

How P&G is driving growth by doing good

Marc Pritchard, Chief Global Brand Officer at Procter & Gamble, discusses society and sustainability

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In 2019, the business of growing a brand is tied to having a positive impact on society and the environment, according to Marc Pritchard, Chief Global Brand Officer at Procter & Gamble (P&G), the world's biggest advertiser.

Pritchard, one of the most influential leaders in marketing, is co-leading the 'society & sustainability' stream of the CMO Growth Council, a collaboration between the Association of National Advertisers (ANA) and Cannes Lions (WARC's sister company). The work of the CMO Growth Council in this area brings brand leaders together to consider how they can put societal good and sustainability at the heart of their growth strategies.

Consumers expect brands to raise their game in sustainability

What brands are learning, Pritchard believes, is that balancing growth with doing good is a fundamental consumer expectation.

"What's important for brands to do is to be consistent about these areas, and stick with them for them to have an impact," Pritchard said in an exclusive conversation with WARC.

Consumers of all ages – "from Gen Z to Boomers" – are now expecting brands to take a stance on important societal issues. He noted: "People expect more from our brands and our companies. They expect brands and companies to do good for society and for the planet. Nine out of 10 consumers say they have a more positive image of a brand or a company when it supports a social, or environmental cause."

About 10 years ago, P&G started considering the power of its brands to make a positive difference to society and the environment. Though P&G's commitment hasn't been directly motivated by the current divisive political climate, Pritchard acknowledged it adds renewed relevancy. "The climate and the current times are just amplifying how important it is to focus on eliminating bias and accurately, realistically, and positively portray all people," he said.

Brands need to demonstrate authenticity and action...

Today, a 'citizenship' component is at the heart of P&G's brands. In recent advertising work, P&G brands have tackled issues including racial

discrimination, toxic masculinity and equality for women.

On the sustainability front, the company is making a concerted effort to ensure its manufacturing processes are as environmentally friendly as possible, including minimising wastewater and sourcing sustainably harvested ingredients. This makes sense for P&G, as one of the world's biggest packaged goods manufacturers.

Pritchard advises marketers, when considering how their brands can have a positive social and environmental impact, to choose something that holds true to the brand.

"What I think we learned is that if (the purpose) is too disconnected from the business, then it doesn't work," he said.

"Ensure that you're coming up with something that fits your brand's core equity, and benefit, so there is an authentic reason for a consumer to think about it."

...while tying it back into growth

Many brands have fallen into the trap of purpose-driven campaigns that seem cynical, opportunistic or simply

By Anna Hamill, Senior Editor, Brands, WARC

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don't deliver business results.

In Pritchard's view, it's important not to lose sight of the fact that marketing campaigns should be designed to deliver growth. Finding the right balance is key: "If you're a force for good and not a force for growth, then you're philanthropy. Philanthropy is good, but most of it is non-profit. If you're a force for growth and not a force for good, then some of your consumers might think of you as being too much of a mercenary. You have to bring the two together and build in what we call 'citizenship' into how the business grows."

The key for P&G is to build both elements into the strategy from the start.

Brands need to be clear on metrics

"Our CEO declared a few years ago that we would build citizenship into our business: we would build sustainability, equality, diversity and inclusion, and a community impact into our brands. Whatever we came up with would drive our core business metrics."

"We focus on growing the market, the users of our brands, market share, and then sales and profit.

Those are the measures. We look for any marketing programme we develop, including these citizenship programmes, to deliver on those metrics," Pritchard explained.

Metrics such as improved brand equity or trust ratings are also considered. And the good news is that if a campaign hits the right cultural buttons, it can be very cost-efficient.

"When you do it well – we found this – you don't have to invest very much money. In fact, we don't invest that much into any of these programmes. When they're culturally relevant, they get amplified. They get amplified by influencers, they get amplified by the media, they get amplified in social media. They ended up having an even higher ROI, in some cases, because you don't have to invest as much," Pritchard said.

Advertising can reinforce social messages over time

Diversity and inclusion have been hot-button issues in recent years. #SeeHer, a marketing industry movement for more representative portrayals of women and girls, has been making progress. Likewise, the

#SeeAll campaign encourages more ethnic and cultural diversity.

"One of the ways in which brands can make a difference on bias is through our advertising. There needs to be a consistent drumbeat of having accurate and realistic portrayals [of society], and then periodically taking a stand," he explained, adding environmentally-focused initiatives also need the "same drumbeat".

"Keep doing it over and over again. Eventually, those forces will start to take hold," he advised.

Marketers should review hiring and procurement practices

Internally, the drive for more balanced representation doesn't stop at on-camera talent. Just as P&G is working toward sustainability in its manufacturing supply chain, the company is also aiming for "equality in the creative supply chain," Pritchard said.

P&G is "just five promotions away" from 50-50 gender equality across its brand teams, from entry-level to director-level, he revealed. The company was a founding sponsor of the #FreeTheWork and #FreeTheBid initiatives, which seek to connect

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creatives from diverse backgrounds with opportunities. Just 7% of TV commercials are directed by women, so P&G proactively sought to employ female directors for more of its advertising. Now, 21% of its commercials are directed by women, a number which Pritchard remains committed to improving. "I think that's something that every brand can do, and every company can do," he said.

Personal leadership can help speed up change

Pritchard has spoken in the past about the impact his Hispanic heritage has had on his philosophy toward diversity and inclusion. The work done for P&G's Tide brand about the labelling of Hispanics prompted Pritchard to examine his own Mexican

heritage and especially the privileges afforded to him by virtue of having a non-Hispanic name.

But not every marketing leader feels comfortable taking personal leadership on this issue, especially when the cost of getting it wrong can be high.

"Really examine your own personal history, and even biases, to become personally motivated and inspired about doing good," Pritchard advised. "By examining those things and being willing to talk about them openly, you create emotional safety for others to have conversations."

Alongside Damon Jones – P&G's Vice President of Global Communications and Advocacy, who has played had an instrumental role in developing P&G's purpose-driven campaigns – Pritchard recently met

with a group of potential P&G interns to discuss the campaigns, sharing personal stories and the motivations behind the brand's work.

"There were a number of people that came up afterwards and said 'thank you for doing that, because that creates the safety for me to talk about that,'" Pritchard said.

"It is important to note that it requires some practice. My advice would be to find people that you can create a trusting relationship with, so you can have these kinds of conversations, and do that in a safe place. When you do that, and you practice it and unpack some of these things, then you're better able to examine things and talk about them in an objective way."

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