



Purpose, Brand & What Matters

Chris Quinn on How to Stand Out

By Rita Lewis

Head of global sales and marketing. Corporate VP. Marketing consultant to leading tech companies. Founder and president of his own learning-solutions company. Business educator, trainer and diagnostician.

In his many professional incarnations, Chris Quinn has seen a lot of companies. Large and small. Emerging and on the downslope. He's seen plenty of businesses stutter and fade.

He's also witnessed companies enter challenging markets and not only grow, but thrive. He knows what it takes for a company to stand out and succeed, especially in today's markets.

From practice to teaching to diagnostics

After college and two tours as a Marine infantry officer, Chris started his corporate life in management, quickly moving into sales. He was promoted into sales management, and then regional management, and then became global head of sales and marketing for a division of Baxter, an international medical products and services company.

From there, he was recruited to become head of global marketing for Bayer, a German company. "I've done business in 49 countries, last time I counted," Chris says. "I think I have three million miles on American Airlines. I was all over the place, and it was a good experience for me."

After his corporate career, Chris joined a partnership providing strategic marketing courses to corporation executives. He subsequently founded his own company to maximize his impact: "I was interested in going deeper with clients and staying with them to try to implement."

Quinn founded Imprint Learning Solutions in 2004, developing a suite of e-learning marketing courses for tech companies like Microsoft, Dell and HP. Eventually he built Imprint's Marketing Readiness Diagnostic, an empowering cloud-based tool that measures a company's readiness to execute its marketing plans. "I started moving more upstream to the diagnostic," Chris explains, to help companies address problems and improve performance.

4 fundamentals every business should master

Chris has coached many CEOs and owners of successful businesses. He cites one as the poster child for getting things right.

Mako Medical Laboratories entered the medical testing market four years ago against two formidable competitors: LabCorps and Quest, both large, international companies. Mako positioned itself to compete by concentrating on its workforce, its service model and its geographic area (the Southeastern U.S.).

The results? Mako Medical Laboratories is the only company to rank No. 1 on the Triangle Business Journal's Fast 50 list for two years in a row. It was named one of RTP's best places to work in 2017, and has captured TBJ's Health Care Heroes and Life Sciences awards.

Chris identifies four factors that have contributed to Mako's success—fundamentals that help companies to compete in contemporary markets.

1. Purpose

Over the last 20 years, “why” has become as important—if not more so—than “what.” While business should always be intentional, purpose has become increasingly attractive to workers and customers.

“People want to work with companies like that. People want to do business with com-

panies that are about more than just earnings per share,” Chris explains. “A lot of companies can have flowery, bring-tears-to-your-eyes mission statements, but they don't live it, they don't behave in alignment with it.”

Mako encourages employees to be involved with local charities, to give back to the community, and the company does the same, contributing to its purpose-driven culture.

2. Customer intimacy

To transform transactions into relationships, and foster rapport with customers, Mako creates high-touch exchanges. Quest and LabCorp use FedEx and UPS to retrieve lab samples from doctor's offices—efficient, but not necessarily personal.

Mako, however, employs U.S. military veterans for this job. Retired logistics experts who are highly trained in efficiency, veterans pick up samples from doctors' offices in cars wrapped in the Mako shark logo. They notice when a doctor is struggling with an issue or picking up new business.

“They understand when there's something going on locally,” says Chris, pointing out that Mako's competitive choice to use veterans circles back to its emphasis on purpose.

3. Strong brand and identity

Mako has a stewardship approach to brand. The company understands that an interac-



tion between Mako and a customer is either positive or negative, but rarely neutral. “Their people live the brand. They realize that everything you do, everybody who answers the phone, everyone who touches anything to do with the customer shapes the brand experience,” explains Chris.

Mikey the Shark—Mako’s mascot—is an integral part of its brand. At children’s hospitals and ball games, Mikey personifies Mako’s culture of purpose and caring, building brand awareness and offering assurance to customers that “Hey, I know who these guys are.”

4. Measuring and valuing what matters

Every business is unique. Mako knows this and captures data sets appropriate to its own experience. Chris explains, “They have lots of metrics, but the metrics are not your traditional metrics.”

The company also wants its people to feel like owners, not just employees. So it uses a stakeholder, pay-for-performance approach. Mako hired 90 people in March alone, a lot to absorb for a young company. “As they scale,” says Chris, Mako’s skin-in-the-game approach “is a big deal.”

Lesson from the field:

Align what you do with who you are

Chris Quinn has had a lot of opportunity to put these fundamentals into practice with his own company.

Imprint is now partnering with the Predictive Index, a Boston company specializing in workforce assessments, to add a diagnostic tool in human capital analytics. Analytics help companies understand people’s behavioral drivers to ensure the right hire for the right job. Once individuals are hired, analytics can determine how best to engage and train them.

“The world is moving away from episodic performance reviews and more toward ongoing coaching,” says Chris. “That’s how you tailor your approach to your employees; you meet them where they are. You can’t change them but you can nurture their strengths and help them overcome some of their weaknesses if you understand them.”

A rebranding will reflect the new focus for Imprint, which will keep its name but move toward helping companies with talent readiness.

It’s another business incarnation for Chris, who is passionate about helping clients in this area. “I can’t think of anything more important than engaged employees, because if they’re not engaged, they’re not going to deliver experiences to the customer.”

What you do and who you are should be connected, declares Chris, whether you’re a business owner or an employee. If the connection isn’t there, “That’s a drain on your battery in life. Purpose matters. You’re never doing work if you’re aligned with your purpose.”



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