

**GOOD  
IS THE  
NEW  
COOL**  
GUIDE TO

# **MEANINGFUL MARKETING**

HOW BRANDS CAN WIN WITH  
CONSCIOUS CONSUMERS

**AFDHEL AZIZ  
& BOBBY JONES**

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# IN PRAISE OF GOOD IS THE NEW COOL GUIDE TO MEANINGFUL MARKETING

“Afdhel, Bobby, and Conspiracy of Love are key partners on this journey to bring our purpose to life.”

—**Vicky L. Free, former CMO, Global Brand Marketing adidas**

“Afdhel, Bobby, and the team at Conspiracy of Love are the real deal. Smart, empathetic, strategic and seasoned; they really know how to guide an organization to imagine and realize their essential Purpose.”

—**Tom Herbst, former CMO, The North Face**

“Conspiracy of Love are wise and trusted partners helping us to authentically navigate the space of purpose with our brands to drive business growth.”

—**Ciara Dilley, Senior Vice President, PepsiCo**

“Every business, brand, and individual involved in the business of brands should sit up and take note.”

—**Paul Woolmington, CEO, Canvas Worldwide**

“As we begin to enter the golden age in which brands unlock the tremendous potential of technology to do good, VC's and founders alike should treat this book as their indispensable guide to creating disruptive businesses with integrity and soul.”

—**David Jones, Founder and CEO, The Brandtech World**

“As the world rightly moves to stakeholder capitalism, how companies lead, market, and transform their culture will require a reexamining of purpose. *Good is The New Cool* should be their handbook.”

—**Eve Rodsky, Author *FairPlay***

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**FOR OUR RESPECTIVE SONS, MILES  
& NURI**

# Introduction

As we look back at this book from the vantage point of 2025, two things become clear:

We could not have predicted the speed and scale with which Brand Purpose (the catch-all term for “marketing with meaning”) would become the norm for most major brands.

How the principles we espoused in the book (“Think Citizens, Not Consumers,” “Solve Problems from the Everyday to the Epic”) would continue to be timeless in their application, and still relevant to today.

A brief timeline: We started writing this book in 2011, which came out in October 2016. Shortly thereafter, Donald Trump was elected president, and in many ways, his rise to power was the catalyst for brands to take a stand—some with better success than others.

We've seen the good, the bad, and the ugly since then.

We saw Nike celebrate the 20th anniversary of their iconic Just Do It by highlighting athlete and activist Colin Kaepernick with the electrifying tagline “Believe in Yourself. Even if it means sacrificing everything.”

We saw Pepsi incur the wrath and ridicule of the Internet with their ill-advised Kendall Jenner campaign, which took the charged imagery of civic protest and rendered it a backdrop for a feel-good soda moment.

And yes, we've seen the fallout from the Bud Light campaign when a well-organized right-wing boycott against the brand for simply partnering with a transgender activist resulted in a massive loss of sales for the brand.

We've come full circle: from brand Purpose being practiced by a handful of brands to becoming a mainstream idea with thousands of brands going on their Purpose journey—to suffering the backlash against it.

All in the space of under seven years.

There are now a myriad of awards dedicated to brand Purpose, from the Cannes Glass Lions to the D&D Impact Awards to the Fast Company Brands That Matter Awards.

This book is also responsible for our evolution into leaders in that space. Speaking about the book put us inside some of the world's biggest companies—Coca-Cola, Pepsi Co, Mondelez, Adidas—who then asked us for help navigating this new world we had foreseen.

It led to us setting up Conspiracy of Love, our Purpose consultancy, and working with over 50 brands and companies. Here's a partial list of who we worked with:

Adidas, Akamai, Alicorp, American Family Insurance, Athleta, Banana Republic, Bare, belVita, Benevity, Bimbo Bakeries USA,

Bolivar, BUILD, Chips Ahoy!, Cotton On Foundation, Crate and Barrel, Crown Royal, Diageo, GAP, GSK,

Haleon, Halls, Hewlett Packard, Hotaling & Co, LG, Molson Coors, Mucinex, Natean, Nespresso, Negrita, Nexium, Nike, Off The Eaten Path, Old Navy, Oreo, PepsiCo, Project Management Institute, Ritz, Robitussin, Sara Lee, Sephora, Skittles, Sour Patch Kids, Stacy's, Starry, Sun Life, Swedish Fish, The A2 Milk Company, The Coca-Cola Company, The Laundress, Inc., Trident, and Unilever Australia.

We're proud to have helped brands such as Ritz, Sara Lee, Sour Patch Kids, Triscuit, and many others invest millions of dollars in causes such as childhood hunger, educational scholarships, and arts and culture programs, partnering them with distinguished nonprofits such as the Thurgood Marshall College Fund, Feeding America, US Hunger, and the Boys and Girls Clubs.

Purpose has also moved beyond North America—we've worked on everything from A2 Milk in Australia to Inca Kola in Peru. It's now a global

movement, with brands contacting us daily to explore how to help them grow with impact.

Along the way, we became a B Corp ourselves and were proud to be recognized with a Best for the World award. We're so proud of the Conspiracy of Love team, who continue to pioneer the path forward for our clients.

Good Is the New Cool has gone from this book to become a global movement: We created the GoodCon “Festivals of Good” experiences and brought together communities of leaders from brands, nonprofits, and culture creators in Los Angeles, Sydney, Melbourne, London, and New York (in association with the United Nations).

We're developing TV shows with incredible partners such as Time Studios to help showcase “Solutionaries”—entrepreneurs tackling some of the biggest problems on the planet, from food to transport to fashion, with new companies using cutting-edge science.

We're also about to launch Good Is the New Cool as a media platform, inspiring people to live climate-positive and ethical lives. Watch this space!

In some ways, the backlash against brand Purpose (whether from advertising traditionalists or from the “anti-woke” brigade) confirms how powerful it became—and how misunderstood it was.

Brand purpose was always about walking the walk, not just talking the talk (as our principle “Back Up the Promise with the Proof” suggested). It wasn't about emotionally manipulative advertising that tugged at the heartstrings—it was about helping brands find their deep areas of impact that were in line with what their customers wanted.

What's even more fulfilling is how brand Purpose has spread beyond marketing. Companies realized that communications were just the tip of the iceberg and that they had to go on a journey to evaluate every aspect of their model, from ensuring that their sourcing and supply chains were sustainable and ethical to ensuring that the diversity within their companies and teams reflected their communities.

Today, a consumer can find information on a brand or company with a few keystrokes, instantly evaluating its bona fides. We live in an age of radical transparency, with brands unable to hide anymore.

Even more validation comes in the form of the thousands of new “purpose disruptor” brands that have emerged to disrupt multiple categories with sustainability and inclusivity at their core. From Who Gives A Crap in toilet paper to Pangaia in fashion, customers now have an incredible breadth of choices when it comes to living a conscious lifestyle.

Today, it is possible for someone to go from the moment they wake up to the moment they sleep and only use products and services that are both “Good and Cool.” Read “A Day in the Life of a Conscious Consumer” in the next chapter to get an idea of what we're talking about.

If you think millennials and Gen Z are passionate about supporting brands that positively impact the world, Gen Alpha (the demographic born from 2010 onward) feels the same way. According to data from GWI, 66% of them want to buy from companies with a purpose. As the most diverse generation in history, representation matters—and as the generation that will bear the brunt of climate change, they want to see swift and massive action from the companies they support.

We hope you enjoy this “remix” of our original book. We've tried to remain true to the timeless ideas we championed while updating our data, some case studies, and references to reflect the reality we live in today.

We'll leave you with one final thought: we believe meaningful marketing is more urgently needed than ever.

For instance, the rise of artificial intelligence has thrown up new ethical dilemmas that brands must navigate. Without a strong brand purpose at their core, with clear values and ideas on how to positively impact the world, it would be all too easy for brands to give in to the worst ideas with enormously damaging consequences.

If the world is to find a way to eliminate capitalism's worst excesses and evolve into a decarbonized, regenerative, inclusive model that balances the needs of people, planet, and profit, then we need marketers to lead the way.



We need marketers to “make markets” by developing innovative new products and services that help people live sustainable and ethical lives—and we need them to use the incredible power of storytelling and experiences to inspire them to go on a journey to make changes in their lives.

If we do so, we believe that we can create a world where people's consumption choices can not only help us stave off the worst effects of climate change but also raise the standard of living of billions of people around the world.

Far from brand purpose being over, we are just getting started.

So stand your ground. Don't be distracted by the rhetoric.

Your values drive your value, both as an individual and as a brand.

We can't wait to see what you do next!

Afdhel and Bobby

PS: And we'd love to hear about your work and how this book has inspired you. Please email as at [purpose@conspiracyoflove.co](mailto:purpose@conspiracyoflove.co).

# Why We Wrote Good Is the New Cool

It's a Saturday afternoon in Soho, New York. The streets are packed with shoppers and tourists, all busy exploring the luxury designer stores that are clustered in the area: Paul Smith, Prada, Balenciaga. Yet outside one store is a scene that looks more like a nightclub than a retail outlet, with a velvet rope and security guards. People are lined up outside, patiently waiting their turn, until the crush inside the store reduces enough to let them in. This isn't some high-end luxury boutique; this is a store that sells \$95 eyeglasses and for every pair bought, distributes a pair to someone in need. This is Warby Parker.

Inside the store, the lucky ones who have gotten in are eagerly trying on pairs of retro-themed eyewear with names drawn from literature (Beckett, Huxley, Chandler) and Americana (Roosevelt, Marshall, Langston). The look of the store is inspired by the New York Public Library—all rolling ladders and floor-to-ceiling shelves with beautifully presented merchandise and vintage books, all of which helps to convey the inclusive yet aspirational allure of the brand.

Supercool design has been a huge factor in the success of the brand. After all, people want to look good first; regardless of any social good intent, the products themselves have to be appealing. The frames instantly give wearers the kind of bookish, hipster image one sees in the pages of GQ and Vogue (both of which have covered the brand with the kind of breathless fandom that used to be reserved for Gucci and Tom Ford).

But an equally crucial part of what drives the success of Warby Parker is that for every pair of eyeglasses bought, the equivalent cost is donated to VisionSpring, a nonprofit whose goal is to provide eye care to those in need, both by training people in developing countries to give basic eye exams and by selling affordable glasses. Instead of a straight donation model, this creates a more sustainable approach, helping build the long-term infrastructure for eye care. To date, more than 15 million pairs of glasses have been distributed across the world. This aspect of Warby Parker is a large part of why wearing the glasses makes devotees of the brand feel so

good, and it makes them want to tell others to purchase the brand. In doing so, Warby Parker has managed to create the Holy Grail for brands: a word-of-mouth magnet. A full 50% of customers coming to the website do so on the recommendation of a friend.

Warby Parker has managed to come up with something remarkable: a brand that disrupts the status quo economically (selling designer frames for \$95), logistically (selling them online), stylistically (taking retro cool to the world), and socially (their impact in the developing world). In doing so, they have also created a business that in 2024 is now valued at a staggering \$1.65 billion. How did they do that?

Warby Parker is the perfect example of a brand that has figured out the model for success we unveil in this book: how to “Make Money and Do Good by Harnessing the Power of Cool.” They understand that today's customers want it all, and they have created a purpose-driven business all of us can learn from.

But they are far from alone in today's world. Brands such as TOMS, Tesla, Etsy, Kickstarter, Patagonia, Ben & Jerry's, and many others are also figuring out how to use this combination of “commerce, culture, and conscience” (as we call it) to create brands with passionately loyal followings. Not to mention the thousands of B Corps (or benefit corporations) out there that have embarked on a mission to upgrade business to go beyond the tired, short-term thinking of only driving shareholder value to the much more profound approach of also driving societal value.

We believe we are witnessing a seismic shift in popular culture—one where doing good has become its own form of cool, creating a unique opportunity for brands, nonprofits, and artists to learn from each other and work together. We believe this is being driven by three key factors: the new expectations of millennials and Generation Z, the crisis of meaningfulness in marketing and advertising, and the disruptive opportunities afforded by technology. In the upcoming chapters, we're going to dive deeper into all of these factors and unearth what they mean for us.

Our mission in this book is to track this profound change in the zeitgeist, and also to show you how marketing has a crucial role to play in this brave new world. Marketing is consistently ranked as one of the least valuable

professions in society, but we believe this new approach could both elevate it and show how marketing can help save the world. We propose something radical: replacing the broken 20th-century approach to marketing that is fixated on advertising with an altogether new one, where “great marketing optimizes life.”

Seeing this shift in business and culture, we were inspired to learn more about the pioneers that are leading this new movement, and we're going to share our journey with you. We're going to meet men and women from all backgrounds, at all stages of their careers—from the managers of some of the biggest music superstars in the world to the inspiring marketers leading brands from Oreo, Chobani, and TOMS to Citibank, Zappos, and the Honest Company, and some of the hardworking young hustlers and entrepreneurs who are just starting to make a dent in the worlds of business and nonprofits.

We're going to share what we've learned from their journeys in seven principles that can be used by anyone in any organization anywhere. There are lessons on how to “find your purpose” and “find your allies”; how to incorporate principles such as “treat people as citizens, not consumers” and “don't advertise, solve problems” as you design and plan; and how to execute ideas of impact by using insights such as “lead with the cool,” “people are the new media,” and “back up the promise with the proof.” All which add up to our central idea: “great marketing optimizes life.”