HATCH
THE AGENCY

TRUTH IN BRANDING

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.

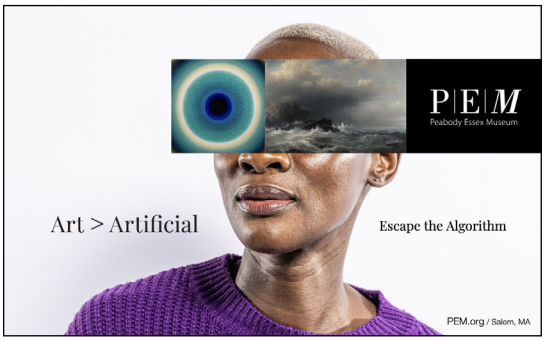
A Brand Truth is *an essential strand of your organizational DNA:* It could be your company's origin story, what you do differently, where you stand in your category, what is most unique or valuable or interesting about you. Everyone in your organization knows it's true, from the C-suite to the interns. 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:

PEABODY ESSEX MUSEUM (PEM)



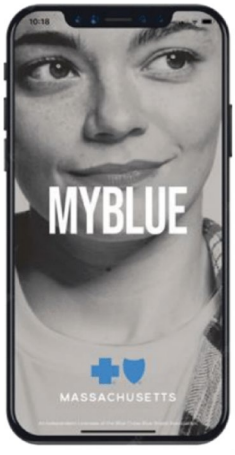
Brand Truth: PEM purposefully curates experiences that change people's minds and charge their senses.

Human Truth: People crave the dopamine hit we get from scrolling social media, but it can leave us feeling lonely and anxious.

Living Truth: PEM has the opposite effect of the algorithmically determined digital feeds that devour our time and drain our energy.

PEM wanted to reach new audiences and attract them to Salem for a non-witch related experience. They asked HATCH for an awareness campaign, but we saw a bigger opportunity to stake a claim about what makes PEM different. After trying on several Brand and Human Truths, we landed on the pairing that generated a Living Truth focused on the effect PEM has on visitors: It's more meaningful, mind-changing, and (actually) social than the fleeting dopamine release we get from our artificially generated digital feeds. PEM's Living Truth inspired a brand platform that will come to life across advertising, engagement-driving activations, and in-museum experiences.

BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD OF MASSACHUSETTS



Brand Truth: Blue Cross believes equitable access to healthcare is a human right.

Human Truth: People don't feel the healthcare system is on their side.

Living Truth: Blue Cross is your ally when you need to navigate the healthcare system.

Blue Cross was always seen as a leader in the healthcare industry, but their Net Promoter Score (NPS) was dropping. People's perception was that they were more focused on healthcare providers than patients. As part of rebooting their brand strategy, we listened to real people and uncovered a powerful human truth: They didn't feel the "healthcare system" was working for them. When people see the system as the enemy, Blue Cross can be an ally, helping them navigate their way to the best decisions for their health. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Blue Cross lived up to this truth through actions like expanding access to online mental health programs — and achieved a strongly positive NPS along the way.

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.

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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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