



# TRUTH IN BRANDING

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## A TRUTH PROBLEM FOR BRANDS

Beer is for everyone. Or is it?

In the spring of 2023, Bud Light launched a partnership with the popular social content creator Dylan Mulvaney, who is a transgender woman. The backlash from conservatives was swift and furious, with many vowing to boycott the beer. Bud Light clumsily abandoned Mulvaney and retreated from their inclusivity push, harming their favorability on both ends of the cultural spectrum.

When the foam settled, Bud Light had lost its long-held crown as the top-selling beer in the U.S. and Anheuser-Busch's CMO had stepped down.

"Beer is for everyone" is a great-sounding brand message. It assuredly seemed like a nice, positive theme for an Instagram campaign. But it was ultimately hollow because Bud Light wasn't willing to stand up for it when they faced pushback.

Bud Light is just one high-profile example of a larger problem: If modern brands' actions don't back up the stories they tell about themselves, today's empowered consumers are savvy enough to notice and connected enough to call them on it — with serious business consequences.

To flip the problem into a positive: The strongest, most trusted brands in the world today aren't the ones with the smartest strategies, the prettiest designs, the cleverest taglines or the slickest apps. They're the brands that live by a simple, resounding truth in everything they do.

We call it a Living Truth. The challenge is finding yours.

# THE SEARCH FOR LIVING TRUTH

What is your brand's Living Truth?

**An essential truth about your brand – born from the tension between a Brand Truth and Human Truth – that you commit to live up to every day. Not just when you launch your brand; not just in your marketing; always and everywhere. (Including when it's not easy.)**

Before you can pin down your brand's Living Truth, you first need to uncover two truths that already exist in your organizational DNA and out in the wider world – Brand Truth and Human Truth. It's the tension between these two truths that sparks your Living Truth.

A Brand Truth is an essential strand of your organizational DNA: It could be your company's origin story, what you do differently, where you stand in your category, what is most unique or valuable or interesting about you. Everyone in your organization knows it's true, from the C-suite to the interns. Your customers know it's true – not because you told them it is, but because they've experienced it for themselves. Even your competitors would grudgingly admit it's true.

Human Truths are found in what we know about how people think and act – from our own lives, from data and research, from culture and social media. They can even come from AI (curated and finessed by humans, of course). What matters is that it's a real and recognizable truth about how people act, think or live that influences the way they experience your brand. Connecting your brand to a human truth makes it empathetic and relevant to people.

Many things are true about your brand, and even more things are true about the people it interacts with. So, at this stage of the process, it's not about choosing one perfect Brand Truth and Human Truth, but finding several of each that are relevant and compelling. Then you can start mashing them up in different combinations to see which pairing sparks a Living Truth-generating reaction.



## TIME FOR EXAMPLES:

### L.L. BEAN

**Brand Truth:** L.L. Bean makes durable outdoor clothing and gear.

**Human Truth:** People spend 95% of their time indoors.

**Living Truth:** Going outside is good for you.

Making sturdy gear that lets you get outside and stay outside – even in cold, snowy places like Maine – has been ingrained in L.L. Bean’s DNA since 1912. But, for most people, life overwhelmingly happens inside, and we often need a push to get off the couch and enjoy the outdoors. There is a tension between those two truths; a tension that sparked the truth L.L. Bean lives by, not only in their brand marketing under the brilliant tagline “Be An Outsider,” but in the decisions they make and the ways they act in the world: From offering fly fishing classes, to creating meeting spaces in parks, to supporting nonprofits like Teens to Trails.

(Disclaimer: L.L. Bean is not a client of HATCH The Agency. But we do wear a lot of their stuff.)

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### MAILCHIMP

**Brand Truth:** Not taking yourself too seriously is at the core of Mailchimp’s DNA.

**Human Truth:** Our brains are wired to perceive differences. (Remember “One of These Things Is Not Like the Others” from Sesame Street?)

**Living Truth:** The best way to stand out is by doing things your own unique way.

Email automation was once a boringly professional B2B space, with big tech players selling pricy tools to large companies. Born as the side hustle of a web design agency, Mailchimp was smaller and more fun from the start. From their silly brand name and winking chimpanzee logo; to category-defying marketing strategies like sponsoring a nascent podcast called Serial and advertising fake brands like JailBlimp in the “Did You Mean Mailchimp?” campaign; to their informal brand voice and delightful Instagram content, Mailchimp grew into a big business (acquired by Intuit for \$12 billion) by doing everything in their own, whimsical way – and attracting other small businesses who want to follow in their footsteps.

## WHERE AND HOW LIVING TRUTH SHOWS UP

Your Living Truth will guide every way your brand shows up. Your brand design, messaging, and advertising, of course. But also activations, content, product design, customer journey ... we could go on. Your Living Truth is a filter for your brand's decisions; an inspiration for your actions; a rallying point for your culture; something the people you work with are proud to stand by and the customers you serve are proud to be associated with.

Having a Living Truth makes your brand predictable. For a TV show, predictable is bad; but for a brand, it's very good. Predictability is powerful; it means people understand and care about your brand. Whether you love or cringe at Disney, you know the brand will inject "magical" storytelling into everything they do. Taco Bell will always bring spicy irreverence to the table, whether it's the newest bordering-on-ridiculous menu item or envelope-pushing social posts.

To achieve this predictable level of consistency every day, everywhere you show up, for everybody you interact with, your Living Truth must be distinct, memorable, actionable, flexible and accountable.



- DISTINCT
- MEMORABLE
- ACTIONABLE
- FLEXIBLE
- ACCOUNTABLE

## WE LEAD BRANDS TO THEIR LIVING TRUTH

HATCH helps brands find their Living Truth and put it out into the world. We start by learning where your business has been, who you are now, and how you can grow. We need to deeply understand your business strategy before we can get to work making it relevant and compelling to humans in order to drive value and fuel your growth.

We also know your audiences are not passive watchers of your brand – they are active and powerful participants in it. So we need to know how your brand fits into their world, their attention span, their lives. To gain that knowledge, we conduct deep-dive research into your customers, your competitors, and the culture surrounding your brand and industry.

Once we know your business and your brand inside and out, we can start generating Brand Truths (from our mapping of your business's DNA) and Human Truths (from what we know about how people think and act) and discovering your Living Truth in the tension between them. This is where strategy and creative overlap – not through a brief that's handed off, but for a highly collaborative and iterative process. We also bring in your team early and often to get your take on potential Living Truths until we get to the one you can't wait to move forward with.

Ready to learn more about the process and how it would work for your brand? Get in touch today, we'd love to walk you through it.



At HATCH, we make creativity an accessible tool for brands by shortening the distance between our clients and the creativity they need – from strategy and insight, to brand development and execution. Come see who we are, what we do and when to think of us.

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