

Why heritage plays a seismic role in shaping company culture and success

In an age where consumers are boycotting brands if their values don't align with their own, company culture and the behind-the-scenes of business operations have never been more important.

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But consumers aren't the only demographic to consider when it comes to cultural alignment; research shows *nearly half* of job seekers consider a company's culture to be amongst the most important factors in applying for roles, highlighting the rippling implications that culture has in the corporate world. Businesses that are doing more than just providing product propositions will continue to get ahead - there is a talent war going on and people are choosing where they work based on a company's ethos and long-term purpose.

Company culture largely derives from the values upon which a business is built - its founders, the people it employs, and the overall vision for business success. While any reputable business will have values underpinning the work they do, for *Suntory Beverage and Food, Great Britain & Ireland* (SBF GB&I), it is the heritage from Suntory's founders that feeds into all aspects of decision-making and everyday operations. With European roots and the proud owner of British brands Ribena and Lucozade, our Japanese heritage shapes our company's values and unique identity.

What does heritage look like in action?

When businesses experience seismic growth and have been operating for a long time, the strength of company values can sometimes naturally dwindle. But if values are kept at the forefront and act as the guiding principles that they always come back to, they are more likely to see long term success.

We share the same values across the whole of Suntory Group and these are categorised into three clear schools of thought: *Growing for Good*, *Yatte Minahare* and *Giving Back to Society*.

Growing for Good is key to how we do business. It's a commitment to positive change inside and outside of our business with a focus on sustainable growth – the more we grow our brands and business, the greater our capacity to give back.

One of our latest initiatives, Mizuiku, literally meaning 'water education', was launched by Suntory Holdings in 2004 to give younger generations the opportunity to learn where their water comes from and understand the significance of the forests that help nurture it. Started in Japan, the programme has expanded to Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, France, China, Spain and launched in the UK for the first time this year, with tailored initiatives for each country. Another example of how key priorities and values are aligned globally.

Our *Yatte Minahare* value however can be described more as a mindset that is adopted across all facets of business at SBF GB&I. Founder of Suntory, *Shinjiro Torii*, started operations in 1899 based on the spirit of what we call Yatte Minahare – the mindset of dreaming big, taking challenges, and never giving up. This means we encourage our employees to act with a pioneering spirit, commitment and strong will to create value and deliver results. It's also key to how we unlock

sustainable performance – we balance long term sustainability with short term business priorities, encouraging the bold future decisions that will lead to success.

Finally, *Giving Back to Society* acknowledges the responsibility we have to the world around us, giving back generously to society, not only through our charitable donations, but through the partnerships and programmes we create and the roles our brands play in society. This year we launched our new volunteering programme ‘Together for Good’ across our European market, bringing employees together across Europe through volunteering, charitable giving and sustainable behaviours that together will have a positive impact on society and our planet.

Linking everything we do as a business back to these core values enables us to stay true to our heritage, living and breathing these into the company every day.

Impact of culture on corporate success

The correlation between a successful bottom line and a successful work environment have long been drawn and I strongly believe that the way to successfully deliver both is with a credible and strong company culture. A lot of companies obsess about performance but forget it’s the culture and the people that unlock it – this is where the focus is needed.

Whether something is going well, or badly, it comes back to people – not investment or strategy. If you get the right people with the right mindset and train them well, you will perform well. In our business we talk about how failure is an option, but fear is not - good people know themselves and have confidence on where they need to course correct.

Making decisions based on company values and heritage infers a sense of loyalty and commitment, instantly promoting authenticity and credibility

within a business. A global business also feels more closely connected as a unit if there are clear values at the centre, acting not just as a reference point but a gravitational pull, making all regions, internal divisions, and individuals resonate with the company's mission.

Final thoughts

Ultimately, an organisation is only as strong as its people and the culture in which they operate. It's a culture that is not staying fixed but always evolving and responding to feedback. We believe our unique culture is our strength and we're determined never to lose sight of this.

Many of the world's household names speak to the value of heritage which has played a vital role in the longevity of business operations in what is only becoming a more competitive market. The influence of company heritage should not be underestimated; it should be celebrated and acted upon.

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