



The *Tipping Power* of Patient-Inspired Authentic Alignment



Karl D. Speak
President
Brand Tool Box, Ltd.

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For more than a decade patient-centered care has become the universal brand promise of the healthcare industry. Many healthcare providers have completed the hard work of changing internal structures, processes and upgrading the “customer service” qualities of the healthcare experience. The bar for patient-centered care has been raised, but not enough. A culture steeped in a patient-centered care ethos has proven to deliver considerable benefits to patients and employees. So how can all the hard work completed so far be leveraged to unleash the true potential of patient-centered care?

The first step is acknowledging that within almost every organization there are individuals and teams delivering the true promises of patient-centered care. These special people know how to use their passion, moxie and talent to get the best from the institution for the benefit of the patient – sometimes this is being done despite the institution. These folks are good at aligning what’s possible from the organization with the needs and wants of the patient.

The opportunity and proven process exists to transfer a passion-fueled, patient-centered esprit de corps to a large, pivotal group of caregivers who may have become discouraged by the stiff bureaucratic-like nature of a healthcare institution.

This article will describe an innovative customer-centric cultural change process that can ignite and align the spirit of caregivers who are likely sitting on the

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sidelines of the patient-centered care cultural movement. Research shows this segment of employees who are agnostic to the patient-centered ethos represent the largest number of employees within a healthcare organization. The proven process described in this article, used in many other industries for over 10 years, taps into the power of authentic alignment, empowering employees to direct the best of the organization for the betterment of a customer (patient).

At the core of this practical change model is a values-alignment process, leveraging the authenticity of employees (their personal brand) and the authentic qualities and commitments of an organization (its organizational brand). A well conceived definition of an organization's brand aligns its authentic qualities with the most important needs of its targeted customers.

The paradigm of aligning the authentic qualities of employees with the authentic, outstanding qualities of a healthcare organization ensures that the best efforts of employees consistently deliver on what's most important to patients – maximizing the caring potential of a healthcare organization for the betterment of the patient. Given the pivotal role of individual caregivers in delivering on the promise of patient-centered care this internal brand alignment process has the focus and power to unleash the caring passion of healthcare employees.

To maximize the benefits from this process an organization must place equal emphasis on nurturing its alignment with employees as it does the alignment with customers/patients.



This powerful alignment process is symmetrical by nature. To maximize the benefits from this process an organization must place equal emphasis on nurturing its alignment with employees as it does the alignment with customers/patients.

The strength of the alignment between employees and an organization creates leverage in delivering the most value to customers/patients. In the truest sense the Power of Brand Alignment

is a symmetrical person-centered, employee and customer, alignment model. The strength and nature of the organization's relationship with its employees energizes the alignment with patients. Likewise a strong, focused relationship with patients energizes employees. This symbiotic relationship powers the patient-inspired alignment process.

The people-centered alignment process can transform the culture of a healthcare organization by unleashing the energy of its "Caring Leaders;" igniting the caring potential of its "Caring Passives" and exposing the "Caring Detractors." The result will be a transformed culture that is ready, willing and energized to deliver the true promise of patient-centered care.

Understanding a Healthcare Organization's Patient-Centered Care Potential

Every healthcare organization delivers on the promise of patient-centered care, to one degree or another. Employees or teams consistently delivering the highest levels of care are motivated in part by a strong sense of personal alignment with their employer. In essence these high-performing caregivers believe there is a strong connection between their values and the values of their employer. Moreover these high-achieving caregivers believe the organization meets their personal standards for delivering healthcare. The challenge is to expand the patient-centered ethos across a larger share of employees until the organization reaches a tipping point inspiring the majority of employees to deliver care that consistently meets patients' expectations.

What is the level of internal brand alignment in healthcare organizations? Internal brand alignment is not the same as employee engagement, that's only one dimension. Conventional employee engagement scores measure employees' overall job satisfaction. Towers Watson reported that about 44% of US hospital employees were highly engaged.

The other driver of internal brand alignment is the level of employees' understanding and belief there is something distinctive about their employer that supports and enhances their personal



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commitment to provide a high level of care for patients. In essence the employee believes that the employer has an authentic, distinctive brand in delivering healthcare. Gallup reports that the healthcare industry ranks near the bottom of all industries with only 33% of employees agreeing to the statement “I know what my company [employer] stands for and what makes our brand different from our competitors.”

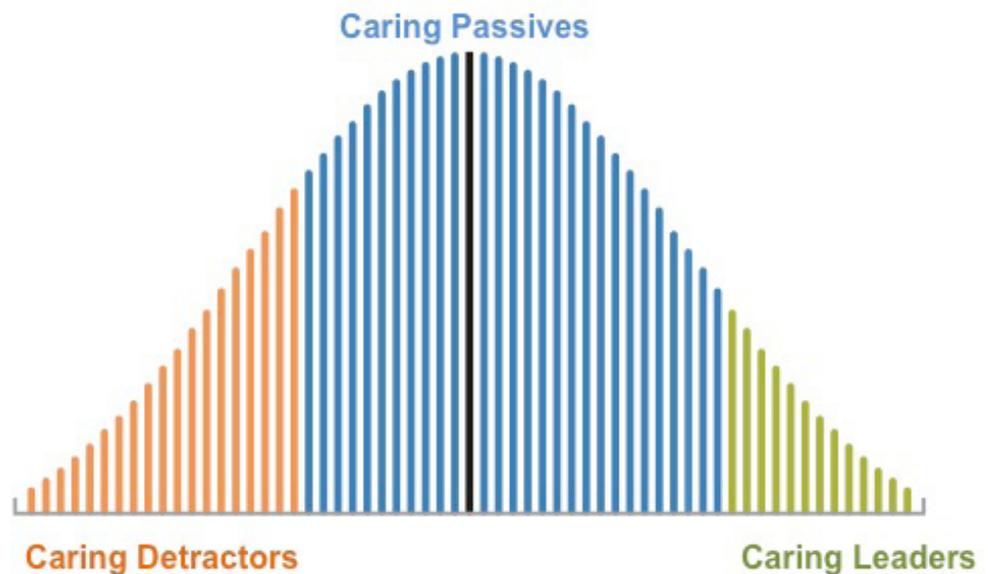
The level of internal brand alignment is measured as a composite of employee engagement factors and employees’ awareness and belief in an organization’s most important authentic qualities. Employees’ responses to a battery of these composite factors determines the level of internal brand alignment. Using this methodology, our research results suggest that the healthcare industry has a disproportionately higher level of “misaligned” employees than other industries. The level of those “highly aligned” employees is similar to other industries. The overall distribution of internal brand alignment in the healthcare industry is depicted below.

Healthcare Industry
Internal Brand Alignment

30%
Caring Detractors
Little Alignment with Organization

50%
Caring Passives
Willing and Waiting Caregivers

20%
Caring Leaders
High-Performing Caregivers



We have labeled the three different levels of internal brand alignment in the healthcare industry. The right end of the curve represents the high-performing caring individuals and teams that deliver on the promise of patient-centered care and often times despite impediments that may exist within the organization. We call this group of high-performer caregivers the “Caring Leaders.” Colloquially speaking these caregivers go the extra mile at the

right time, for their own reasons. The larger the portion of Caring Leaders, the faster a healthcare organization can produce the tipping point in expanding its patient-centered care potential.

We have labeled the largest segment of employees as “Caring Passives.” The data suggests that these employees have not given up on committing to delivering on an organization’s patient-centered care focus, at the same time they are not aligned with the initiative. This segment of employees offers the most potential for leveraging the power of internal brand alignment to boost the level of patient-centered care. This potential is not based solely on the size of the group, but also because of their “willing and waiting” disposition. These employees have not “signed-out” and just need encouragement and the tools to develop closer alignment and confidence in their employer.

Implementing a change process that encourages and inspires caring passives to move into the “Caring Leaders” camp is the pivotal strategy to create the tipping point for delivering more broadly on the potential of patient-centered care.

We have coined the term “Caring Detractors” for employees who display relatively little alignment with the organization’s brand. The best strategy to address this group is to expose them and use the growing presence of internal brand alignment, i.e., patient-centered care ethos, to encourage them to leave. (Applying a healthy dose of patient-centered inspired-performance management can also be a helpful strategy to address this segment of employees.)

Patient-Inspired Alignment – Creating a Tipping Point in Patient-Centered Care

Patient-Inspired Alignment is a process that uses the proven power of authentic alignment to encourage more employees to engage as Caring Leaders. The Patient-Inspired Alignment process was developed by customizing the time-tested Power of Brand Alignment customer-centric cultural change model.

The strength of the Patient-Inspired Alignment process comes from a foundation built on three pillars. By far the strongest ele-



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ment to this process is its requirement of authenticity, from the individual and the organization. The power of authenticity is unleashed through alignment. Those individuals that discover a way to align their authentic qualities with the interests of their employer are consistently successful and high achievers. Our experience is that for this process to yield tangible benefits employees must believe they are authentically aligned with the organization they work for. They must also believe the organization is authentic and aligned with its customers.

Tools for employees and the organization to define their authentic qualities set in a context of making a difference for a patient is the lynchpin of this powerful process.



Defining Individual Authenticity

The first phase of the Patient-Inspired Alignment process provides tools for individuals and the organization to define their authentic qualities. We have found that using a practical, universal framework of brand is a powerful tool to help individuals and organizations define authenticity. A proven model of personal brand, based upon the best-selling book *Be Your Own Brand*, is used as the learning model for individuals. A congruent, universal model defining the organization's brand platform is the other framework to define authenticity. Both models have been successfully used by thousands of employees and scores of organizations over the past 10 years.

Individuals define their personal brand using a three-part self-paced learning process to determine their values and their five most authentic qualities and how the qualities are used to make a difference for others. Individuals rank the exercise of defining their personal brand as one of the most prized parts of the entire process according to our analysis of the participants' evaluations. In addition the external perceptions assessment individuals receive from colleagues, friends, family and customers adds excitement and additional value to the process of discovering their authentic qualities, an experience unfamiliar to most people.

Defining the Organization's Authentic Qualities

The next step in the process is defining an organization's authentic qualities. We work with an organization's leadership team to define their organizational brand platform. The culture of a health-care provider determines its brand. Its brand is the sum of all of the interactions a patient has with caregivers and other employees. For some organizations "brand" is a powerful term to use, while others like to use the phrase "The (organization's name) Way." A health care provider's culture or distinctive way of providing care is a synonym for its brand, e.g., "the Mayo Clinic way." The patient-inspired alignment process is agnostic to using either term.

In a nutshell, the process of defining an organizational brand platform begins with understanding an organization's basic leadership platform (mission/vision/values) and extending it into a practical, framework that defines how the authentic, distinctive qualities of the organization are displayed in the way it serves patients. The brand platform framework articulates the outstanding qualities of the healthcare organization in the context of how they impact patients.

Working with leadership teams of healthcare organizations to develop a brand platform that is authentic, distinctive, relevant and consistent has proven to be more challenging than expected. We have experienced that a breakthrough point in the process occurs when the leadership team can identify and agree on the authentic ethos that guides its culture. Extending the ethos into a set of practical precise statements that define the organization's brand or "The Way" tends to be a straightforward productive process.

Alignment Discovery and Alignment Intention

The process of creating alignment begins when teams of employees attend an action-learning-based workshop. The workshop is built on a three-module learning design.

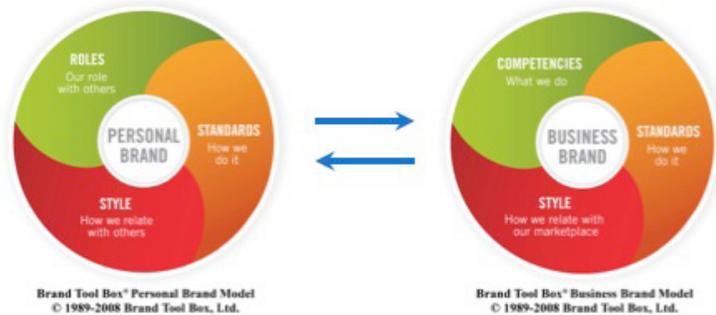
The first module provides employees with a set of skills to define



their authentic qualities, i.e., their personal brand. During the first part of this process an employee will define their most important authentic qualities using a self-paced learning tool. The primary objective of this part of the process is to provide an employee with a new set of relationship-building skills by leveraging his/her authentic qualities. As an example, employees learn the power of perceptions in building trusting relationships. In addition each employee will understand the importance of consistency in building trust. Finally employees receive their personal brand assessment reports to discover how well their authentic qualities are perceived by others. At the end of this learning experience employees will have developed a set of skills to focus their authentic qualities to make a difference in their relationships with others

The process of using congruent learning models of personal and organizational brand provide a powerful, self-evident illustration of the level of alignment that exists between an employee and his/her employer.

Brand Tool Box® Power of Brand AlignmentSM



The second learning module provides employees with a clear understanding of the importance of authentic alignment in the healthcare organization's ability to deliver on the possibilities of patient-centered care. In particular employees will understand the power of symmetrical alignment in fostering satisfaction of patients and employees.

The third learning module is where employees literally discover their level of alignment with the healthcare organization. The model starts out by introducing the organization's authentic beliefs about patient-centered care (the organization's brand platform). The process of alignment discovery begins next. Caring Leaders' beliefs will be reinforced as they clearly see their strong level of authentic alignment with the organization. Caring Passives will be reassured that they have a certain level of alignment with the organization, providing them the confidence to be more assertive in

finding ways to focus the authentic qualities of the organization or get around its shortcomings to better serve patients. The Caring Detractors will confirm their lack of alignment with the organization. This understanding will reinforce the stress and negative feelings they have working each day. A series of action-learning activities follows the alignment-discovery activities that can be used or modified to drive a deeper level of patient-centered care.

Alignment Reinforcement

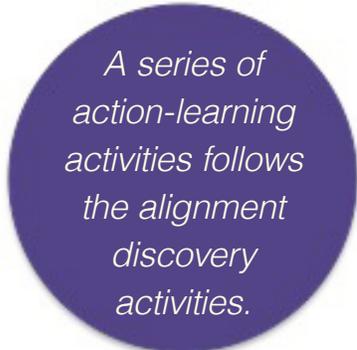
Following the implementation of the alignment discovery process a series of organizational development reinforcement activities must be implemented for a period of at least 12 months to ensure employees that the Patient-Inspired Alignment process is backed by an enduring commitment of the organization. Based upon experience a reinforcement plan may include implementing a mix of:

- Personal coaching tools to help employees better understand possibilities for stronger alignment; team or departmental action-learning programs focusing on changes to structure and processes that may be creating barriers to delivering on the promise of patient-inspired care;
- Large group motivational-type events to boost the spirit of the power of alignment highlighting success stories;
- Conducting internal research to measure employees' perceptions of the progress of the program and assessing their levels of alignment;
- Focusing the content of all internal communications to reinforce the progress of the patient-inspired care initiative

The mix and success of reinforcement programs differ by culture.

A Powerful Boost to Building a Patient-Centered Caring Culture

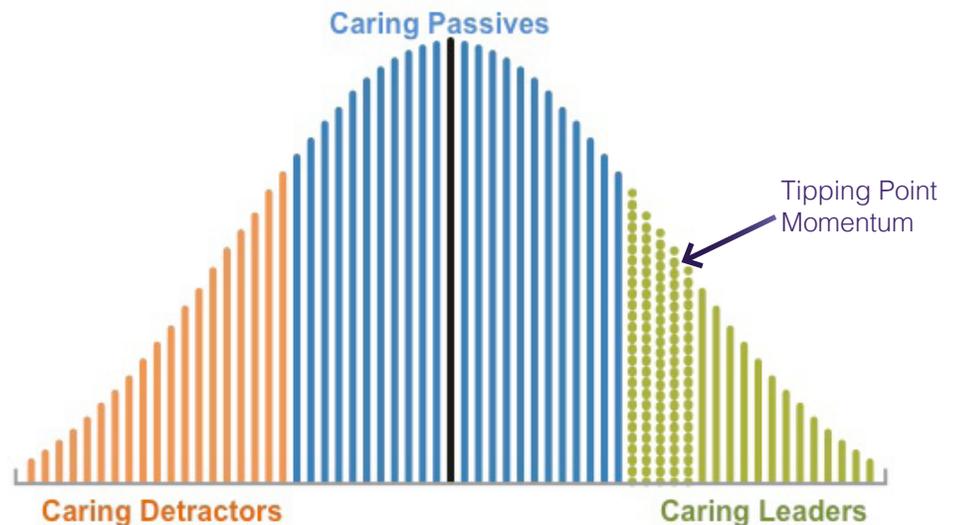
The Patient-Inspired Alignment process is not a magic elixir, but certainly it is a strong booster shot for jump-starting a culture committed to delivering on the promise of patient-centered care.



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Based upon our experience it is reasonable to expect that 10%-20% of Caring Passives will begin to act on their newly discovered authentic alignment.

Shifting a portion of Caring Passives to acting like Caring Leaders begins the Tipping Point process to expanding the patient-centered caring potential of a healthcare provider.



Implementing a dedicated reinforcement program instituted at the team/department level will determine if the Caring Passives remain in the Caring Leaders' camp. An organization's leadership will have to determine how to address the Caring Detractors. Caring Leaders and Caring Passives will be watching for cues of leadership's commitment to its patient-centered-care belief system.

A Few Lessons Learned

Authenticity defined can be energizing. Authenticity has become a highly valued commodity across all segments of employees, especially younger employees. For all of the emphasis on authenticity, our work has uncovered that the large share of employees lack a significant articulation of their authentic qualities. We have strong evidence that proves that given a practical tool individuals can be very articulate about their authentic qualities. The process of clearly articulating one's authentic qualities breeds an excitement and appetite to apply it at work and home.

Test the authenticity of the authenticity. Conducting a personal brand assessment is an important part of the authentic alignment process. A personal brand assessment is a tool that provides in-

dividuals with immediate feedback on their proclaimed authentic qualities giving them powerful, empowering information.

Define the organization's authentic qualities, authentically.

Defining an organization's authentic brand can be a challenge for a leadership team. A good way to begin the process of defining an organization's authentic brand is to substitute the phrase "the organization's way" for the word "brand" in discussions. The next step is to come to agreement on the singular word or concept that describes the organization's cultural ethos. Avoid defining and constraining an organization's authentic brand in a marketing context. Define it in practical terms such that every employee will be able to know how to apply it in his or her daily activities.

Internal brand leadership is the lynchpin. It's almost trite to state that leadership is important in driving cultural norms. This is no different in creating a culture based on authentic alignment. It is very important that the leadership team experience the authentic discovery and alignment process as a first part of the process. Strong authentic alignment is a must for every person on the leadership team. It has been a common experience that the authentic alignment process has caused some consternation getting all members of the team aligned and on board.

"Get in line or else" is not an alignment strategy. It is the responsibility of an organization's leadership team to establish alignment as a priority, foster it, promote it and protect it. The only sustainable way to create a patient-inspired culture is to focus on an employee-inspired culture. Every employee should understand the importance of alignment and the personal benefits from it. Everyone should be given the tools to discover their authentic alignment. Alignment with the organization's authentic qualities needs to be a fundamental part of the leadership process. Employee's clear and repeated demonstration of their alignment should be recognized and encouraged. A culture based upon authentic alignment must be protected from individuals who chose not to participate and support this important ethos.



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Karl D. Speak is a global expert known for his pragmatic and unconventional approach to using brand as a leadership platform for gaining customer loyalty and employee engagement. Karl's innovative work on corporate brand strategy, personal brand and internal brand building has been implemented in companies in 23 countries. His best selling book, *Be Your Own Brand*, is translated into 12 languages and has sold over 80,000 copies. A revised and expanded version of *Be Your Own Brand* was recently released to leverage the global success of the first edition and the growing popularity of personal brand.

Brand Tool Box, Ltd., the company he founded 30 years ago, is the global leader in developing and implementing internal brand-building programs. It is a unique professional services organization melding world-class brand expertise and organizational development best practices to help organizations build and nourish customer-centric culture alignment. Brand Tool Box's consulting processes, training programs and organizational development tools have been successfully implemented in companies across virtually all industry segments, non-profits and governments.

Brand Tool Box has successfully packaged its intellectual property into a portfolio of training workshops, coaching and consulting templates. The products have been used in a range of business and personal development applications, ranging from internal brand building, sales training, to leadership-development coaching.

Through Brand Tool Box, Karl has implemented his contemporary approach to brand management and internal brand building with a wide range of corporate clients. Clients such as 3M, LeadingAge, American Express, AT&T, BASF, BMW, Cabela's, Cargill, Consumers Energy, EDMC, FedEx, Honeywell, IBM, ING, Mosaic, Motorola, National Church Residences, Securian, Skandia, Sony Corporation, St. Jude Medical, Syngenta, Target Corporation, The Scotts Company, The Wall Street Journal, Toro, and Walgreens have benefited from Karl's consulting and internal brand-building programs.

Karl also serves as an "expert witness" in legal cases involving matters relating to brand. Karl holds a Masters Degree in Economics from the University of Minnesota. Karl has taught in the MBA programs at University of Minnesota, St. Thomas University, and has been guest lecturer at University of Westminster in London, Capella University, ESADE University in Madrid, among others. Karl's boardroom experience includes being a board member of Mesa Holdings, VocalEssence, MAP and serving as the chair of the board of The Design Management Institute.



Brand Tool Box, Ltd.

510 First Avenue North, Suite 605

Minneapolis, MN 55403 USA

www.brandtoolbox.com

info@brandtoolbox.com

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