers & Cyber Growers) since 2008. Brand consultant, juror (ADC Europe Awards, Effie) and speaker (personal branding, creativity, entrepreneurship) since 2010. Accolades at Effie Awards, Golden Drum, AdPrint, ADC Awards, Rebrand100, Sabre Awards, Fibra Awards.

Zitec

Alexandru Lapusan, CEO and Founding Partner



Alex has graduated Automatic Control & Computers at the Polytechnic University in Bucharest and holds a Masters in Project Management in Cybernetics from ASE Bucharest. In 2003, together with his wife Simona, he founded Zitec, currently a leading provider of custom software and digital marketing solutions throughout many industries and across various countries. Alex's hobbies include sailing, biking, reading comic books, and photography. He is also involved in supporting sustainable non-profit projects, such as Alpinet.org or amazing people such as Alex Gavan. Simona and Alex have two kids, Ruxandra and Alex, who both love the Star Trek universe and Herbert's "Dune".



As patriotic Eastern Europeans, our team has watched this region's potential fade in the eyes of public opinion over the years. Times have not been easy and, with the unexpected competition that resulted the moment those walls came down, local brands – including those that represent our heritage, our countrysides, our values, and our people – struggled to catch up to the development levels fortified by the West.

But rest easy. Like all great strategies and stories, there is beauty in taking your time, there is prosperity in patience. Romania, along with its sister nations, has begun planting seeds of innovation and creativity across its industries, allowing newer generations more and more to sow its grounds and reap its rewards.

Today, we stand at the precipice of collaboration. On one side we have the analytic minds, the practical thinkers, and the experienced leaders. On the other stand the vivacious and curious, the agile and unexpected. Both sides must be brave and let down their guards in an effort to join forces and breathe new hope into our societies and communities. It is up to all of us to make the jump and rebrand that which has remained uncultivated for too long.

Welcome to the era of taking responsibility. Welcome, Rebels and Rulers.

FLAVIA ANGHEL

CEO & Editor-in-Chief
Brandingmag



How do you define the brand culture of an organization, be it a for- or non-profit?

The alignment of brand purpose and the internal culture of an organization across people, processes, and technology.

“Brand culture influences how you’re perceived by the market as an employer, as a service/product, and as a partner for your clients.”

– Viorela Marcu

Research across ING has shown that there is a very strong correlation between external brand love and internal brand alignment. Brand culture is about the brand orientation of an organization. The more central the brand is to the overall strategy and decision making – the stronger the brand will be outside of the organization.



**SHADE
VAUGHN**
CMO North America,
Capgemini



**NANNE
BOS**
Head of Global
Brand Management,
ING

Some cliches are passing through my mind: it's the bottom of the iceberg, it's not just your reputation, it's your identity or the view from inside-out. To paraphrase another cliché, it's what you say about yourself when everybody leaves the room. And here "you" is a collective character. It's the promise that you really want to keep, not just the one that will help you succeed.

Defining a brand culture is not a purpose or a decision, it's an internal, quasi-democratic process. The vision — entrepreneurial or intrapreneurial — is the monarch, the internal stakeholders with whom we are talking to are the parliament. Properly selected, they are representative of the whole organization. I prefer to talk live with as many people as possible, from the CEO to the part-time ex-driver. As David Ogilvy would say it today, "Your colleague is not a moron, she is your wife."

Many times, the most valuable insights in a brand auditing process are coming from the people that are not in charge of the transformation of the organization. Brand culture is the mixture between what the leadership wants and what people believe in. Why does your organization deserve to exist? It's a simple, yet very tough question.



**CATALIN
RUSU**

Co-Founder & CEO,
Rusu+Bortun

The brand culture is your organization's DNA. Starting with the values, building into behaviors and going deeper into mission, vision, and the purpose of the organization, culture is embedded into everything you do both within a company and outside of it. Brand culture influences how you're perceived by the market as an employer, as a service/product, and as a partner for your clients.

At UiPath, we believe our brand culture is one of our main competitive advantages, helping us deliver powerfully, consistently, and competitively. For us, it acts as a collection of guiding principles inspiring employees, providing them with direction and ultimately helping them see the impact they have on other people's lives.



**VIORELA
MARCU**

Employer Branding
Leader for EMEA,
UiPath

At Zitec, the brand culture of our team is like a DNA-based organism. It influences how we do things in our team or in relation to customers or partners, has an impact on who we collaborate with, what behaviours we value and promote, and how we deal with various situations along the way. Moreover, a healthy and strong organisational culture adds great advantages to how people collaborate and to their performance within the organisation.



**ALEXANDRU
LAPUSAN**
CEO & Founding
Partner,
Zitec



You are a decisive factor in the management of your brand's culture – how do you include it in your everyday decision-making process?

A big part of our brand culture is in the belief that the business value of technology comes from and through people. We know that our talent is our most valuable asset and the way we work together collaboratively to solve some of the most complex business challenges needs to be based on a strong foundation of honesty, boldness, trust, freedom, team spirit, modesty, and fun.

**SHADE
VAUGHN**

We have put a lot of effort to link our internal behavioral code, which we call the Orange Code, to our brand strategy. We are working very closely with HR – to make sure that this code is implemented in all HR processes including the employee performance system, recruitment, and internal promotion.

**NANNE
BOS**



Nanne Bos talking about ING's Orange Code on the main stage of REBELS AND RULERS 2018.

A healthy brand culture is an invisible tool for business as usual. It's not just what or how you do it, it's the why behind every activity. A self-conscious organization is ready for new challenges. As a leader, you are the firestarter of the brand culture that you live in. In this case, leadership means to endorse and encourage the use of the brand in each and every aspect of business management. In sales, for instance, you can sell offers or who you are as an organization or who you aren't. When you are searching for new talent, you can talk about job description and requirements or you can let people from the organization walk the talk regarding your values.

For us, at Rusu+Bortun, growing the entrepreneurial spirit is our mantra. We are trying to redesign the business model around what's important for us. The process is a reverse pyramid, not a top-down management intervention. An office manager or a creative guy could be more start-up oriented than a co-founder. Brand management is not for connoisseurs. Let's see it as an open-source value platform.



Culture is our compass, always being part of the decision-making process, helping us choose what works and what doesn't for UiPath. We are also lucky to have colleagues who will speak up if there are any misalignments, challenging us to bring more arguments to the table. We are a debate-first, decide-after, commit-to-it kind of culture.

VIORELA
MARCU

In a company with a strong brand culture, it's only natural for the decision-making process to be strongly influenced by it and vice-versa. Thus, when we make decisions that impact our team or the company's growth or profitability, we keep in mind some of our core values, such as authenticity, courage, commitment, and respect. We care deeply about keeping the promises we make. Whether times are good or less favorable, loyalty is a matter of honour to us and we treat each member of our community with dignity and appreciation.

ALEXANDRU
LAPUSAN



Is longevity achievable, for a company, without harnessing a sustainable, active brand culture model?

I have to believe having a strong, active brand culture is one of the most important ingredients for longevity for any organization. It doesn't guarantee longevity, but it would be incredibly difficult to be successful in the long-term without it.

SHADE
VAUGHN

I strongly believe that structurally investing in your brand is the only way to long-term growth and margins. You just need to strike the right balance between the short-term sales activation and longer-term brand investments. Making sure that everyone in the organization understands what the brand stands for and how to contribute to a differentiating brand experience is a long-term effort, but will make sure that the brand can survive in the long run.

NANNE
BOS

In many organizations, the brand culture model is the business model. I strongly believe that brand therapy is a much better syntagm than brand audit or strategy. There are “brand therapists” that are focusing on behavior related to context and others that are digging more to find the core values that drive innovation. The values are not contextual, the way you are expressing them should be.

CATALIN
RUSU

“In many organizations, the brand culture model is the business model.” – Catalin Rusu

As Yuval Noah Harari wrote, “Sapiens rule the world because we are the only animal that can cooperate flexibly in large numbers. We can create mass cooperation networks, in which thousands and millions of complete strangers work together towards common goals. Any attempt to understand our unique role in the world by studying our brains, our bodies, or our family relations, is doomed to failure.” If we bring this reference into our day-to-day, we need the brand culture to help us move further towards a common purpose, guided by common values, inspired by stories of success. Not having an active brand culture will eventually make things more difficult: people will be less engaged, and they will, eventually, deliver less or even pursue other opportunities.

VIORELA
MARCU

It might be possible for a company to have a long lifespan even with a weak or undefined brand culture. However, the way we see it, a strong brand culture makes it easier for organizations to attract like-minded, talented specialists who will join the team not only for financial reasons or other perks and benefits, but for common values and goals.

ALEXANDRU
LAPUSAN



Can ethics be considered the starting point of any type of culture? If so, then what do you think of the brands that build cultures around unethical behavior? Can they last?

We recently saw Chief Executives from the Business Roundtable, which includes leaders from some of the largest companies in the world, state that companies must invest in employees and deliver value to customers and not just focus on value to shareholders. It's clear that business leaders understand that employees and customers want to see a positive impact on society, and part of that is having strong ethics. Brands that value profits at the expense of societal impact will be challenged more than before.

SHADE
VAUGHN

For more and more consumers, it is no longer about what you buy, but what you buy into. This means that you need to clarify your purpose and the values you stand for as a brand. From there, you need to walk the talk — and make sure that your behavior as an organization is congruent with your values.

NANNE
BOS

Nowadays, the bridge between product and brand is falling down. The days when a great brand was enough to sell questionable products are gone. Also, a great product is no longer attractive without a proper brand. As in the Blue Ocean Strategy, people want both differentiation and cost, not just one of the two. Millennials are a value-driven generation. For them, business ethics is the new Q10 coenzyme. Which brand will you endorse: McDonald's or Joe and The Juice?

CATALIN
RUSU

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For more and more consumers, it is no longer about what you buy, but what you buy into. – Nanne Bos

People want to work for a company that has a positive impact on the world. Good working practices are more likely to inspire your employees and make them hang around more. If ethics is one of your starting points, then there's a great chance your company will keep that deeply embedded in its DNA, throughout the entire lifecycle of the company.

VIORELA
MARCU

It's difficult to comment on what others are doing.

Very passionate entrepreneurs and their teams think that the world should not continue to exist without their idea having come to fruition – we've seen cases where this can also lead to unethical behavior, just like we have seen cases where our understanding of what is ethical has evolved. Think of the oil and gas industry. We did not know some of the damage it would do, when that industry took off – we just thought it would power the world.

If there's one element that cannot be missing from a positive and healthy organisational climate, then it must be ethics. Not only does it help people build relationships based on trust and fairness, but it has a deep impact on the type of partnerships you're willing to set up, the kind of business you drive, the contracts you sign and the path you set out for you and your team to follow.

We believe unethical behaviour might help you reach what could seem as a mountain top, but it's only a matter of time until everything starts falling apart. Once an individual or an organization is perceived as being unethical, it will start to pay a huge tax on everything. Especially in Romania, ethics does not have a strong foundation and unfortunately, along with logic, it's not included in the educational system.

We actively promote ethics and make business and team decisions based on ethics, or better put, we avoid people and companies that have an unethical recent history.



Is anticipation of culture possible in today's rapid commercial environment? How can a brand create behavior based on anticipation?

ING was founded many years ago on the principle of empowerment. Leaving this brand purpose is not an option. But while principles endure, formulas don't. People will always respond well to empowerment, but the way we empower them is an ever-changing thing. What inspires today is old fashioned tomorrow. Therefore, we continuously need to anticipate these changing needs and consumer behavior.

Any culture starts with an idea of doing things in a very personal manner. Extracting the vision is the foundation of any transformation, but sharing vision and values is the everyday process that makes the brand fit. As brand therapists, we have the opportunity to talk to people, internal or external stakeholders, on behalf of the management. This is how we access those transformational insights about competences, target, competition, or trends. You have to be open as an organization, bottom to top, if you want to anticipate the next move.

**CATALIN
RUSU**

Trends can be observed before spreading widely across communities and becoming part of culture. Anticipation of culture has much to do with being reactive in relation to these shifts. It can be of great advantage to act among the first ones and build a narrative that anticipates what cultural shifts will dictate, as long as it is integrated naturally in a brand's own culture. As brand culture often implies continuity and a sense of predictability, brands should distribute the same amount of effort to keep their voice on the same lines and stay true to their mission and values, as they do to stay relevant in a continuously changing commercial environment. We promote an open-minded "what-if" culture and we're always ready to try something new — as such, being part of new trends comes naturally.

**ALEXANDRU
LAPUSAN**

Zitec is famous for their beautiful headquarters, which were designed entirely by the employees. One of the best examples of a healthy brand culture.



If you throw scarcity in the game, anticipation can be possible even in today's market. Enthusiasm and love for the brand because of its impact throughout the world is also a driver for anticipation. So, if anything, anticipation of culture is even more possible today than it was 100 years ago.

VIORELA
MARCU



The power of CSR on (external) brand reputation is well-known (and abused) by now – but what can you tell us about using social responsibility as a tool for internal culture?

Social responsibility is one of the most important dimensions of a strong internal culture. Ensuring that an organization's CSR goals and objectives are 1) aligned to brand purpose, 2) visible and known to all team members, and 3) inclusive of opportunities for team members to actively participate and support are all absolutely critical.

SHADE
VAUGHN

Everybody wants to contribute to something bigger than themselves. Having a brand purpose that goes beyond just producing and selling products/services and also brings a positive impact on the world is therefore key if you want to rally the troops. However, you need to make sure that your purpose is authentic to the brand – and something that you can really deliver on.

NANNE
BOS

I don't believe in CSR. I believe in social or ethical buying. The social involvement should be transparently related to sales, with the business growing. Having a brand purpose at the core of your business strategy is an important transformation for the organization. If this decision is top-down, many people will leave the boat. If the line between commercial brand and employer brand is blurred, then employees will be engaged and will deliver the brand promise to the customers.

CATALIN
RUSU

If we agree that brand culture influences all of your actions as an organisation, then CSR campaigns must be designed starting from the organisational culture and the way a company understands to play a role in a given community. It's no wonder that some of them set out to make a CSR program out of anything as long as it helps build a good/better reputation.

ALEXANDRU
LAPUSAN

Our experience with CSR has been slightly different in the sense that our focus has been more on the needs and interests of our team members and less on how to gain awareness points out of our actions. And one such example is our blood donation campaign www.cei1024.ro. The initiative started about three years ago as an internal activity proposed and initiated by one of our workmates who asked how many colleagues would be interested in donating blood if a mobile team from the Transfusions Center in Bucharest would visit our office. After about 10 sessions organised with increasing success in our office, we decided to open this program for all the IT companies in Bucharest, by providing everything needed to set up such a session. We're very grateful to everyone involved in this campaign to now be counting over 13,000 lives saved (statistically, one unit of donated blood helps save 3 lives) as a result of tens of blood donation sessions organized across 15 counties in Romania, by companies in all industries, including direct competition. This is a hard thing to pull off in a country still scarred by Communism, distrust, and unproductive competitiveness. We are very grateful to all our colleagues and other companies who voluntarily #makeitso.

For us, CSR includes the Employee Volunteering program and the UiPath Foundation, which has as a mission to empower children in underprivileged communities through access to education. Everybody needs to feel they have a purpose and that they have a positive impact on society, and we give them the context to do just that. It taps directly into employee engagement. And it speaks clearly about where we come from and what we care about.

VIORELA
MARCU



UiPath Foundation team members.

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If the line between commercial brand and employer brand is blurred, then employees will be engaged and will deliver the brand promise to the customers. – Catalin Rusu



Is it sustainable to be responsible or is it responsible to be sustainable? Although they look similar, the wordplay describes two opposite behaviors that are driving today's market.

It's a very nice wordplay, but I am not sure I can separate the two ideas. I strongly believe the State cannot possibly cover all the needs and solve all problems that are plaguing society, and this is especially true in Romania where corruption has enforced incompetence and obedience as the main HR policy in State institutions and agencies.

As such, not only the Civil Society, but also private companies need to team up, and start tackling various problems. Lots of individuals, lots of small companies — together they can make a sustainable impact in our society. We need to learn this is not an option, we need to understand it's mandatory, not just sustainable, to be responsible. This way of seeing things is also part of our culture and it attracts like-minded individuals to support us or join our team.

On the other hand, it's easy to get carried away, brainstorm, and daydream about the next project/product/initiative. We must educate ourselves to make the leap from this creative state to the next level, an out-of-comfort-zone one. Thinking of an initiative in a 5- to 10-year time-frame forces one to better plan financials and business models and thus, ensure a better sustainability. Again, this is not an option — it must become a reflex.

ALEXANDRU
LAPUSAN

It is never out of fashion to be on-trend. Denmark is a very green example of a country brand. Copenhagen is turning garbage into green electricity in its state-of-the-art plant, which is also a ski slope and a climbing wall, to be opened in October. Innovative technology and architecture integrate to form a future in which waste-to-energy plants are welcomed in any backyard. What's somehow funny is that Denmark is importing garbage because it doesn't have enough.

CATALIN
RUSU

“Thinking of an initiative in a 5- to 10-year time-frame forces one to better plan financials and business models and thus, ensure a better sustainability.”

– Alexandru Lapusan

I think it depends on the stage the company is in. To be able to give back, you first need to be self-sufficient. In the early stages of its growth, a company is responsible for being sustainable. For established companies, however, it is sustainable to be responsible.

VIORELA
MARCU



Talent management is crucial for brand culture yet so many organizations have a superficial understanding of it and its role in brand-building. Is HR not taken seriously enough in high-level decision making? How can companies improve this and, subsequently, improve their talent acquisition and retention rates?

At ING we have been working very closely together with HR. From my experience, I know that this co-operation can be a bit difficult at first, but I believe that it is crucial to building a strong brand. If the brand is central to the decision-making and all aspects of the organization — it is also the foundation for the HR strategy, processes, and policies including talent acquisition, retention, and promotion. Therefore, we jointly worked on an 'employer value proposition and brand' and implemented our Orange Code in many HR processes.

NANNE
BOS

As I mentioned before, brand culture is also crucial for talent management. For instance, a well-being program is a key driver for employer branding. We are treating our customers as people and we are trying to build collateral platforms in order to engage them. But internally? The employees are our new customers, we have to treasure them equally.

CATALIN
RUSU

No wonder then, that one of the most popular topics among HR professionals is, “Is HR strategic enough to have a say?” Looking at the industry, I can say we’ve made some progress in the last years, but we still miss some key competencies. We need to build our business acumen and be more data-driven to become genuine partners for our stakeholders. Understanding the business needs and goals, and making decisions based on data will improve all people-related areas, not only talent acquisition or retention. It will also improve the perception of HR: from paper-pushers to real business partners.

VIORELA
MARCU

“Understanding the business needs and goals, and making decisions based on data will improve all people-related areas, not only talent acquisition or retention.” – Viorela Marcu

We pay close attention to what we call talent management and talent experience by carefully designing a journey that includes all steps a candidate would take if he/she were to join our team. This means we’re looking at every moment a candidate interacts with our brand, from the job application on our website, social media or recruiting sites to the moment he or she exits the organization. Along this journey we focus on contouring a clear picture of our expectations and of the available instruments for career development, placing a great price on meaningful work and striving to create and maintain a positive work environment. We make sure every colleague has a supportive manager and a mentor and we constantly analyze growth opportunities. Maybe most of all, we’ve learned how to build trust in leadership. Considering how difficult it is for organizations to attract and retain new talent, we believe HR is slowly but surely becoming a strong(er) factor in designing and recommending talent acquisition strategies, based on real data gathered from the market, with the right tools at hand. This also means HR teams must evolve, use new tools, people analytics, focus on performance management and not just on sourcing, hiring, and administrative tasks.

ALEXANDRU
LAPUSAN



Can you share an example of how a brand has used storytelling as a tool for creating or steering brand culture?

For a number of years, Whole Foods published an online magazine with in-depth feature articles on visionaries and thought leaders who were doing interesting things with food and quality ingredients. The quality of the storytelling — including film, written, and interactive content — was uncommonly strong, and it was in alignment with the organization’s brand purpose. At the same time, it created a vehicle for employees to participate in the socialization of the stories and to feel a sense of pride and ownership about the brand culture.

SHADE
VAUGHN

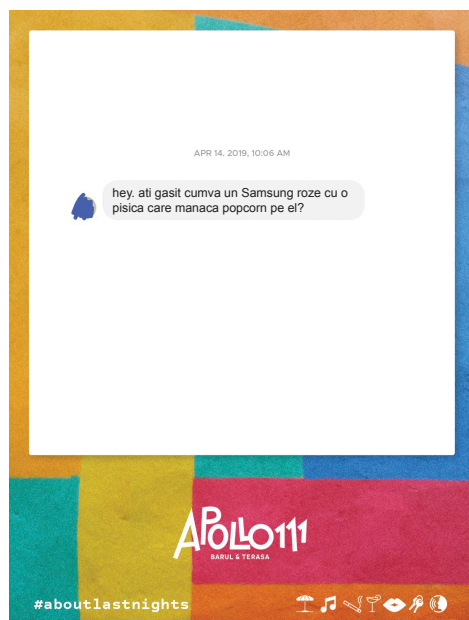
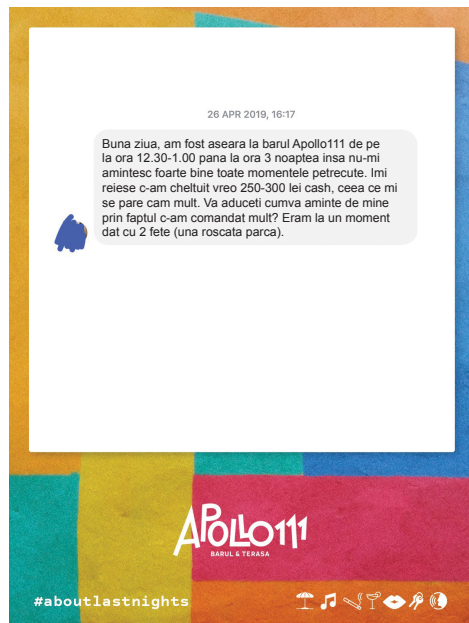
In every culture, storytelling plays a crucial role in maintaining the culture for existing and future generations. The same is true for organizations. The brand story — if told well — can do the same trick. At ING, we have done this in many different forms, ranging from an all-employee speech of the CEO to brand movies and workshops. There are no single solutions — you need to make sure that you keep telling the story over and over again.

NANNE
BOS

Apollo111 is a cultural hub in the downtown area of Bucharest, made up by an independent theater, a disco-bar, and a terrace. The parties at Apollo 111 The Bar are frequented every weekend by hundreds of party people. At the end of June, the parties went on a summer break, and the fun moved to the terrace. The problem was that a lot of the party-goers had no clue about its existence. Hence, the need to communicate and to express the core values of the brand: diversity, inclusion, and self-expression. Our mission was to get the good vibe from the parties on to the terrace, to complete the Apollo111 experience with the after-party.

CATALIN
RUSU

While browsing through Apollo's Facebook private messages, we found out that the page's inbox didn't only have a functional role, but it was an informal community platform, where people wanted to interact with the brand, one way or another. Some were asking for info, others were looking for a job, a few gave their feedback, but most of them asked about the items they lost at parties, which gave us the insight that a party gone south becomes a story you tell the next day. While most brands want primarily to get user-generated content and secondly to generate conversations and build community, we took the content from existing users and turned it into a meme, without making the author's name public.



We took these private messages out of their anonymity and made them public under the #aboutlastnights hashtag, as a daily topic of conversation #ontheterrace, thus launching the first local campaign based on private messages turned into memes. After 22 posts, organic reach per post grew 3,5 times and the number of reactions generated went up 5 times. But beyond social media, we're pleased that the terrace sales have doubled.

I can tell you how we do this at UiPath. We have an inspiring story, and the values we have now were our drivers from the beginning. They are not just words put in a frame that hangs on a wall; they are behaviors that help us become better and better. We use any occasion to share our story: conferences, videos for our clients, users or partners, recruitment processes, onboarding, and many more. That's how we make sure people understand what we stand for and move in the same direction. Our core value, humbleness, actually stems from the experience we had with our first customer, in India. They were the first to discover the potential of our product to alleviate the burden of repetitive tasks on employees' workloads and drive business efficiency. That made us realize we must always listen to our customers, partners, and developer community, as our success is dependent on that. We keep telling that story.

VIORELA
MARCU

UiPath office in Bucharest.



As our team has started growing considerably in the last couple of years, we've become preoccupied with the set of soft skills our team members possess and how to encourage growth in this area, build better relationships with colleagues and business partners. Each team or department is now following a soft skills training program based on their needs, with the most impactful so far being the Leader Effectiveness Training (L.E.T.).

As pretentious as it may sound, it's a workshop series focusing on practical tools everyone can use, both professionally and personally, to relate efficiently to each other, speak our minds in appropriate ways and properly confront someone when the situation calls for it. As a follow-up program to the training series, we have designed an internal cards game called "Every talk counts" which we managed to test during our 15th team-building in the Danube Delta, in 2018. The card game is meant to help players have meaningful conversations, share real stories and understand that authenticity and vulnerability are some of the key ingredients to building a team. Our greatest surprise was to find out our team members would use the game both at work, as an ice breaker in a meeting or during lunch, but also at home, with friends and family.

Given its success, this year we launched a similar game, called "What if", that stimulates curiosity and courage and helps us remember some of the milestones we're most proud of. One of them was the development and recent launching of Mirro.io – an app that helps build positive and ever-evolving team journeys based on real-time feedback, customized recommendations, and insights – which also started as a "#whatif we design and build an app that serves all our needs based on our 15-year experience with feedback and performance management tools?"



What advice would you give to brands looking to improve their culture and better understand their cultures' influence on reputation, sales, and sustainability?

Consistency and simplicity are the two most important factors in having a strong brand culture. It needs to be reinforced at every opportunity and it needs to be as clear and precise as possible so that every employee can explain it.



**SHADE
VAUGHN**

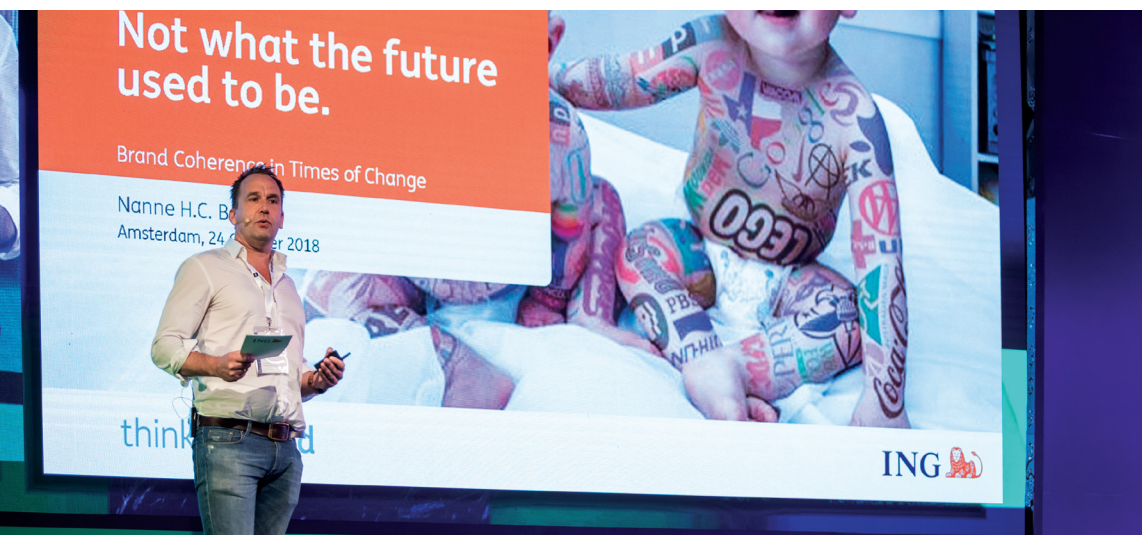
CMO North America,
Capgemini

Start by clarifying the brand purpose and make this central to the strategy of the organization. From there on, focus on three key behaviors, a combination of what has brought the organization where it is as well as where it is heading.



**NANNE
BOS**

Head of Global
Brand Management,
ING



Nanne Bos speaking about Brand Coherence in Times of Change, on the main stage of REBELS AND RULERS 2018.

To encourage the personal branding of each crew member in order to have an empathic employer brand. The internal brand is a long-term investment with a fast ROI if it is doubled by a start-up culture.



**CATALIN
RUSU**

Co-Founder & CEO,
Rusu+Bortun

There's no doubt that your culture influences all of those factors. Everything you have within your organization will be mirrored externally to some extent. If I were to build a checklist, it would be something like this:

- Understand or define your culture — mission, vision, and values;
- Define your purpose;
- Build brand identity;
- Find proof points — stories that can sustain your brand and make sure you share them.



**VIORELA
MARCU**

Employer Branding
Leader for EMEA,
UiPath

We believe it's essential for organizations to always stay true to their core values and principles. The journey to an efficient brand strategy, talent management, performance management must start with understanding the real values already present in the team, and comparing them with the values of the founders/management, not by making up a cool set of values in a brainstorming session. It will sound great, but it will also sound hollow and produce zero effect. While there is such a thing as a weak company culture, it actually means there's no one on watch. The culture of the group is there for sure. Comparing this with a garden, the plants will grow by themselves, but if you want just stunning flowers and not weeds, then you need to gear up and act as a gardener. Take care of talent, allow it to grow, create a safe environment for constructive feedback and communication, and remove what does not work, remove negativity and critical-for-the-sake-of-being-critical feedback. It might not always be an easy ride and it might take long to see results, but it's the only way. For us, at least.



**ALEXANDRU
LAPUSAN**

CEO & Founding
Partner,
Zitec

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