

Model: 5B model

Type of model: Brand model (process model)
 Author(s): J. Geelhoed, H. van der Loo, S. Samhoud
 Domain: Internal branding

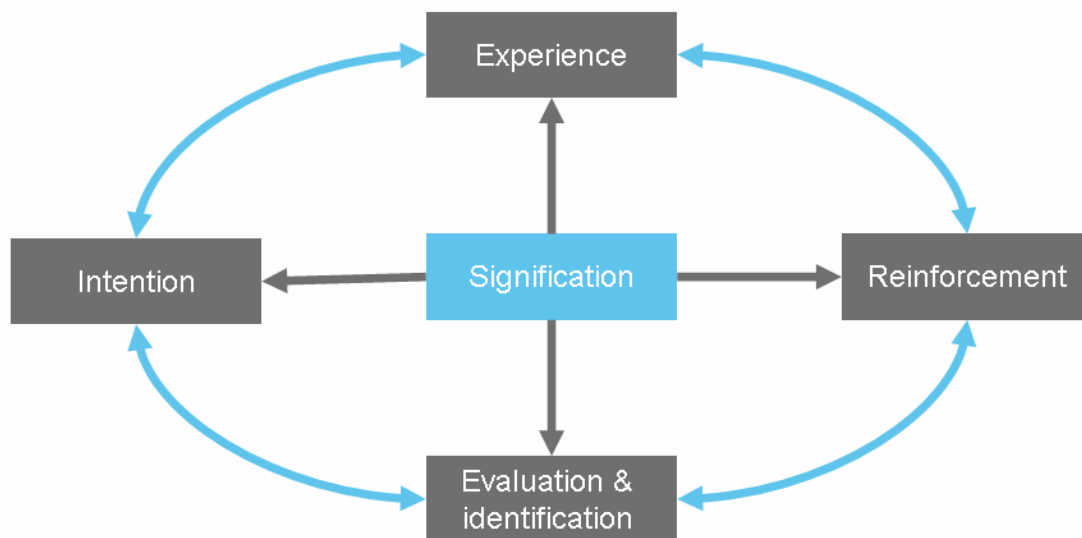


Figure 1: 5B model according to Geelhoed, Van Der Loo and Samhoud.

Geelhoude, Van Der Loo and Samhoud's 5B model (the name '5B' is based on the fact that all stage names in the original Dutch model start with the letter 'B') identifies five elements that can be used as a guiding principle in the creation of a so-called 'disciplined corporate culture'. They posit that when a company has disciplined staff in its ranks, and is able to think and act in a disciplined fashion, there is an important foundation in place for success. Discovering and breathing life into a vision plays a crucial role in that. When the vision is handled effectively, there will be discipline running through every vein of the company. The five stages/ elements (Bs in Dutch) that have to be gone through in this (culture) change process, are, in consecutive order: (1) signification, (2) intention, (3) experience, (4) reinforcement and (5) evaluation and identification. We will further go into these five stages in the following:

1. Signification

The first stage in the development of a 'disciplined' corporate culture consists of signification (centre box in Figure 1). People continuously wonder what things around them actually mean, and what purpose they serve. That process of signification is a social one: people talk about things with each other, influence

each other, and they copy opinions and judgements from each other. With time, such social processes give rise to a common frame of reference, which the group in question can draw on. Developing a vision – and following on from that possibly the development of a brand – is an example of a conscious form of signification. In order to unfold a vision, people should not only be aware of and understand it, they should also continuously keep its meaning alive and pass it on to newcomers. At Starbucks, for example, the vision and the brand are the central focus in all their operations. During induction courses for new staff, which last several days, Starbucks goes into the contents of its vision and brand at length. The so-called ‘Mission Review’ process (which they use for that) leads to a continuous stream of complaints from customers that have spotted a breach of Starbucks’ mission, but also to ideas for new ways of working in line with the vision and mission, or ideas for new products.

2. Intention

The second stage of the model deals with the intention behind the meaning. Meaning alone is not enough, in the view of Geelhoed, Van Der Loo and Samhoud, to create a disciplined corporate culture. The idea is to do something useful with the meaning we assign to the things around us. People will, in other words, have to couple the vision to certain objectives. Objectives are inextricably bound up with a vision. After all, a vision encompasses a higher and daring goal. The subsequent conversion of visionary objectives into strategic, tactical and operational targets is the next step, which is taken at this stage. Ideally, each operationalised target has to have a clear underlying objective, and it must be unequivocal why attaining this objective is important. The authors go on to state that strategic and operational targets have to be derived from the objectives from the vision in a way that everyone can understand. Targets should, ideally, be reviewed at length every year, ensuring that every department is clear on its role in the realisation of the targets.

3. Experience

The third stage of the model deals with experience. The authors claim that people/employees not only do things because they are useful, but also because it gives them some sort of satisfaction, or simply because they are fun. People want their work to give them a positive feeling. This aspect of (corporate) culture has, in recent years, earned such high acclaim that we are using terms like ‘experience society’ and ‘emotion culture’. Life – and with that work – is more and more about feelings and happiness. Positive thoughts and feelings are important sources of energy and motivation for people. They get people moving and boost performance. But the other way round, negative experience can lead

to people losing their drive or even developing an aversion towards their work. A vital vision therefore benefits from the fact that people are enthusiastic about it and even proud of it. An example of this step as taken at Starbucks is that of its corporate story, which is based on its vision, and not cited and recounted endlessly, but rather updated and rewritten continuously by managers and employees. Seeing as Starbucks wants the story to be real and credible, they made a conscious choice to have advertising experts set it up. 'We want our people to live and pass on the story, the way it is and the way they experience it. It, therefore, has to be told in normal language'.

4. Reinforcement

The next stage concerns the reinforcement of the 'disciplined' (corporate) culture. The authors chose the term 'reinforcement' because the preceding stages will really have to have been implemented in actual behaviour for there to be an actual corporate culture. They therefore define 'reinforcement' as the confirmation of meanings, objectives and positive energy. Reinforcement can happen in a number of different ways: by carrying out activities ensuing from vision, brand and strategy, by complying with core values and a code of conduct, by showing exemplary behaviour, by giving people feedback, and by holding them accountable, etc. At Starbucks, for example, 'action' is the most important form of communication. They say: 'What you do is more important than a thousand words and a hundred images'. That is why Starbucks spends virtually no money on advertising. 'We prefer to show what we can do, and have our employees demonstrate our values. That is far more effective.' Starbucks also states that so-called 'passionate followers' are more important than 'passionate leaders'. Starbucks does not believe in leaders that carry the all the load. It is not about what leaders do, but rather about how their followers perform.

5. Evaluation

For there to be a disciplined culture, the 5B model requires compliance with one last demand: all obtained results have to be subjected to critical evaluation. A (corporate) culture is never finished or perfect: there are always things left to tweak and change. People should continuously ask themselves critical questions. Did the ideas and actions displayed up to now yield the intended results? How can we improve? Or should we, perhaps, aim lower? If a culture wants to survive, it will have to ask these questions time and time again. If not, decline will set in sooner or later, and not be reversible: people become complacent and less critical, and reality soon catches up with them without them realizing. If they fail to change that attitude, chances are they will go under

in a cultural sense: the culture dies out. An important aspect of vital corporate cultures is not only to assess collective performance, but also to assess individual contributions to group performance. Terminating underperformers and bringing in new people is also part of the core of contemporary management activities. At Starbucks, for example, 'feedback' is a core concept. Employees, and customers too, are continuously asked to express how they feel about the company, what they think of the products, and what could be improved. Starbucks uses a raft of tools to gather this information: surveys, group discussions, and individual conversations. They also make use of experienced managers' ability to 'make the walls speak': 'an experienced manager can see at a glance how things are in a shop: whether staff is motivated, whether customers are satisfied, and whether it is making a profit or not'.

Reference(s)

Geelhoed, J., Loo, van der, H., Samhoud, S. (2007), Plezier & prestatie (hét managementprincipe voor organisaties) [Fun & Performance (the prime management principle for organisations)]. Academic Service, Den Haag.
Culturele disciplineren aan de hand van het 5B-model [Cultural disciplining using the 5B model] (2007). White paper, www.hansvanderloo.nl