

# Burt's Buzz

**W**e marketers spend a lot of time talking about this medium or that medium, especially these days. In fact, it's hard to go anywhere—either in business or in personal life—without being asked if you're on Twitter and Facebook.

This is all great and certainly very exciting. But it tends to skip over what matters most, and that is creating a culture of shared values with our consumers.

As I look across the many Facebook fan pages and Twitter posts, I see huge potential to create the kind of communities promised by these new social media. It's

It's a culture that says, "we care." We care about our family, friends and business associates. We care about public policy issues. We care about the brands we use. We care enough to show up every day—in some cases every five minutes—and speak our minds.

The question is, do we, as marketers, care as much as our consumers? Certainly many of us do, but just as certainly some care more than others. My point is that those companies that care the most—that have a culture of caring—are most likely to see the most success with social media.

What is a culture of caring? I immediately think of Burt's Bees, the personal products company. At Burt's, a culture of caring permeates everything they do—in fact, "we care" is their company's mantra. Its culture of caring encompasses its products, packaging and facilities. It extends to its suppliers and, most important, embraces its employees and ultimately its consumers.

So extreme is the culture of caring at Burt's Bees that some might look at it and conclude that it is an anomaly, a product of some crazy '60s hippie sensibility that doesn't pertain to many other companies. There's no denying the obvious countercultural roots at Burt's Bees, but to dismiss it as radical to the point of irrelevant would be a mistake.

True, Burt's Bees may be different than your company because it has a single product line, which might make it easier to build the kind of culture it has. But the fact is that every enterprise has a culture of one kind or another—and a choice as to what kind of culture that is.

Like every other company, Burt's Bees has values, a vision and a mission statement. It has goals and objectives, both long-term and short-term. It measures its progress against those goals and objectives and offers employees incentives to achieve those goals.

It communicates with its shareholders, its employees and its consumers. It has an image and a marketing strategy to build its brand equity. In short,

## At Burt's Bees, a culture of caring is both the medium and the message.

amazing to see the passion and excitement from so many consumers about the brands they love.

However, I also see a lot of old-school attempts at fitting into this new kind of communication. I see Facebook fan pages that are really nothing more than advertisements and Twitter posts that amount to nothing more than 140-character promotions.

This is obviously a huge missed opportunity because as most of us well know, these new media are about conversations, not commercials. This is nothing new—it's part of internet culture, which has always been resistant to commercial interruptions.

It also suggests that many brands have more work to do than they think when it comes to getting the most out of social media. Twitter and Facebook may fade over time, or even go away, but the culture that makes them so wildly popular is here to stay.

## Merging Strategy and Culture



the framework of the company is no different than that of any other company. In most ways, it's a very conventional company.

The only difference is that it chooses to care about certain things—like using natural ingredients, minimizing its carbon footprint and not testing on animals, for instance. Above all, it chooses to care about the wellbeing of its people, both those who work for the company as well as those who purchase its products.

Burt's Bees is also very clear and strong about its choices, which has big implications for how it is perceived in the marketplace. I recently spoke with Jim Geikie, General Manager, International, at Burt's Bees, who said that it is the company's clarity of purpose that defines the brand.

"When you're very clear about what you are and aren't, it ends up being a magnet for consumers and also employees who share those points of view," he said. While Jim does not lead marketing, he observed that this changes the way Burt's Bees communicates from a marketing standpoint.

"It comes down to push marketing versus pull marketing," he said. "We don't push our marketing on people. It's all pull—public relations, point-of-sale in the retail environment, product education and training on the web. We've started to do some print advertising in the past year, but for the previous 25 years we hadn't done any. And no television."

Source:  
Burt's Bees

Social media is, in fact, a part of the mix for Burt's Bees, but they aren't just jumping on it because it's the latest cool thing. In many ways, it's old hat for them.

The culture of social media—the openness, dialogue, creativity, the sense of caring—is an exact fit with the culture at Burt's Bees, and at least generally the way it's been from their beginning. Jim stresses that it's a journey, though, and that getting things right is still very much a work in progress.

But it's paying off for Burt's Bees, at least for now. For the most recent year reported, ending June, 2008, the company grew by 18 percent, while reducing its waste to landfill by 50% and energy consumption by seven percent.

Burt's Bees lives and breathes a culture of caring, which naturally results in growth, even during this recession.

Now that's something to Tweet about! By the way, you can follow me on Twitter, @WomanWise. ■



**DORI MOLITOR** is founder and CEO of **WomanWise LLC** ([womanwise.com](http://womanwise.com)) a WatersMolitor Company, a hybrid consultancy-agency specializing in marketing brands to women. Dori can be reached at [dmolitor@womanwise.com](mailto:dmolitor@womanwise.com) or (952) 797-5000.