

URL: <https://ecorner.stanford.edu/clips/mission-brand-and-product-alignment/>

Shiza Shahid, co-founder and co-CEO of Our Place, uses her company's experience to illustrate why entrepreneurs should see mission, brand, and product design as deeply interconnected. She advises them to establish a meaningful mission and make sure the product is closely tied to it.



Transcript

- I think that's true, that what set us apart 00:00:05,130 has been our mission and our product design, and what's interesting is they're actually deeply interconnected, and you can look at it and say, "Okay, our brand is around culture, it's around inclusion, it's around celebrating all of our culture, it's loudly and proudly, from (speaks foreign language) to noche buena to Lunar New Year to Ramadan, let's, you know, celebrate all of our identities and bring them to the table and have conversations.. And then you have a beautiful pan and a beautiful pot and a beautiful plate and great use of color, and what in the world do those two things have to do with each other? But the fact of it is, if our mission is to get more people cooking and sharing meals around the dinner table and having conversations and building connections to each other, to their community, to their food systems, to their bodies, to their identities, then we have to make cooking more fun, more inspiring, more joyful, and the way you do that is through better product design.. Whether it's functional product design, making products that are multifunctional, whether it's through aesthetic innovation, again, this is an area where everyone was hiding their pots and pans, and, you know, air fryers in the back of their cabinets, and we said, "You've gotta hold stove top, leave them out.. Leave it out because the next time you're about to go and order another soggy box of takeout, you'll see that beautiful Always Pan or Perfect Pot and say, "You know what, it's right here.. I'll whip something up real quick." And then we also went pretty deep into sustainability and the use of Teflon and forever chemicals in the industry, and the impact of that, 'cause if we wanna create a world where everyone's having more meals together, we wanna foster healthy communities that aren't filled with Teflon pans in their landfills.. So it all is deeply interconnected.. I think it's both essential.. I think if you just have great product design, guess what? People are gonna knock you off, and then what? And by the way, that's happened to us.. Everyone from Drew Barrymore to Aldi to, you know, you name it, they've made the Awesome Pan, the all-in-one pan, everything, like they've done it, right? But they can keep knocking off our product design.. They don't have, A, they can't make the same quality, B, they can't have the brand that we have..

And then if you just have a brand that's amazing and, you know, great, that's so hard to do, to make people feel something, but if your products don't live up to it, then it's gonna fall apart, right? It's gonna be like, "Well, I love the brand, I love that it's female-founded and sustainable, but like, I need something I can light on fire, and that I can pass down, and I don't have to replace all the time." So, I think those two are so deeply interconnected.. My advice is have a mission that really means something 'cause building something is really hard, attracting and retaining talent is really hard, and doing this work is really

hard, so you need to be motivated by something other than, you know, fame, success, money.. And then make sure that your product is very closely tied to that and that you're investing in product.. Especially in Silicon Valley, when people start product companies, they underestimate how hard it is to make things.. They think it's about, you know, hacking the Facebook algorithm and growth marketing and growth hacking and SEO and SEM and all that stuff.. Everybody knows how to do all that stuff.. You have to make sure you're building something that's fundamentally better...