



## Changing Values

A recent article cited studies since the pandemic began that 78% of consumers in the U.S. want brands to address social justice issues. 87% said they would purchase products from companies that advocated for a cause or issue that was important to them. 76% also replied that they wouldn't patronize a company that supported issues that were against their beliefs. And the biggest "tell" was that 75% acknowledged that they would be inclined to patronize a new company if the values aligned with theirs.

## What Brands Can Do

[Marketers](#) should know their customers. If they don't, they need to act immediately to identify their values. There are several ways to do this.

Brands with little or no budget can check out what their top competitors are doing, what causes they're supporting, as well as pay attention to pages with customer comments, suggestions, etc. Going to the website of the cause or nonprofit competitor's support can be revealing. Look at what they and their supporters say about the brand and its involvement.

Another way is to recruit loyal customers who are representative of the brand's target audience. Ask them to participate in a virtual focus group where important values and questions like those addressed above can be discussed. Doing so will give a clear picture of customer attitudes as well as the future intent regarding their continued buying.

The final option is to commission a survey of people in the community who are representative of the brand's target audience. The same kinds of questions that would be asked of the focus group will yield valuable information.

The information gathered from one or more of the above studies

should provide enough data on which to decide whether and where to direct brand efforts to collaborate with a cause or nonprofit. The next step would be to identify the potential partner and open discussions on that possibility.

If an agreement is reached, a strategy and timetable on such a campaign needs to be drawn up and agreed to. This should include each party's responsibilities, communicating the results regularly with each respective audience, and how the brand will be acknowledged.

An important aspect often overlooked in such planning is the possible use of employees and pro-bono services. If the selected partner can also use volunteers, it can be vital in building employee loyalty. Pro bono services have financial value to the recipients, too, and are cheaper than an outright donation.

"When the dust settles, I will only measure my success by the happiness that has ensued within myself and happiness I have brought in other people's lives." Mdoda Zondo, South African social scientist.



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