of 'Living the Brand: Manifesting Internal Brand Alignment at WeTransfer'
by Sita de Kruijf

Appendix

Contents

A. Approved project brief

Practice what you preach: improving WeTransfer's internal branding   project title

Please state the title of your graduation project (above) and the start date and end date (below). Keep the title compact and simple. Do not use abbreviations. The remainder of this document allows you to define and clarify your graduation project.

start date   13 - 12 - 2021   02 - 06 - 2022   end date

INTRODUCTION **
Please describe, the context of your project, and address the main stakeholders (interests) within this context in a concise yet complete manner. Who are involved, what do they value and how do they currently operate within the given context? What are the main opportunities and limitations you are currently aware of (cultural- and social norms, resources (time, money,...), technology, ...).

In this project, I will work together with WeTransfer, a B-corp company that builds creative digital tools. The goal of this project is to enhance WeTransfer's brand authenticity as well as their employee experience (EX) by looking at the internal branding. WeTransfer has a strong team that takes care of the EX, as well as strong branding and storytelling efforts towards their customers. But how are the two connected? I believe that a truly meaningful brand should be built from the inside out. Employees are the core of the company, so play a key role in shaping and radiating the brand story.

Internal branding looks at internalization of brand values. Figure 1 shows how internal branding focuses on the intersection of the 'inside' (the Employee Experience and Employee Identity) and the 'outside' (the customer brand) of a company. Just like customers, or even more so, employees should understand the brand, identify with the brand and behave in ways that suit the brand (Saleem & Iglesias, 2016; Barros-Arrieta & Garcia-Cali, 2021). When done well, internal branding can build a truly authentic organization, resulting in higher well-being and job satisfaction amongst employees, but also in increased customer satisfaction and loyalty (Saleem & Iglesias, 2016; Steger et al., 2012). Although varying approaches can be found in literature, I plan to take an employee perspective. IKEA's brand internalization, described by Tarnovskaya & De Chernatony (2011), is a great example of how core values (cost-consciousness, honesty and simplicity) are at the start of every decision that employees make. But when IKEA enters new countries, they do not force employees from different cultures to act along the brand values. They take the employee perspective, and look for common ground to find a "healthy mix between cultural and corporate values". The challenge is not to make employees behave a certain desired way, but to find an inherent reason for them to do so. I will focus on the way employees experience the company to find out how they identify themselves in relation to the brand.

My graduation project will take place at the Technical University of Delft, as part of the Master's program Strategic Product Design (SPD). Strategy is inherently connected to the purpose of the organization; especially nowadays, customers do not commit to a brand solely because of its products, but especially because of its story. The topic of this project is relevant in the present time, as the newest employees on the work floor - Generation Z - are the first to value purpose over salary when choosing an employer (Aziz, 2020). Congruence between what a company says and does is essential in building a meaningful brand. Therefore, this research will benefit the TU Delft in the field of brand strategy, with insights on how to create a truly authentic brand, but also in the field of organizational design, with insights on how to align employee experience with brand values.

Aziz, A. (2020, March 7). The Power Of Purpose: The Business Case For Purpose (All The Data You Were Looking For Pt 2). Forbes.

Barros-Arrieta, D., García-Cali, E. (2021). Internal branding: conceptualization from a literature review and opportunities for future research. Journal of Brand Management 28, 133–151.

Saleem, F.Z. & Iglesias, O. (2016). Mapping the domain of the fragmented field of internal branding. Journal of Product & Brand Management, 25(1), 43-57.

Steger, M. F., Dik, B. J., & Duffy, R. D. (2012). Measuring Meaningful Work: The Work and Meaning Inventory (WAMI). Journal of Career Assessment, 20(3), 322–337.

Tarnovskaya, V. V., & de Chernatony, L. (2011). Internalising a brand across cultures: The case of IKEA. International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management, 39(8), 598-618.

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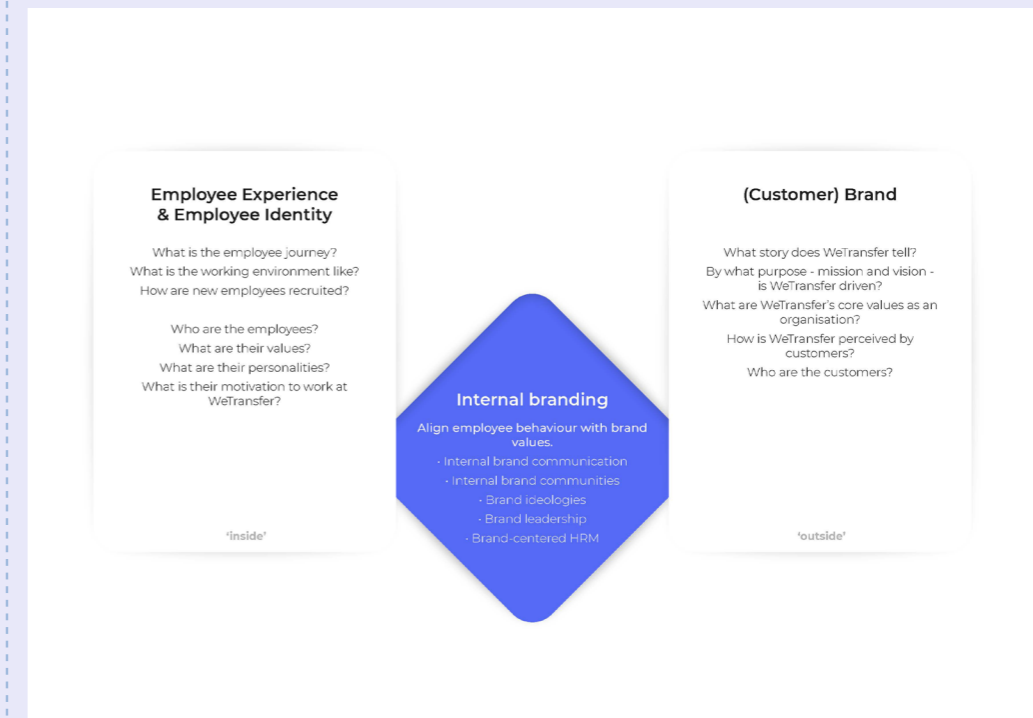
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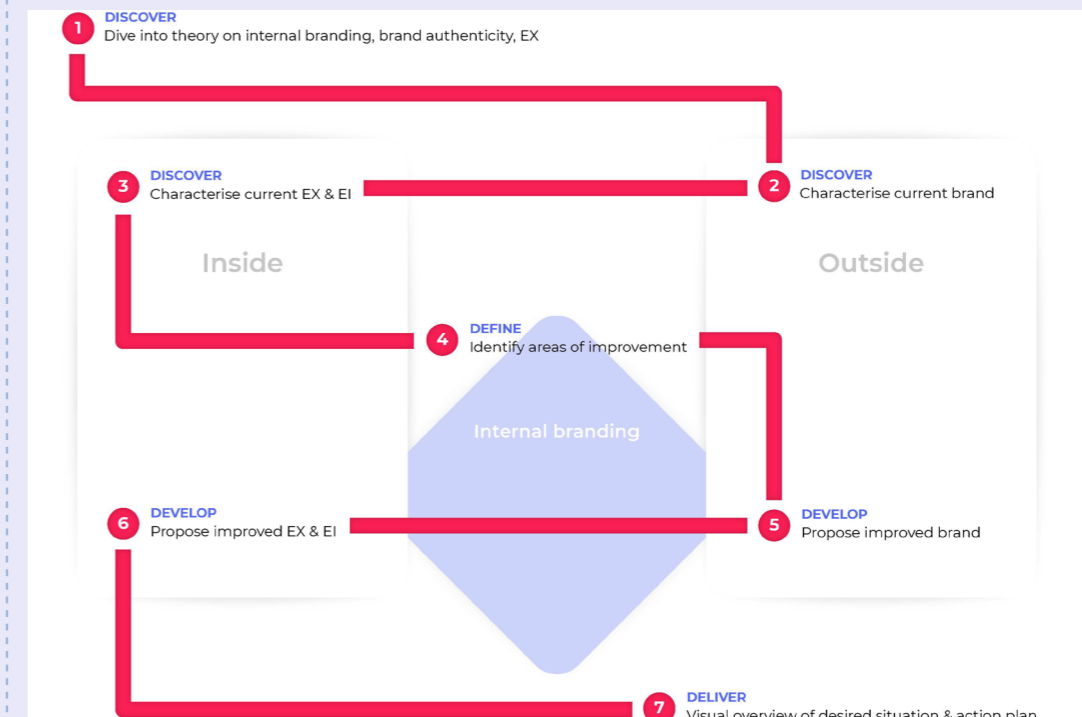

image / figure 1:   What is internal branding?

image / figure 2:   Key steps in the process

PROBLEM DEFINITION **
Limit and define the scope and solution space of your project to one that is manageable within one Master Graduation Project of 30 EC (= 20 full time weeks or 100 working days) and clearly indicate what issue(s) should be addressed in this project.

Not only does good branding attract good employees, the right employees - who share company values and can deliver the brand promise - will strengthen the brand and the customer experience (Beverland, 2018). Therefore, it is key to carefully match employees' 'personal' brand to the company brand. For WeTransfer, there is no explicit plan to do so, yet. I will explore how the Employee Experience (& Identity) and brand can be adapted to create a coherent whole. This includes analyzing the current situation, determining points of improvement and illustrating an 'ideal' picture of WeTransfers in- and outside, to provide a clear and attractive target to work towards. All in all, the work I will be doing can roughly be divided into two main questions:

1. How can WeTransfer optimally align the Employee Experience and Employee Identity with their brand, to develop into an authentic organization with happy and fulfilled employees?
- What is the current EX/EI like? What journey do employees experience, from the moment they are recruited until the moment they leave WeTransfer? What are their values, and what is their motivation to go to work every day?
- What is the current brand like? What story does WeTransfer tell its customers?
- What incongruences or points of improvement are there? Take these as an opportunity to align (through internal branding) the inside of the company with the brand story.

2. What does this desired combination of internal (including the EX and EI) and external brand look like?
- How can these identified improvements be implemented in the Employee Experience (& Employee Identity) and the brand?
- What concrete steps should WeTransfer take to make the envisioned changes?

Beverland, M. (2018). Brand Management, Co-Creating Meaningful Brands. Sage Publications Ltd.

ASSIGNMENT **
State in 2 or 3 sentences what you are going to research, design, create and / or generate, that will solve (part of) the issue(s) pointed out in "problem definition". Then illustrate this assignment by indicating what kind of solution you expect and / or aim to deliver, for instance: a product, a product-service combination, a strategy illustrated through product or product-service combination ideas, ... In case of a Specialisation and/or Annotation, make sure the assignment reflects this/these.

I will create a strategy for WeTransfer to optimally align the Employee Experience/Identity and the brand. This strategy consists of areas of improvement, that are translated into proposed changes to the EX/EI and/or the brand, and finally a visual overview of the desired situation (meaning the inside and outside of the company, as well as the relationship between the two), supported by an action plan.

The most important deliverables of the project are:
- An analysis of the current situation. Firstly, looking at how employees experience WeTransfer and how they identify themselves in relation to the company. Secondly, looking at the external brand; what story is told, what brand values are prominent and how the brand is perceived by customers.
- Areas of improvement (solution spaces). Here, I identify tensions that exist between the external brand and the internal internal experiences, thoughts and behaviors. This part will be supported by theory on internal branding.
- A visual overview of the desired EX/EI and brand. The areas of improvement will be implemented to form a vision on the desired inside and outside of the company. A one-page visual should capture this holistic and function as a clear and inspiring goal for WeTransfer to work towards.
- An action plan. The visual of the desired situation will be supported by an action plan, describing the concrete steps that WeTransfer should take to align their EX and EI to the brand identity, or vice versa. From the action plan, one or two parts will be elaborated on and will be tested with both the EX team and the employees.

As this project focuses on the interplay between what happens on the inside of the company and what is told on the outside, there will be a co-evolution of solutions. Depending on what the areas of improvements suggest, the desired EX/EI and the desired brand might both need to undergo changes, to in the end achieve a perfect fit between the two. In the course of the project, it will become clear which side needs most work and where the main focus will be.

PLANNING AND APPROACH **
Include a Gantt Chart (replace the example below - more examples can be found in Manual 2) that shows the different phases of your project, deliverables you have in mind, meetings, and how you plan to spend your time. Please note that all activities should fit within the given net time of 30 EC = 20 full time weeks or 100 working days, and your planning should include a kick-off meeting, mid-term meeting, green light meeting and graduation ceremony. Illustrate your Gantt Chart by, for instance, explaining your approach, and please indicate periods of part-time activities and/or periods of not spending time on your graduation project, if any, for instance because of holidays or parallel activities.

start date   13 - 12 - 2021   2 - 6 - 2022   end date
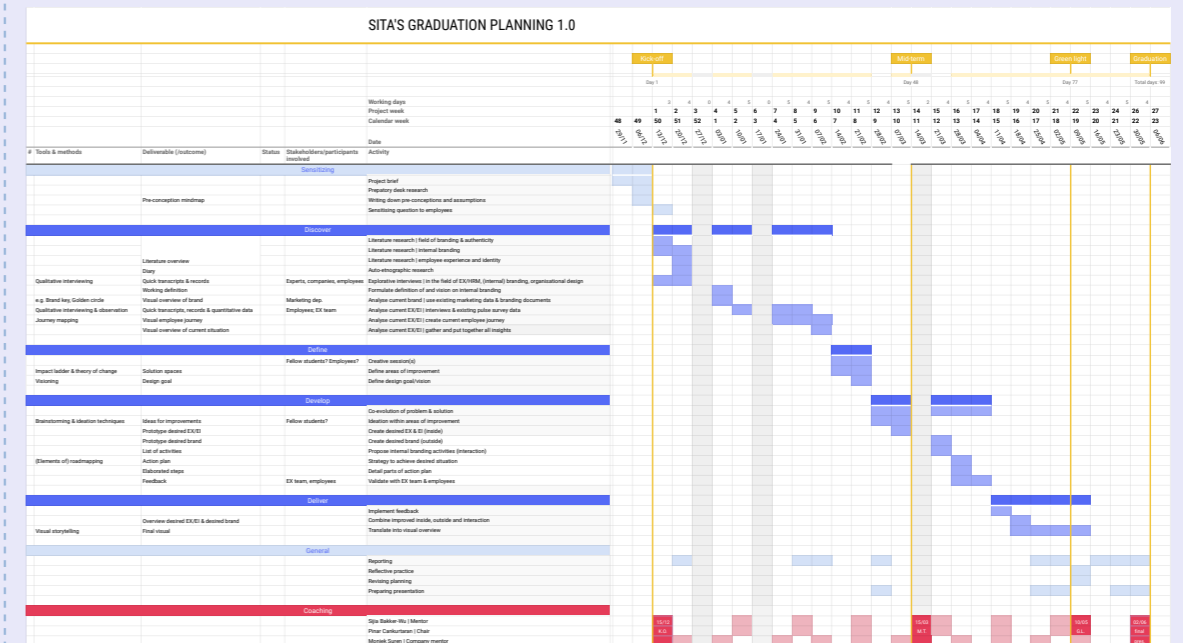
Approach:
Figure 2 describes the main steps I plan to take to deliver the desired results. As shown in this diagram, I will be moving back and forth between the 'inside' and 'outside' of the company, to in the end come up with a solution that brings the two together.
The main steps are as follows: 1. Dive into the subject through theory and practice; 2. Define current brand; 3. Define current EX/EI; 4. Identify areas of improvements (solution spaces); 5. Propose improved brand; 6. Propose improved EX/EI; 7. Visualize overview of desired inside, outside and interaction and make concrete with an action plan.
The Gantt Chart above elaborates on the exact activities that I want to execute, on which methods and which people are involved and on the timing of things. The planning is roughly divided into four parts, that represent the Double Diamond design process: discover, define, develop and deliver.

Practical:
I plan to work 4,5 days per week, the reason for which will be further explained in my personal ambitions. In practice, this means I plan one free day every other week. These days are flexible, but I want to be careful to really spend these days on something else than my graduation project. At the bottom of the Gantt Chart, coaching is planned out. I would like to speak to each of my mentors every other week. At the kick-off meeting, I will already plan fixed days and hours to avoid spending lots of time scheduling these meetings every week.

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Initials & Name S   de Kruijf   5413   Student number 4458974

Title of Project Practice what you preach: improving WeTransfer's internal branding

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Initials & Name S   de Kruijf   5413   Student number 4458974

Title of Project Practice what you preach: improving WeTransfer's internal branding

6   Approved project brief

Appendix   **Appendix**   **Approved project brief   7**

MOTIVATION AND PERSONAL AMBITIONS
Explain why you set up this project, what competences you want to prove and learn. For example: acquired competences from your MSc programme, the elective semester, extra-curricular activities (etc.) and point out the competences you have yet developed. Optionally, describe which personal learning ambitions you explicitly want to address in this project, on top of the learning objectives of the Graduation Project, such as: in depth knowledge a on specific subject, broadening your competences or experimenting with a specific tool and/or methodology, ... Stick to no more than five ambitions.

1. Come full-circle
During my masters, I have developed an interest for brand strategy. Along with that interest, the believe in me has grown that a brand is inseparably connected to the inside of a company: the corporate culture, the employee experience and the values that live amongst employees. My study program was set up around my interests; I did an internship on strategic branding and a large project on organizational design. But so far, I have never had the chance to combine the two. WeTransfer seems like a good party to work on this topic, because the company gathers lots of data on what their employees feel and think. Likewise, they have great knowledge on their customers, active in the creative industry (Ideas Report, 2021). This data can be a valuable starting point for this project, combined with newly obtained information. In my graduation project I aim to use data from both these worlds and connect the two concepts, to in the end help WeTransfer get happier employees and happier customers.
The thought behind my graduation project is to make my masters come full-circle and bring my vision to life. I want to discover if I potentially see myself working in this field in the future. Also, I hope to gain deep knowledge on Employee Experience and find out how it relates to brand strategy.

2. Work-life balance
The graduation project is essentially the transition between my studying and working life. For that reason, I intend to approach the project as I would in my future working life. In the first place, that means guarding my work-life balance. A common struggle for students, myself included, is to 'drown' in a topic and not be able to look at it holistically anymore. I believe that my experience will be the most fun and educational if I have enough headspace and make clear distinctions between working hours and leisure hours. This way of working could benefit my project because there is enough space for serendipity – giving my mind the time to process and come up with creative ideas. I tried to base my planning decisions on this ambition already, by scheduling one day off each two weeks.

3. Decisive action
If there is one thing I learned during my study years, it would be that I have difficulty taking quick decisions (individually). I have the tendency to first explore all possible options to be 100% sure of the choice I make. Obviously, there is no time for that within the graduation project, neither will there be in my future working life. My challenge is to make concise, yet substantiated decisions to be able to maintain a continuous flow in the process. This also includes really taking charge of the project.

WeTransfer. (2021). Ideas Report '21. https://wetransfer.com/ideas-report/2021/intro

FINAL COMMENTS
In case your project brief needs final comments, please add any information you think is relevant.

B. Brand description

🔭

Mission & Vision
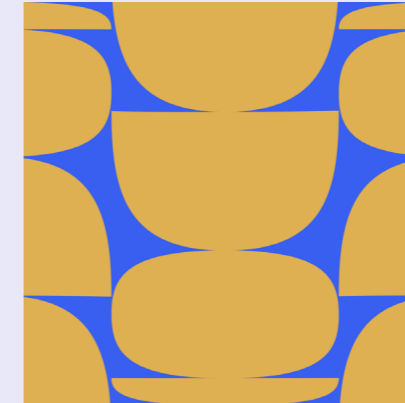
We're an ideas* business. We've built our business on supporting billions of ideas in the form of files, sketches, stories and wallpapers. You could say we're kind of the experts.

Our ambition is to be behind every great idea.
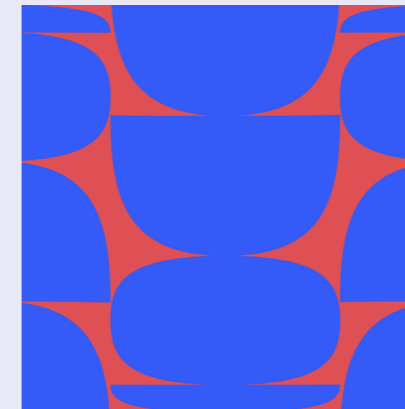
Too many ideas get stuck.

And new tech isn't helping. 76% of creatives say that a combination of work pressure, time management and online distractions are getting in the way of good ideas.

Creativity needs freedom and flexibility.

Our mission is to help you bring your ideas to life.

Which is why we create beautifully obvious tools to shape and share your ideas
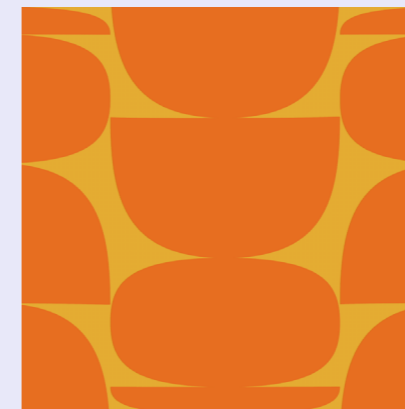
While other tools layer on the complexity, we focus on tools that are beautiful and obvious to keep you (and your creativity) from getting stuck.

Tools to move ideas.

We design tools for the creative process. We like to take things one step at a time, getting back to the basics with essential tools that work beautifully together or alone.

We believe that good ideas deserves good company. **We are a BCorp**

Our Values

We enable

💪 **We empower everyone to do their best work.**

This means – We ask people how we can help and listen to what they need. We make ourselves available for others wherever and whenever we can. We commit to an overall framework and leave the detailed decisions up to the experts working on the job.

This doesn't mean – We never look after ourselves or ask for help when we need it. We don't help people do stupid, dangerous or harmful things. We've got your back, but we are not always up in your business.

We all own it

🚀 **We are proactive and we all take responsibility for moving things forward.**

This means – We speak out if we see something that worries us and we are happy to take the initiative (and help others do the same). We collaborate and pick up loose ends outside the scope of our normal day-to-day. We are all accountable for making the work better, whether it means speaking out if something worries us, or championing an idea which we think is great.

This doesn't mean – That everyone gets a vote on every decision, that we stubbornly resist change for the sake of it or that we kick decisions down the line for someone else to take charge.

We're optimistic

💯 **We are enthusiastic about our work and believe in the people around us.**

This means – Our starting point is positive. We are openminded, excited by change and by challenges and able to think beyond the day-to-day. When faced with challenges we don't consider whether we can conquer them but rather how we can! We are realistic and we learn from our mistakes (publicly).

This doesn't mean – We shy away from honest and constructive feedback, or that we're blindly upbeat in all situations.

We're inclusive

💬 **We are proudly defined by diversity – of people, ideas and products.**

This means – We appreciate all the people who make WeTransfer successful and accommodate everyone's strengths. We celebrate cultural differences and believe that different perspectives drive innovation.

This doesn't mean – We blur the lines between right and wrong or shy away from the things we believe in. We assess based on differences but we use our diversity to form well-rounded decisions, products, and experiences.

C. Views on internal branding

Since internal branding has gained relevance, the term is defined by several writers in the academic field. Despite their differences, all definitions share a common component: Internal branding is about bringing employees and brand values closer together (Morhart, Herzog, & Tomczak, 2009; Punjaisri, Wilson, & Evanschitzky, 2009; Saleem & Iglesias, 2016).

However, subtle distinctions uncover opposing views on the concept. The following three definitions illustrate how scholars hold differing opinions on what exactly internal branding entails, especially in terms of the starting point of the internal branding process and the role of employees in this process:

"[Internal branding includes] the activities undertaken by an organisation to ensure that the brand promise reflecting the espoused brand values that set customers' expectations is enacted and delivered by employees" (Punjaisri et al., 2009)

Starting point: Punjaisri et al. (2009) take the brand promise, moreover, customers' expectations to receive that brand promise, as a starting point. The approach suggested here is based on an outside-in perspective.

Employees' role: It is notable that employees' role remains purely functional in this definition. There is no cognitive element preceding the behaviour that employees are expected to perform. Rather, customers are given a central role, having developed expectations of the brand.

"[Internal branding is] a process through which brands aim to facilitate the internalization of brand values by employees" (Morhart et al., 2009)

Starting point: This definition clearly appoints the brand values as a starting points. This implies that the brand values are previously constructed before they are to be adopted by employees.

Employees' role: Employees have a passive role in the definition that Morhart et al. maintain. (2009) They are involved at the very end of the process, with the task to merely embrace the brand values that are presented to them.

"Internal branding is the process through which organisations make a company-wide effort within a supportive culture to integrate brand ideologies, leadership, HRM, internal brand communications and internal brand communities as a strategy to enable employees to consistently co-create brand value with multiple stakeholders." (Saleem & Iglesias, 2016)

Starting point: Whereas the previous definitions hint towards an outside-in approach to internal branding, Saleem & Iglesias clearly take an inside-out perspective, starting from internal processes and culture.

Employees' role: This definition describes internal branding as a bottom-up process, regarding employees as active co-creators of brand value. Another remarkable aspect is that these scholars emphasise that the process is continuous.

D. Elaboration on taking a stance

Statement 1: Brands are dynamic and co-created by nature

A traditional aspect of branding that has been challenged is the way brands come to exist. Whereas some regard brands as rigid, coordinated things (Aaker, 1996), a new stream of research now defines them as fluid, dynamic entities that are co-created - not only by the customers and employees but also by any other external stakeholder (Iglesias & Alfaro, 2013; Beverland, 2018; Iglesias & Ind, 2020; Schmidt et al., 2021; O. Iglesias, personal communication, December 16, 2021). To take it one step further, when we recognise a brand as being the result of all interactions - both internally, externally and between the two - can it even be seen as a separate concept (Iglesias & Alfaro, 2013)? Indeed, the company is the brand (T. Claassen, personal communication, December 22, 2021). Nothing in relation to an organisation can be seen as detached from the brand. As Bedbury and Fenichell wrote, back in 2002, "brands are sponges for content, for images, for fleeting feelings" (Bedbury & Fenichell, 2002, p. 15).

Everything a consumer experiences that has to do with the company impacts their perception. On that same note, every decision an employee makes contributes to the identity of the company. Moreover, every experience an employee has that is associated with their employer, affects the employee's perception of the company and with that, their behaviour (Piehler, King, Burmann, & Xiong, 2016). We should not limit the scope of brand influence to frontline employees who are in direct contact with customers (Iglesias & Alfaro, 2013). Co-creating a brand is not only done through customer service or support, but also through indirect influences, such as facilitating others to do their job or maintaining a suitable work environment. As there are so many moments where the brand is somehow influenced, managers should not assume to have full control over it (Bedbury & Fenichell, 2002; Schmidt et al., 2021). The brand, merged with everything associated with a company, and the purpose, functioning as a common thread, can not be created within an isolated board room or a marketing team (Aurand, Gorchels, & Bishop, 2005; Schmidt et al., 2021; T. Claassen, personal communication, December 22, 2021). Every individual contributes to the identity of the company as a whole.

Statement 2: Brands are increasingly purpose-driven and ideological

As many sources describe, the concept of branding finds its origin in burning a mark to indicate ownership over something (Bastos & Levy, 2012; Beverland, 2018). Over the decades and throughout several fields, the term has been used in many different ways. For me, it is evident that a brand can no longer be seen as a mark, or a label, to identify something. The concept has moved on to something far more complex, holistic and deeply rooted. To something that concerns the core rather than the facade of an organisation.

Traditionally - and tied to the original product differentiation focus - literature and practice view brands as a means for customers to identify products and help them in making a choice (Bedbury & Fenichell, 2002; Hampf & Lindberg-Repo, 2011; Iglesias & Ind, 2020; Schmidt et al.,

2021; Beverland & Cankurtaran, 2022). This implies a functional understanding of brands; the kind of branding where a product is favoured over another because of its tangible features (Garas, Mahran, & Mohamed, 2018; Sultan, 2021). Over the years, when the service economy started to gain ground, brands were increasingly understood as a relationship between seller and buyer, determined by several touchpoints the customer has with the company (Hampf & Lindberg-Repo, 2011; Beverland, 2018; Garas et al., 2018; Sultan, 2021). Simultaneously, the brand experience became a central concept and the realisation that employees are critical to delivering that experience hit (Saleem & Iglesias, 2016; Beverland, 2018; Garas et al., 2018; Iglesias & Ind, 2020; Barros-Arrieta & García-Cali, 2021; Sultan, 2021). Recently, the necessity of purpose is flipping the world of branding all over again. Rather than a functional or experiential concept, brands are embodying the true identity and purpose - reason of being - of an organisation (Accenture, 2018; Polman & Winston, 2021; T. Claassen, personal communication, December 22, 2021). This movement is pushed by the critical consumers (and employees) of the current time, who value purpose over product. They seek brands with values that align with their own beliefs (Accenture, 2018; Aziz, 2020).

Let's take a step back and look at the coming of age of purpose - which is similar to the transformation that the concept of branding has gone through. 'Purpose-driven' has come to exist within the field of marketing. In this context, a purpose was merely a marketing tactic; a way to sell. "Buy this can of soda and we will donate $1 to Unicef". Over time, companies started to increasingly embed purpose into their products and business. A more consistent sense of purpose, for example, committing to a certain issue (think Dove's 'Real Beauty' pledge) or even incorporating the purpose in the product and in the strategy (as Unilever did when reorganising the business with the Unilever Sustainable Living Plan) (Polman & Winston, 2021). With these examples,

the purpose is a structural part of a business, but business still comes first. The purpose-led movement goes one step further, challenging the concept of businesses as a whole. Purpose comes first and business is essentially a means. Patagonia primarily exists to preserve nature. They make clothes to realise this mission. Thus, an applicant at Patagonia would first and foremost have a heart for nature to have a chance to be hired (T. Claassen, personal communication, December 22, 2021). Because purpose is becoming increasingly leading for companies, internal branding should aim at aligning employees on this purpose. This type of alignment goes further and deeper than regulating behaviour to match the brand promise.

So, we see two main shifts happening: brands are increasingly seen as co-created, and the value of brands is moving from purely functional to purpose-giving. Placing the changes into a matrix - as depicted in Appendix E: Evolution of brands - gives an idea of the direction in which the field of branding is moving.

Statement 3: Employees should be at the centre of reasoning

This project is initiated by and executed within WeTransfer's Employee Experience team. Employee Experience (EX) is a perspective, characterised by putting employees at the centre of reasoning, that has gained ground over the past years (Plaskoff, 2017; Gallup, n.d.). It is shaped by the sum of all interactions between employees and their employer (Plaskoff, 2017; Gallup, n.d.). Younger generations' critical eye increases the importance of EX. To compete in the employer market, companies must consider their employees' perspectives (Plaskoff, 2017; Clark, Chapleo, & Suomi, 2020). At WeTransfer, too, the Employee Experience team has been composed just recently. Plaskoff (2017) describes how the growing focus on EX marks a shift in the world of Human Resources Management. Instead of starting from the company needs and mobilising employees as means to achieve them - a new EX mindset is adopted; this mentality evolves around empathy and understanding employees' deep needs, emotions and thoughts.

"Employee experience can be defined as employee's holistic perceptions of the relationship with his/her employing organisation derived from all the encounters at touchpoints along the employee's journey" (Plaskoff, 2017)

Whereas internal branding mostly focuses on educating employees about the brand and making sure they connect to it to be able to consistently deliver the brand promise, I believe that delivering the brand promise to employees is equally important. Values that a company claims to hold dear, should be experienced and felt by employees. That is why Employee Experience (EX) plays a part in aligning the external story WeTransfer tells with the inside of the company. Strong EX efforts improve employees' perception of the company and its brand and thus positively impact engagement, retention, performance and development (Gallup, n.d.). All in all, in determining the working definition of internal branding for this project, it is thus necessary to reason from an employee perspective.

E. The evolution of brands

A brand is...

Where it's going

Axis labels: IDEOLOGICAL — EXPERIENTIAL — FUNCTIONAL (vertical right); CO-CREATED — CONTROLLED (horizontal bottom)

Bubbles (quotes):

- "Shaping a world-view anchored in values, beliefs and promises (brought to life through symbols, stories and experience) [Ennno Pullgrano]"
- "A brand - like a person - needs to have a continuous and consistent identity in order to be trusted"
- "Brand identity also considering how employees see brand positioned"
- "Product/service + values + associations; creating meaning that people can connect with on an identity level" [Helen Edwards]
- "What brings together company values, internally and externally" [Brian Richards]
- "Sponges for content; psychological concepts held in the minds of the public, that you can't entirely control" [Bedbury]
- "Navigation tool that can influence internal and external stakeholders"
- "A concept that regulates the behaviour of brander and user [Roland van der Vorst]"
- "Aligning what you want people to think about your company with what people actually think" [Jay Baer]
- "Service/corporate brands: social processes that involve multiple stakeholders"
- "A gut feel about a product/service/company, created by the individual" [Marty Neumeier]
- "A container for customer experience" [Sergio Zyman]
- "What people say about you when you're not in the room" [Jeff Bezos]
- "Managing employee-customer relationships to improve perceptions"
- "A customer experience, represented by images & ideas" [AMA]
- "Relational branding: how consumer and brand affect each other"
- "A reason to choose" [Cheryl Burgess]
- "A product that provides functional benefits plus added values" [John Philip Jones]
- "Intangible set of product attributes" [David Ogilvy]
- "Branding focuses on segmentation of the market"
- "The original focus in brand management is product differentiation"
- "Distinguishing name/symbol to identify goods of one seller and to differentiate those from competitors" [David Aaker]
- "A name, term, design, symbol or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers" [AMA]
- "Product-based brands rely on tangible and functional benefits"

1 Beverland, M. (2018). Brand management: Co-creating brand meaning (1st ed.) Sage.
2 Iglesias, O., Ind, N. & Alfaro, M. (2013). The organic view of the brand: a brand value co-creation model. Journal of Brand Management, 20(8), 670-688. https://doi.org/10.1057/979-1-352-00008-5_9
3 Sultan, A. J. (2021). The organic view of the brand: a brand value co-creation model. Journal of Brand Management, 20(8), 670-688.
4 Hampf, A. & Lindberg-Repo, K. (2011) Branding: The Past, Present and Future - A Study of the Evolution and Future of Branding. Hanken School of Economics. Working Paper no. 556) Retrieved from Library Hanken School of Economics website https://helda.helsinki.fi/handle/10138/26578
5 Burmann, C. Zeplin, S. (2009). Building Brand commitment. Journal of Brand Management, 1, 279-300. https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.bm.2540223

F. Related concepts

There are two additional concepts, related to internal branding, that are worth mentioning.

Employees' perceived brand authenticity

In literature, it is found that to translate employee engagement into actual behavioural performance that matches the brand, employees' perceived brand authenticity is an indispensable link. Employees must believe in the values articulated by the company and be convinced that they come from an authentic place. Only then, employees can form a 'motivational state of mind' that moves them to behave according to the brand promise (Sultan, 2021).

Role clarity

Another essential aspect in internal branding is the clarity of individuals' roles. Literature and experts point out that to achieve brand citizenship behaviour, employees must know what their role is in relation to the greater purpose (Aurand et al., 2005; Garas et al., 2018; K. de Kruijf, personal communication, December 20, 2021). A framework that is used to indicate this connection between individual actions and company goals is the Purpose Pyramid (K. de Kruijf, personal communication, December 20, 2021).

The Purpose Pyramid shows how every aspect of the work builds up to the greater goal - the mission and vision. This tool can help define how the purpose seeps through in daily decisions, responsibilities and interactions. It is essential to make employees feel this logic, so that they know why they are doing what they are doing. Also, the purpose pyramid makes explicit that the right culture is at the base of achieving big things (Iglesias & Ind, 2020).

Diagram (Purpose Pyramid, top to bottom):
- mission & vision
- goals & strategy
- tasks & responsibilities
- way of working
- teamwork & relationships
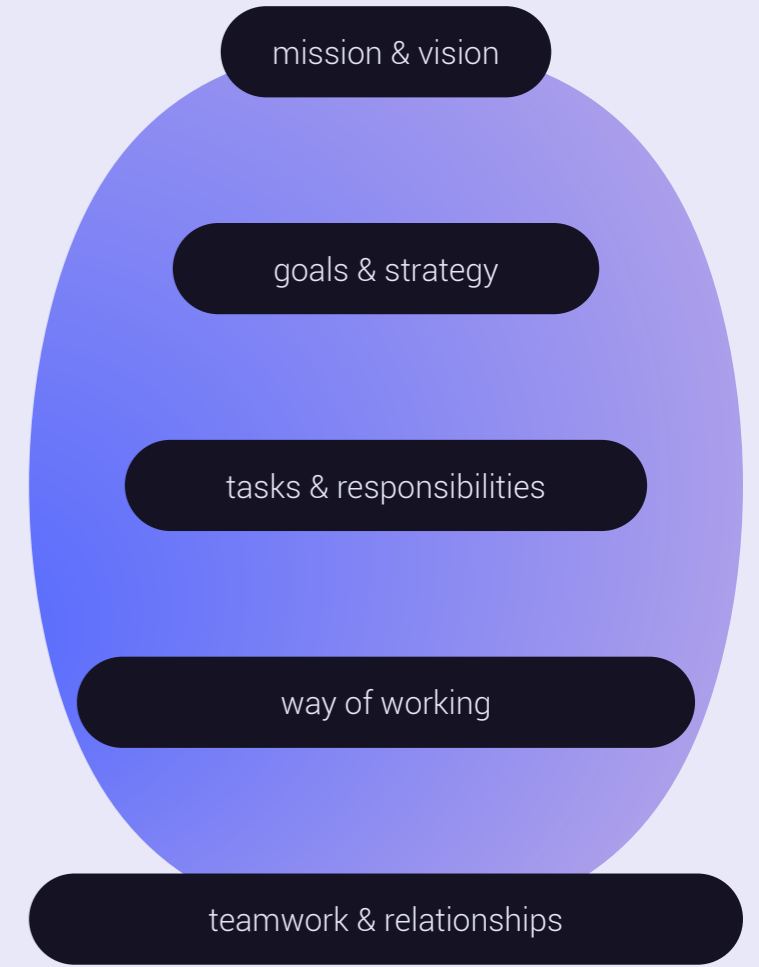
G. Research design in detail

Existing data collection

Existing data about the internal brand and culture, used to paint a picture of the current situation and ground research findings later on, is derived from three sources.

Officevibe (WeTransfer, 2022c)

METHOD: SURVEY, N ≈ 100

Through Officevibe, WeTransfer regularly checks how employees feel the company is doing and what their opinions about the way of working are. The pulse surveys cover ten broad subjects: relationship with manager, recognition, feedback, personal growth, alignment, satisfaction, relationship with peers, wellness, happiness and ambassadorship. For the scope of this project, some subjects are especially interesting to look at. 'Ambassadorship' gives insight into if employees consider themselves ambassadors for WeTransfer and feel proud of the company. 'Alignment' touches upon employees' thoughts about the mission, vision and values of WeTransfer. 'Personal growth' uncovers data about employees' personal contribution to the greater goal and their individual purpose.

RADAR Assessment (INvolve, 2021)

METHOD: FOCUS GROUPS & SURVEY, N = 133

An external party, INvolve, was appointed to assess diversity and inclusion at WeTransfer. Five main dimensions were evaluated: recruitment and retention, attraction, development, accountability and resources. INvolve describes to what extent diversity and inclusion are matured and what aspects of the company lead to that maturity level. This research essentially takes an internal branding approach; whereas WeTransfer communicates to highly value diversity and inclusion, INvolve tested if the company 'walks the talk' internally. The greatest value of the investigation for this project is the in-depth analysis of the culture and processes of WeTransfer.

Employee Engagement Survey (WeTransfer, 2022b)

METHOD: SURVEY, N = 228

Recently, the HR department sent out a survey to check on the sentiment amongst employees. The key objectives were to find out what's impacting employee satisfaction and retention, in order to strengthen WeTransfer's employer value proposition. A valuable mix of quantitative and qualitative data gives insight into what the best and worst aspects of working at WeTransfer are, according to employees. Their drivers to work at the company, as well as their values at work are uncovered.

Corporate auto-ethnography

The method of corporate auto-ethnography was applied in two ways. Firstly, I kept memos of my personal experiences as an employee. Secondly, I engaged in informal conversations with coworkers. The auto-ethnographic method especially functions to sharpen my own perspective: being a WeTransfer employee myself and connecting findings to personal experiences and information I have heard helps to distil the most important issues.

Personal journal

Keeping a diary is one method for data collection in ethnographic research (Emerald Publishing, n.d.). To keep track of individual experiences related to the company culture, communication and way of working, weekly memos were written in a personal journal over the course of seven weeks. These memos share a set structure, describing expectations, experiences, activities and touchpoints. Also, notes of relevant corporate events and notable observations are included [See Appendix cA: Personal journal].

Off the record conversations

Besides the qualitative interviews, several off the record conversations also contributed to the understanding of the course of events within the company. These conversations mostly were exploratory in nature. The aim could be to either learn from a colleague about a certain topic or to update a colleague on the project and ask for feedback. Over twenty such dialogues were planned and held.

Qualitative interviewing

Round 1 — Semi-structured interviews
to build a deep understanding

The first and most fundamental round of interviews is semi-structured, meaning that certain topics are determined in advance. The conversation between interviewer and participant can flow freely within these topics (Patton, 2002). An interview guide was developed to capture the structure of the interviews.

Interview guide evolution

The interview guide was revised several times since it was first created. Appendix I: Interview guide evolution shows the evolution of versions. Iterations were made based on contextual factors (mainly: the fact that WeTransfer announced its intention to IPO - become a public company - and later withdrew that intention), feedback from supervisors and colleagues and conducted (pilot) interviews. Along the way, the guide became more detailed and refined, to be able to really uncover relevant and deep insights.

Interview guide structure

As said, the research questions form the base for the interview guide. Interview questions were formulated and then placed in a more logical order to conduct the interview. The sequencing is based on chronology and abstraction, aiming to ease the participant into the conversation [See Appendix H: Interview guide].

Abstraction: at the beginning of the interview, relatively concrete questions are asked that do not require too much thinking capacity from the participant (e.g. why did you start working at WeTransfer?). Later on, participants are asked to think on a higher level, contemplating the meaning of WeTransfer and their personal values and desires (e.g. what do you still want to achieve at WeTransfer?). Also, questions are first closely related to the individual but zoom out to a broader scope and context along the way.

Chronology: the interview starts off with questions that concern activities and experiences in the past (e.g. what did you expect of WeTransfer when you joined?). Consequently, the focus moves on to the present and participants are asked about the current state of the company (e.g. what does WeTransfer stand for, in your eyes?). Finally, questions touch upon how participants see the future of themselves, WeTransfer and the world (e.g. what do you still want WeTransfer to achieve as a company?).

All in all, three themes are leading the semi-structured interviews:

• Reflecting - WeTransfer and you
• Sense-making - the WeTransfer way
• Dreaming - your desired future

One pilot and seven one-hour interviews were eventually conducted [See Appendix cB: Transcripts | Round 1 interviews]

Sampling

These qualitative interviews are meant to form an understanding of the internal brand alignment across the organisation. For that purpose, it is beneficial to select a diverse set of participants. A mixed method of opportunistic and criterion-based sampling was used (Patton, 2014). The selected people volunteered to participate in the interviews based on a recruiting message sent out to all employees. Then, the diversity of the group was also evaluated on several criteria: function, department, business unit, tenure, whether they were in the position of a people manager or an individual contributor and where they were based. The final selection shows sufficient diversity. It can be noted that the majority of participants are (i) in the creative business unit, (ii) individual contributors or (iii) based in Amsterdam. However, the majority of WeTransfer employees actually have these characteristics, because the creative unit is the largest unit, there are more individual contributors than people managers and the vast majority of people are based in Amsterdam [See Appendix J: Sampling | Round 1 interviews for an overview of the participants].

After the first round of interviews, there was a need for follow-up conversations. The additional questions were especially about how the company currently handles the brand internally, in different areas (e.g. how is internal input used in brand management? How are the brand values taken along in hiring? How is the brand communicated internally?). To fill these gaps, conversational interviews were organised with internal experts on the matters. Although some questions were determined beforehand, the course of these interviews was informal; questions emerged from the context of the conversation and the expertise of participants was leading Patton, 2002).

Four 30-minute interviews were eventually conducted. [See Appendix cC: Notes | Round 2 interviews]

Sampling

For this second round of interviews, the sampling consists of key informants (Patton, 2014). All participants were selected based on their knowledge and influence on a certain topic, being:

• Brand management
• Internal communications
• Recruitment
• Leadership

H. Interview guide

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Research goal:
define **the gap between** the articulated WeTransfer brand (i.e. the purpose - mission and vision - and values) **and** employees' core [1] drivers and [2] experiences in their work.

Research questions:

- How does employees' perception of the WeTransfer brand differ from the intended perception? - *brand understanding*

- To what extent, why and when (not) do employees feel a sense of belonging to the WeTransfer brand? - *brand identification*

- To what extent, why and when (not) do employees feel attached and do they commit to the WeTransfer values and purpose? - *brand commitment*

- To what extent, and where (not), are employee behaviour and WeTransfer's brand promise and values aligned? - *brand citizenship behaviour*

- To what extent, and where (not), are employee experience and WeTransfer's brand promise and values aligned? - *employee brand experience*

</div>

Introduction | 5 mins

Checklist for start
- Record the interview: just audio or full screen?

Introductory script
- This interview is part of my graduation project in the masters Strategic Product Design, which is on internal branding. I'll explain more in a bit.
- First, some official things:
    - o This is confidential and I will anonymize all results.
    - o You can interrupt or stop this interview anytime. If there is a question you don't feel comfortable answering, you obviously don't have to.
    - o There is no right or wrong here! I am first and foremost interested in your opinion, your feelings and your experiences.
- Something about myself
    - o TU Delft, Strategic Product Design → Branding - quite externally focused
    - o Thesis: looking at internal component of branding, core of the company: employees.
        - ▪ Reason for that: I value honesty and realness, in people, but also in companies. So that is why I think the authenticity of a brand is really important and I enjoy working on that.
- Today, three parts:
    - o First, reflecting on your personal drivers and how you connect to WeTransfer
    - o Second, make sense of the WeTransfer Way: what you think WeTransfer stands for
    - o Finally, look ahead, dream of what the future will look like

- Something about you: tell me about what you value in your life and work.

1 Reflecting - WeTransfer and you | 10 mins

Interview questions & follow-ups:

- Why did you start working at WeTransfer?
    - o What exactly do you do?
    - o What made you go for WeTransfer, not another tech/creative company?
    - o How did you first hear about WeTransfer?
- What did you expect of WeTransfer when you joined?
    - o To what extent were these expectations met? Example?
    - o What surprised you?
- What is the reason you still work at WeTransfer?
- What has changed over the years - since you started?
- What makes you get up and "go to" work every day?
- Can you remember the last time you talked to someone from outside the company about WeTransfer; what did you tell them?

WeTransfer is evolving, and that is embodied by the situation around the IPO. Obviously, it is now cancelled, but I would still like to ask you…

- How do you feel about the growth of the company? How might it change the company?
    - o What d**o** you NOT want to change?
    - o **What can be done to preserve that?**

2 Sense-making - the WeTransfer way | 20 mins

Interview questions & follow-ups:

- What does WeTransfer stand for, in your eyes? [purpose]
    - o How is WeTransfer contributing to this purpose? (tangible, concrete goals?)
    - o How can WeTransfer contribute even more to this?
- What is your role in realising the purpose?
        - ▪ Can you give an example - of how you have contributed in the past?
    - o To what extent is the purpose incorporated in your everyday work activities?
        - ▪ Can you give an example?
    - o How do you communicate about this with your colleagues?
- What do you think are the most important values within the organisation?
    - o How are these values fostered? Can you give an example?
    - o Where can these values be fostered even more? Can you give an example?
    - o How do you communicate about these with your colleagues?
- What achievements of WeTransfer are you proud of?
    - o Why?
- How would you describe the typical WeTransferian?
    - o What do they value, how do they behave?
    - o How would you describe the WeTransfer culture?

*Now, let's move on to how you think WeTransfer is seen from the **outside**.*

- How do you think the WeTransfer brand is perceived by people externally?

I'd like to show you some examples of stories WeTransfer tells to the world.
Show branding efforts - one by one - and ask for each:

- What is your first impression of this message?
- How do you personally connect to this statement?
    - To what extent do you recognise your own beliefs in this?
    - Can you give an example, of a moment when this topic was on your mind?
- Do **you** contribute to making this happen?
    - If yes: how?
    - If no: why not? How could you contribute?

- *All in all…* If you look at the story WeTransfer tells externally, how do you think that is different from what is communicated and experienced internally?
    - How come?
    - What could be done to improve the alignment?
- If you could change one thing about the company, what would that be?

3 Dreaming - your desired future | 10 mins

Interview questions & follow-ups:

- What do you still want to achieve at WeTransfer?
    - Why? What do you base your goals on?
    - To what extent do you have the tools and space to achieve that?
- What do you still want WeTransfer to achieve as a company?
    - Why?
    - Why will this (not) happen?
- Where do you see WeTransfer in 5 years?
    - Where would you like to see WeTransfer in 5 years?
    - Where do you think WeTransfer will actually be in 5 years?
    - Will you still be there, why (not)?
- If you could change one thing in the world, what would that be?
    - Why do you think this is important?

Closure | 5 mins

Checklist for closure
- Is there anything else you would like to mention? Anything I've missed?
- I will use the insights, together with the other interviews, to define any possible points of improvement. I might do a creative session later when designing solutions.
- I can keep you up to date on the outcomes.
- Can I contact you later on for validation?
- Thank you!!

List of generic probes (optional)
- Can you tell me more about that?
- Why so?
- Can you explain that?

I. Interview guide evolution
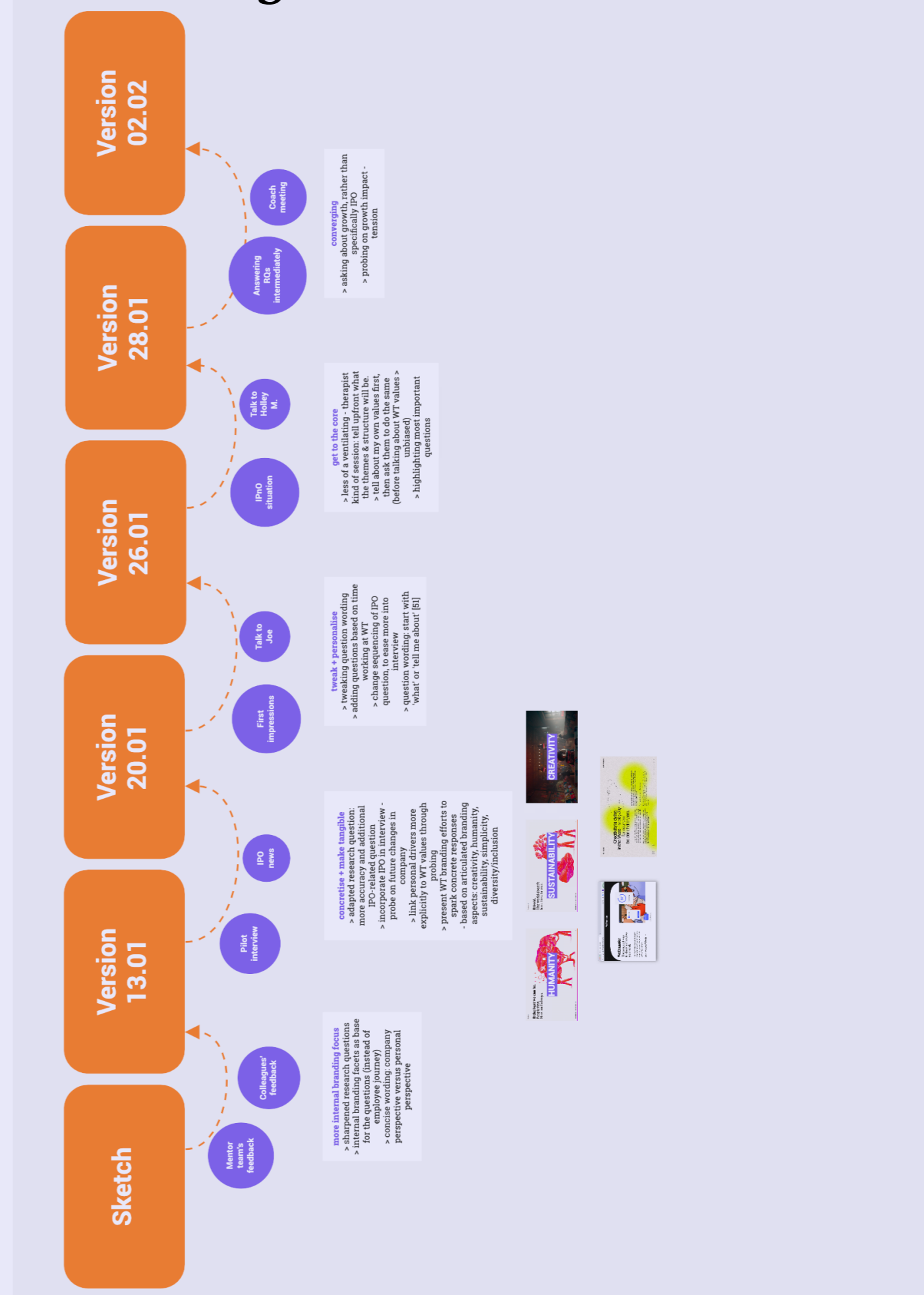
J. Sampling | Round 1 interviews

	(Pilot)	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5	Participant 6	Participant 7	Participant 8
Function		██████	████████	████████	██████	█████	██████	███████
Department		Creative studio	Communications	Marketing	Product	Engineering - Product	Editorial	HR
Business unit		Creative	Creative	Creative	Creative	Product & Technology	Creative	HR
Years at WT		1 year 11 months	1 month	9 months	8 months	1 month	4 years	3 years 3 months
Peoples manager or individual contributor		IC	IC	IC	IC	IC	PM	IC
Based		Amsterdam	Amsterdam	Amsterdam	Remote - US	Amsterdam	Amsterdam	Amsterdam

K. Sampling | Round 2 interviews

	Participant 1	**Participant 2**	**Participant 3**	**Participant 4**
Function	Brand manager	Leadership	Internal Communications	Recruitment
Department	Marketing	Senior Leadership Team	Communications	HR
Reason to interview	• Future plans for the brand and values • Internal input used for branding efforts • Internal communication of the brand	• Value strategies • Long term plans and vision for the company & brand	• Role of brand/purpose/values in internal comms • Employee needs in internal comms • How do employees know what their individual role is?	• Hiring focus: job fit or culture fit? • What is a culture fit?

L. Coding themes

Codes were labeled on different themes. These themes were defined as follows.

Internal branding stages
- Brand understanding
- Brand identification
- Brand commitment
- Brand citizenship behaviour
- Employee brand experience

Discussed topic
- Start of work
- People's culture
- Change over the years
- IPO
- Pre-employment expectations
- Telling others about WeTransfer
- WeTransfer purpose
- WeTransfer values
- Individual role
- Personal drivers
- People first
- Simplest way to share and review
- Together we make
- The world can't wait
- Non-Western creativity
- Future of you
- Future of WeTransfer
- Future of world
- Pride of achievements
- External perception
- Misalignment internal & external

Emerging themes
- Open, personal culture
- Company growth tension
- (What is) creativity
- Support creatives
- We walk the talk
- Brand pride / ideal self
- WeTransfer: the dream
- Valuing teamwork
- Freedom & flexibility
- Trust in employees' potential

- We do more than is perceived
- Fair chances for everyone
- Diversity on all fronts
- Making an impact
- Stepping out of your bubble
- Detachment from products
- High-maintenance employees
- Internal communication & leadership
- Employees need impulse
- Focus on what matters
- Setting the example
- Employee brand authenticity
- Saying versus acting
- Human connections
- Exemplary behaviour
- Brand reflected in daily work
- Long term vision
- Be more vocal
- Varying professional background
- Purpose versus business
- Experienced hierarchy & structure
- Go for it - mentality

Sub-themes
- Brand development
- Brand endorsement
- Brand compliance
- Brand promise delivery
- Creativity = freedom
- Creativity = making
- Creativity = bold and different
- Creativity = impact
- Creativity = vague
- The creative process
- Giving a platform
- Inspiring
- B Corp
- Collaboration / togetherness
- Appealing and engaging
- Parrot the purpose
- Sense of belonging
- Distinction from other companies
- Employee-brand fit
- Recognition from outside world
- Sense of contributing
- Critical on values
- Ideal self
- Actual self
- Positive emotion of pride
- Ambitions are high
- Keep the core at heart
- Domain-focused
- Autonomy
- Lack of connectivity
- Wellbeing VS Expected performance
- Supporting creatives VS Financial growth
- Short term profit VS Long term impact
- People first VS Business first
- Selling the product VS Helping creatives out
- Identity VS Growth
- More structure
- Authentic, personal culture
- Allure of expansion

- Charm of small
- Responsibility to advocate
- Telling the story over and over
- Desire for recognition
- Reach the full potential

M. Answering research questions

The primary round of analysis follows the lines of the stages of internal branding. For each of the steps - brand understanding, identification, commitment, citizenship behaviour and employee experience - insights are translated into an answer to the research questions. In Appendix N: Theory building, visual representations of the theories can be found.

Brand understanding

What first of all stands out with regards to brand understanding, is that many employees tend to talk about the WeTransfer brand as something that has been taught to them, thus seemingly parroting the words they have heard many times and that are etched in their memories. When asked what WeTransfer stands for, several participants spoke of 'from what they have heard' or mentioned how they had the brand book in mind when responding to the question. Turning to the substantive answer to that question, insights can be divided up into two parts: perception of the WeTransfer values and the WeTransfer purpose.

The purpose as understood by a majority of the participants is to support creatives. Several suggestions were made as to how WeTransfer does that: supporting in the creative process, supporting through giving a platform and supporting by inspiring with appealing and engaging design and stories.

When being shown several brand efforts, employees agreed that the 'Together We Make' campaign captures WeTransfer's raison d'être best.

Responses clearly identified creativity and B Corp as the main descriptors of WeTransfer's values. Where B Corp is a relatively new concept for most of them, the values related to this certification primarily sparked curiosity and ambition, but a limited understanding of how to apply these values is present - as confirmed by conversations with the Senior Social Responsibility Manager. As to creativity: although all employees mention this as a considerable, if not the most important, value of WeTransfer, concrete understanding of the term is fragmented. Those who were interviewed brought up varying interpretations of creativity: creativity as freedom in the creative process, creativity as making something, creativity as creating opportunities and having an impact, and creativity as being bold and different. One of the participants mentioned that the purpose (or value) of creativity is too vague to unite everybody in a common goal; this statement is substantiated by Officevibe data showing that only around 60% of respondents feel motivated by the organisation's vision (WeTransfer, 2022c). In additional clarifying conversations, internal specialists agree that values should be dusted off because they are losing concrete meaning and that the long-term vision is too unclear internally.

Versus the articulated brand

When we put employees' understanding next to the brand as articulated by the brand book and by the CEO, it becomes apparent that in broad terms, perspectives are aligned; creativity - to support creatives, to enable creativity, to help make - is in all cases put at the centre of the brand. Also, B Corp values seem to be of great importance to the CEO as well as the employees. However, when looking more closely at the articulated company values (we enable, we're optimistic, we all own it, we're inclusive), these do not seem top of mind for the employees. Rather, they associate WeTransfer with creativity, making an impact and putting people first. These associations do largely match the articulated brand values (freedom, creativity, humanity, simplicity), especially the first three of those. All in all, it appears that employees are aligned with the articulated purpose, but that there are some misalignments on the value level, especially when looking at how the values are concretely understood.

Brand identification

To assess the level of brand identification - the psychological attachment to the brand -, questions were asked about participants' personal values as well as about their motivation to work at WeTransfer. Three broad themes emerged that make employees resonate with the WeTransfer brand, and that also move them to work here: enjoying creativity, valuing sustainability and cherishing togetherness. Strikingly, when closely inspecting the range of personal and individual drivers that participants reported, one common thread recurred: establishing fair chances for everybody. In line with this ambition, participants think it is important that they get out of their bubble, that they care for the planet in order to care for the people on it too, and that they make human connections in everything they do - from teamwork to empathy.

The interview results do not point out a strong sense of belonging, nor a lack of it. Existing internal data from WeTransfer shows that nearly one-third of the employees would leave WeTransfer if they were offered a similar job elsewhere (WeTransfer, 2022c). Also, one of the internal experts mentions that there is a lack of senior talent within the company. This could hint at an insufficient (long term) sense of belonging and could indicate that employees are motivated by their strong internal compass rather than by company goals.

Brand pride

The psychological oneness with the brand is also displayed by the prominent theme of brand pride. Interviewees' experiences and behaviours that point out brand pride include holding positive emotions towards the brand, comparing WeTransfer to other similar companies and advocating for the brand. Additional clarifying conversations point out that the pride even translates into employees being protective when it comes to new hires; they are critical if these new people are as passionate and driven as they are themselves. I agree with earlier research that suggests that WeTransfer's engaged and switched-on employees are a great asset (INvolve, 2021). Literature has taught us that brand pride comes forth from congruity between an individual's ideal self and the brand. In other words, employees' aspirations match what they believe WeTransfer to be: a company that is creative at heart and truly makes an impact. Strikingly, employees' focus seems to be more on that ideal image than on their actual self. One participant argues that people at WeTransfer are at times in denial of the fact that the main source of revenue is still file sharing. The lack of reflection on the actual self relates to the sentiment shared by some interviewees that at WeTransfer, more talking than acting takes place.

An advantage of the autonomous way of working, according to participants, is the go for it-mentality, which is nourished by a free and open space for ideas. However, a downside to this matter is reported to be the consequent low level of connectivity. This insight is illustrated by the fact that most teams have an individual mission statement, not necessarily linked to the overall WeTransfer mission and vision.

Company growth

A phenomenon that arises from interview results and seems to impact (amongst others) brand commitment, is the growth of the company. The lack of connectivity mentioned above can be increased by this growth. For instance, tenured employees state that their feeling of individual relevance to the company has decreased over the years. But upon that, a concern is sprouting that the growth will form a threat for the creative purpose. A tension of business versus purpose is described by several respondents, and manifests in many different cases, such as the following: we care for well-being, but at the same time many people get burnt out. We want to make a long-term impact, but sometimes the short-term profit seems to get priority. Our goal is to support creativity, but advertising our product takes away from that goal. We used to be a people-centred company, but now there are moments it looks like business comes first. An internal specialist states that indeed, people are currently selected on a job-fit rather than a culture-fit. Moreover, they consider the possibility that more pressure on performance might influence hiring criteria in the future too.

Brand commitment

Brand commitment at WeTransfer is, as became apparent in the interviews, fed by the high ambitions employees hold. Participants feel determined to make a positive impact on the world, as they aim to do at WeTransfer by - as mentioned before - supporting creatives and creating fair chances. Interestingly, these high ambitions also translate into a will to improve things internally. Several interviewees report their desire for WeTransfer to be more vocal, but also for more putting our money where our mouth is. Part of the respondents feels that 'we talk more than we do'. Existing data connects to this. When asked if their organisation invests a number of resources, people and efforts that measures up to its ambition, only a little over half of the respondents agree (WeTransfer, 2022c). Also, INvolve's study points out that leadership often says the right things but sometimes lacks to follow through with actions (INvolve, 2021). Employees shape their individual roles to match their aspirations. The interpretation of individual roles is - as I experienced on the work floor - not so much inspired by company-wide goals like OKRs.

When we zoom in on how brand commitment is manifested and channelled, we see that there is a high level of autonomy. In practice, this means that many employees focus almost exclusively on their own domain. Some interviewees argued that they do not consider the bigger picture.

Brand citizenship behaviour

Brand compliance

Interviewees' comments indicate that there is a strong sense of willingness to match behaviour to the brand promise. The majority of respondents provided examples that show how they are constantly keeping the brand values in the back of their minds while working. However, as touched upon earlier, the vagueness of the purpose complicates employees' ability to comply. 'Creativity' is interpreted in many different ways and thus also translated into varying brand behaviours. This fact is also demonstrated by Officevibe outcomes, telling us that only just over half of the respondents feel the organisation's vision is clear to them (WeTransfer, 2022c). The same goes for B Corp: employees only have a basic understanding of what it means for their daily work. Previously conducted D&I research suggests employees need to be given the time and capability to get involved on the topic; this might be the case here too (INvolve, 2021).

Brand endorsement

Those interviewed brought up that they are very keen to tell others about their work at WeTransfer. They endorse the brand hardly on the topic of the product, but more regarding the good work environment and the ethos of creativity and B Corp. The other side of this coin is a brewing

feeling of frustration because employees feel WeTransfer does much more than the outside world knows of. In literature, this phenomenon of discrepancy between the company's knowledge and other stakeholders' knowledge about the brand is known as information asymmetry (Karanges, Johnston, Lings, & Beatson, 2018). It becomes apparent that participants do see it as their responsibility to advocate for the brand and to educate users on the full story. The motivation for this is twofold. On the one hand, there is a desire for recognition. On the other hand, employees believe that telling the full story could help the company reach its full potential.

Brand development

Several ways of brand development recurred in the interviews. Firstly, many participants expressed a tendency to think from a user perspective. With that comes the aspiration to continuously improve users' experience, especially felt by employees that work on the product. Secondly, respondents highly value opportunities to grow and develop individually. What must be noted, is that this individual development is often targeted at gathering experience and gaining more responsibility. Learning & Development is less often related to the company's purpose. From off the record conversations, I learned that this is part of Wetransfers L&D vision: the aim is to give employees the freedom to explore and grow in different directions, not to force them to fit in with company goals. Lastly, we can return to the insight of employees' high ambitions. These ambitions at times seem to translate into (what may or may not be constructive) criticism. The critical eye can be seen as an urge to develop the company in the right direction.

Employee brand experience

The growth WeTransfer is going through has a considerable impact on the employee experience, too. Some employees praise the older times and the small-company assets that are still present within WeTransfer, such as the creative start-up atmosphere, the cool people and the open, personal means of communication. All the while, comments are made regarding the risk of chaos and unstructuredness that this culture brings. The expansion also triggers excitement in a number of interviewees. They consider the buzz, the confusion and the action positive drivers to work at WeTransfer and regard the growth as an opportunity to make more impact on the world and grow further as individuals. An internal expert thinks that to make bigger things happen, the processes and structures have to mature. At the same time, there is talk of concern that the culture will become more corporate and that hierarchy and structure will squeeze the soul out of the company. The turning point that WeTransfer is at is echoed by INvolve's findings, being that the overall culture at WeTransfer is excellent, but the expansion calls for more articulate infrastructure and strategy (2021).

Value for internal branding

Adopting freedom within a framework can help improve the internal branding on multiple levels; that gives reasons to believe that long-term, thoroughly integrated and sustainable solutions could be generated by basing them on this theory.

Freedom within a framework & Brand understanding

A 'Framework of freedom' is meant to provide employees with the context necessary to make decisions that are in line with the company's interests. The brand is concretised by means of the principles, describing tangible behaviour that is born out of the priorities and purpose. Detailing the brand values and purpose like this will help build a more coherent and deep understanding of the brand amongst internal stakeholders. They will be able to not only identify the purpose and the values, but also the day-to-day actions that express these abstract parts of the brand. The cognitive representation of values in the minds of employees will thus be enhanced with more meaning and context.

Freedom within a framework & Brand identification

Freedom within a framework is per definition a strategy that taps into the intrinsic motivation of employees. The framework is designed to guide, but not stifle. That means that the incentive to comply with the framework comes from within employees, instead of from strict rules that allow them no free moving space. The framework offers enough clarity for individuals to find out whether or not they identify with the brand. At the same time, the freedom protects transparency and ensures that a lack of identification will not remain unnoticed.

Freedom within a framework & Brand commitment

Making sure employees are familiar with multiple levels of abstraction of the brand (i.e. the purpose, priorities and principles) will help them make sense of their work. Knowing how a certain action is contributing to the higher purpose will be a motivating factor. That helps individuals feel like they are a significant and relevant part of the organisation (K. de Kruijf, personal communication, December 20, 2021).

Freedom within a framework & Brand citizenship behaviour

Lastly, a 'Framework of freedom' can help improve brand citizenship behaviour, by offering employees the context and information they need. By providing the necessary guidance, employees now know better how to act in a way that benefits the company and suits the ideals. If all of the previous steps succeeded as well, this brand citizenship behaviour would come from an authentic place. Intrinsic motivation would drive employees to behave like the brand, and freedom within a framework would enable them to do so.

N. Theory building

To answer research questions [See Appendix M: Answering research questions], the codes are put in a visual overview to find patterns and theories.

Brand understanding

Brand identification

Brand commitment

Focus on what matters; know the why

versus, desired

manifested by → Detachment from products

Domain focus, hard to get bigger picture

'Go for it'- mentality —and→ A free ideas space

con — pro

Little connectivity, much autonomy

—is shaped as— **Brand commitment** —is fed by→ High ambitions

Make an impact / a difference

Support creatives

Create fair chances for everyone

to

to

To improve...

Be more vocal

More doing, less talking

Sita's assumption

Risk to become siloed

—combined—

inspire

Well-formed idea of individual role

Sita's assumption

←do not inspire— Temporary, team-level OKRs

reinforces →

Decreased individual (feeling of) relevance

Exemplary behaviour & explicit conversations ← (possibly) through — Concern: keep the core at heart

leads to

Purpose versus business - tension

Company growth — causes

Comes with a shift...

Wellbeing VS Expected performance

Short term profit VS Long term impact

Supporting creativity VS Financial growth

Selling the product VS Helping creatives out

Business first VS People first

Identity VS Growth

Employee brand experience

the charm of small

"I think that's still something that is preserved within a small size of a company. It's a safe space to experiment, and if someone has an idea they can still do something with it."

Agency / start-up vibe

Cool people

Open communication, Personal connections

"People know each other by first name because it's small enough - that you know will change very soon."

Chaos

"There was a lot of like messiness, and kind of people doing a lot of ping pong and lots of freedom, like lots of freedom."

"it always felt at WeTransfer the good times were six months ago."

the allure of expansion

"It's exciting and sort of what I'm here for: all that action. All the confusion that comes with it."

Buzz, confusion, action

Professionalisation

More impact (making people happy, making cool products)

Individual opportunities for growth

"Imagine if we could replicate the good experience that I've had for 1000 other people or 10,000 other people, it would mean that there will be 10,000 happy people."

Hierarchy in decision making

Corporate

Fragmentation into groups

"Like now there's a lot of different things that are kind of holding back some decisions sometimes."

"It's really hard now to get a grasp of people who actually work here."

Brand citizenship behaviour

Brand pride

Which shows → Pride to tell others

Brand endorsement —is seen in→ Telling others —To→ Recommend as a great place to work

Telling others —And to→ Educate users on brand story —But not beyond→ 'More than file share' (- a dead end)

Brand endorsement —is not seen in→ Lack of product endorsement

Lack of product endorsement —Because→ Don't use the product —And→ Don't feel attached to /convinced by all products

Constant consideration of values during work —and→

OKRs —Should result in→ Brand compliance —is supported by→ Motivated to comply

Brand compliance —is complicated by→ Vagueness of purpose —Because→ What is creativity? —and also→ Only basic understanding of B Corp

Brand understanding

Brand development —is reflected in→ Focus on user (enhancing experience)

Brand development —is partly reflected in→ Individual learning and development —Because currently→

Individual learning and development → Development focus/goals —Is on→ Exploring and gathering experience —and→ Taking on more responsibility (to have more impact)

Development focus/goals —Is less on→ Purpose-related development

Transition: more than file sharing —also→ B Corp values & ethos
Transition: more than file sharing —also→ Full suite of products
Transition: more than file sharing —also→ Supporting creatives in other ways

We do more than is perceived —as reflected by→ Transition: more than file sharing

We do more than is perceived —results in→ Aversion of the idea of file sharing as the core business

We do more than is perceived —employees feel→ Individual responsibility to advocate for this —by→ Explaining the full story over and over again —to→ Educate users about our business & brand

Individual responsibility to advocate for this —because→ Desire for recognition —and because of→ Aspiration to reach the full potential

Brand pride

Recognition from outside world —reinforced by→ Positive emotion of pride

Wanting to set an example —and even→ Comparing WeTransfer to other companies

Positive emotion of pride —as seen in→ Brand pride [52]

Comparing WeTransfer to other companies —and as seen in→ Brand pride [52]

Brand pride [52] —and as seen in→ Brand endorsement / Creativity is the core

Brand pride [52] —is→ Making an impact

Brand pride [52] —is manifested by→ Ideal self (of employees) —matches→ Ideal self (of WeTransfer)

Ideal self (of WeTransfer) —and is→ 'We do more than the world knows'

Ideal self (of WeTransfer) —and the sentiment→ Frustration

Brand-related self concept

Discrepancy: Hard to define the difference between... —causes→ Frustration

Sita's assumption

Discrepancy → Actual self (of WeTransfer)

Discrepancy —but, some feel→ We do more talking than acting

We do try to walk the talk

Actual self (of WeTransfer) —is, according to some→ We do try to walk the talk

Actual self (of WeTransfer) —and is→ File sharing is the core

Employee perceived brand authenticity

O. Growth ambidexterity

CONGRUITY	RELEVANCE
cherish	**advance**

1 What is creativity?

Space for **own interpretation** of brand values & purpose	**Clarity** of brand values and purpose, to unite and give direction
Frequently **mentioning** the brand values & purpose	Showing brand values & purpose through **exemplary behaviour**

2 Purpose versus business

Strong-minded, **purpose-driven employee mindset**	Understanding how **purpose and business reinforce each other**
Celebrate business success and growth	Communicate how business **contributes** to the purpose
Showing **agility** and ability to pivot when necessary	Sharing an understanding of the **long-term vision**
Recruitment on **culture** addition	Recruitment on **job** fit & skills

3 Pride the ideal image

Optimistic attitude and view	**Doing** over talking
Shared brand **pride and idealism**	**Critical reflection** on current course of events

4 Shift of scale

Free space for **creativity** and ideas	**Structure** to guide processes effectively
Autonomy	Accountability
Personal and informal vibe	**Connectivity** throughout entire company
Fast-paced **ever-changing** environment	**Advanced planning** that can deal with pivoting
Open and transparent communication	Mature **communication channels**

5 Advocate for the full story

Internal brand pride	External brand knowledge
Employee endorsement in **individual social circle**	Endorsement **company-wide, on larger scale** with (potential) users

---

P. Growth ambidexterity | elements addressed

CONGRUITY	RELEVANCE
Free space for **creativity** and ideas	**Structure** to guide processes effectively
Autonomy	Accountability
Space for **own interpretation** of brand values & purpose	**Clarity** of brand values and purpose, to unite and give direction
Frequently **mentioning** the brand values & purpose	Showing what brand values & purpose mean through **exemplary behaviour**
Strong-minded, **purpose-driven employee mindset**	Understanding that & how **purpose and business reinforce each other**
Showing **agility** and ability to pivot when necessary	Sharing an understanding of the **long-term vision**

Q. Freedom within a framework in internal branding

Adopting freedom within a framework can help improve the internal branding on multiple levels; that gives reasons to believe that long-term, thoroughly integrated and sustainable solutions could be generated by basing them on this theory.

Freedom within a framework & Brand understanding

A 'Framework of freedom' is meant to provide employees with the context necessary to make decisions that are in line with the company's interests. The brand is concretised by means of the principles, describing tangible behaviour that is born out of the priorities and purpose. Detailing the brand values and purpose like this will help build a more coherent and deep understanding of the brand amongst internal stakeholders. They will be able to not only identify the purpose and the values, but also the day-to-day actions that express these abstract parts of the brand. The cognitive representation of values in the minds of employees will thus be enhanced with more meaning and context.

Freedom within a framework & Brand identification

Freedom within a framework is per definition a strategy that taps into the intrinsic motivation of employees. The framework is designed to guide, but not stifle. That means that the incentive to comply with the framework comes from within employees, instead of from strict rules that allow them no free moving space. The framework offers enough clarity for individuals to find out whether or not they identify with the brand. At the same time, the freedom protects transparency and ensures that a lack of identification will not remain unnoticed.

Freedom within a framework & Brand commitment

Making sure employees are familiar with multiple levels of abstraction of the brand (i.e. the purpose, priorities and principles) will help them make sense of their work. Knowing how a certain action is contributing to the higher purpose will be a motivating factor. That helps individuals feel like they are a significant and relevant part of the organisation (K. de Kruijf, personal communication, December 20, 2021).

Freedom within a framework & Brand citizenship behaviour

Lastly, a 'Framework of freedom' can help improve brand citizenship behaviour, by offering employees the context and information they need. By providing the necessary guidance, employees now know better how to act in a way that benefits the company and suits the ideals. If all of the previous steps succeeded as well, this brand citizenship behaviour would come from an authentic place. Intrinsic motivation would drive employees to behave like the brand, and freedom within a framework would enable them to do so.
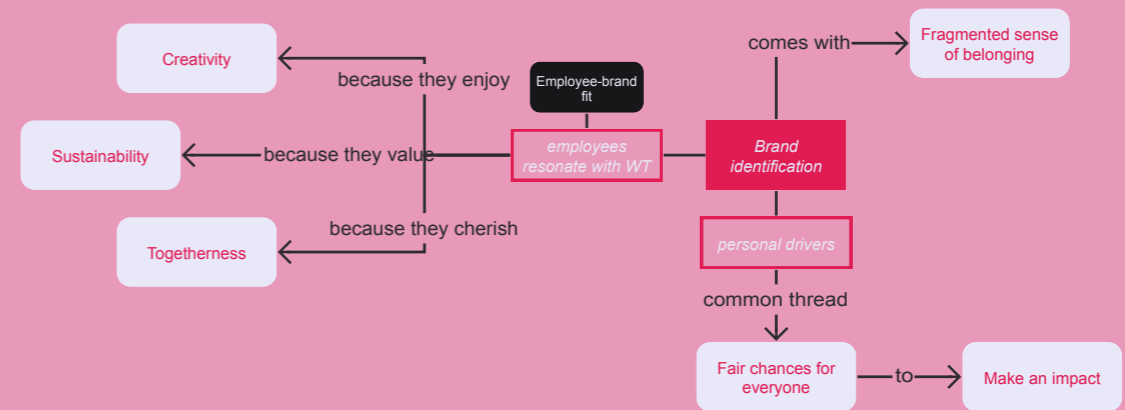
R. Assumption core values

Creativity

Supporting the creative process [2]

Giving people a stage [2,7]

Doing things that feel scary [8]

Pursuing an idea if you believe in it [5,8]

Being bold and unique [3,7]

Building and making things [6]

Inspiring people to create [2,5]

Sharing ideas with others [2,7]

Creating opportunities [6]

Setting a high bar for what you make [5]

Freedom

Not being afraid to follow words with actions [4]

Acting independently in the process of decision making [2,4]

Rolling up your sleeves and do what needs to be done [5]

Having room to fail and learn [4]

Making a difference if there is something you don't like [5]

Expressing your unfiltered opinion [2]

Being in a safe space to experiment [6]

Humanity

Supporting the community [2]

Thinking beyond your own personal box [2,7]

Communicating with empathy [3]

Thinking about users' need in the first place [5,7]

Expressing your opinion with care for others' feelings [2]

Always putting people in the equation [4]

Knowing your colleagues on a personal level [3,7]

Supporting others to be their best, without hidden agenda [7]

Valuing everyone's opinion and feelings [4]

Going out of your way to help others [6]

Embracing open and transparent communication [3,5]

Thriving under teamwork [4]

Using other people's energy to your advantage [4]

S. Ideation boundary object

ideas notebook
→ use as boundary object
for reflection

team meeting
takeovers

scenario
role play
→ according to the
manifesto, how would
we react?

how might we
keep a
FINGER ON THE
PULSE?

checklist
or
pulse survey
· understanding
· identification
· commitment
· behaviour

exploring nuances
sessions
→ extreme, sacrifice,
exception, aim, rebellion
→ adapt manifesto
accordingly

recurring
BA meetings

compare
external +
internal comp.
of brand

how might we
ITERATE TO STAY
UP TO DATE?

keep track of
aspirations + dreams

fridge poetry
→ shuffle + rearrange
manifesto

or in
dreaming sessions.

e.g. in
notebooks

T. Input data creative session

Out of insights coming from the interviews and the survey (WeTransfer, 2022b), a set of words was gathered to form the starting point for the 'fridge magnet' exercise in the creative session. This overview shows how the insights led to the keywords (in pink).

we learn every day

learn

learn every day

Feel supported to ask questions and learn

caring

we are supportive and caring, no matter what

Going out of your way to help others [6]

imperfection

nothing is set, everything can be questioned

Genuinely trying to make an impact, even if it is unsure if you will succeed [6,7]

we know we're not perfect

Supporting others to be their best, without hidden agenda [7]

Supportive and caring

supportive

responsible

a   genuine   effort

not afraid to speak out

Expressing your unfiltered opinion [2]

open   communication

we embrace open communication

open, honest

speak   up

we are not afraid to speak up

listen

Embracing open and transparent communication [3,5]

Valuing everyone's opinion and feelings [4]

manager values my ideas

we value every opinion

everyone's   opinion

teamwork

we thrive under teamwork

Thriving under teamwork [4]

Sharing ideas with others [2,7]

teamwork makes the dream work [iii]

inspiring

bursting with creative energy

Using other people's energy to your advantage [4]

we contaminate each other with creative energy

Inspiring colleagues (iii)

contagious   creative   energy

we set a high bar for everything we make

quality work

Setting a high bar for what you make [5]

being motivated and want to do your best

a   high   bar

ambitious people

reward ambition

go-getters

go-getters

Rolling up your sleeves and do what needs to be done [5]

we are enterprising people who pursue good ideas

Pursuing an idea if you believe in it [5,8]

good   ideas

enterprising

a   scary   challenge

not afraid to take on a challenge (iiiiii)

Doing things that feel scary [8]

we like to take on a scary challenge

Do things our own way [II]

we all do things our own way

Being bold and unique [3,7]

our   own   way

Thinking beyond your own personal box [2,7]

beyond   our   bubble

We look beyond our bubble

we follow words with actions

pursue

Not being afraid to follow words with actions [4]

Making a difference if there is something you don't like [5]

Acting independently in the process of decision making [2,4]

autonomous

autonomy [iiiII]

we are autonomous and feel responsible

U. Creative session

On the following pages, you will find the exercises as presented in Miro during the creative session meant to lay the foundations for the manifesto.
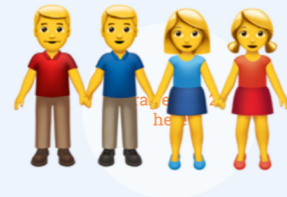

Can you describe a situation when a co-worker did something that you felt was typical and characteristic for WeTransfer?

My first manager at WeTransfer encouraged me to reach for my goal of becoming a manager even though I was lacking confidence in my ability. Much more importantly than encouraging me to reach beyond my comfort zone, though, is that she made sure to set me up for success by connecting me to people that could help and fostering an environment where I could feel safe trying new things.

What made this moment/action 'WeTransfer-y'? Answer using 3 emojis + 3 reasons.

fostering safe spaces for growth	supporting each other	trying to be great

👤 individual ⏰ 7 mins

WeTransfer-y

We will give shape to a couple of sentences that describe the most important desired behaviour, in your eyes. To give you some inspiration, I already included a couple of `snippets` from my research findings. Also, there are some general `building blocks` to help you get started.

· If you look at the reasons you named in the first exercise, are there words listed below that reflect these?
  · Are there any adaptations you want to make? Go ahead!
  · Do you want to add stuff? Do so in the `blue spaces` !
This is your free space: shuffle these building blocks around, rearrange them, combine them, adapt them, add new ones.

we	thrive	on		beyond					responsible

we | are

we | recognise

we | act
we | like | to
we | are | not
we | are | good | at
we | are | known | for

we

Put your three final *desired behaviours* here:

1. we dare to speak up but first we listen

2. we encourage imperfection in pursuit of a scary challenge or going beyond our bubble

3. we embrace open communication and supportive teamwork

👤 individual ⏰ 10 mins

Fridge poetry

Together, we came up with these *desired behaviours:*

Which ones do you find interesting 💡,
recognisable This. or inspiring ❤️?

Desired behaviours

We'll dive a bit deeper into what it means to be part of WeTransfer - to explore the nuances and limits to the behaviours we just formulated.

- Spend max 2 minutes to together pick two desired behaviours from the list. (Don't worry, none of them will go in the bin... Just pick those that speak to you most.)
- For each desired behaviour, discuss the five questions - the extreme, the exception, the sacrifice, the aim and the rebellion. Type the answers in the spaces.

	We act in the interest of our users.	We encourage critical thinking	BONUS: Type your chosen desired behaviour 3 here.
The extreme When is this behaviour pushed to the ultimate extreme?	We put our users first even if it means spending more money, more time, and more resources than originally anticipated.	We allow every single person in the company to be involved in the decision-making. Open forum.	Type here
The exception In what case is this behaviour not desirable within WeTransfer?	When our users demand that WeTransfer operates in direct contradiction with our values. (Bigots!)	When we don't recognize the human behind the policy, decision, and strategy (directed at the person, rather than the idea)	Type here
The sacrifice If we commit to this behaviour, what other behaviour do we have to give up?	We would need to deprioritise our creative outside-the-box thinking, quick wins, risky ventures, etc etc... essentially we'd "just be a file-transferring service."	Quick decision-making, nobody could take ownership over something and the company would move very slowly.	Type here
The aim What (change) do we want to achieve by showing this behaviour within WeTransfer?	Keep our user base engaged and satisfied with our products.	Everybody knows the rationale behind decision making	Type here
The rebellion How do we go against the status quo with this behaviour, and set ourselves apart?	Unlike other tech companies, we put the users and their wishes ahead of our own planning and creative thinking/knowledge.	We listen to everybody	Type here

👥 pairs / trios   ⏱ 20 mins

Deep dive

V. From data to draft manifesto

Research outcomes (interviews & survey)

Session outcomes (exercise 1)

Session outcomes (exercise 2)

Current description of values

we encourage open communication and critical thinking

smart and critical

We are critical thinkers, because we don't take anything at face value

we encourage critical thinking

we encourage critical thinking

we encourage open communication and critical thinking

we know we're not perfect

actively raise the red flag

We dare to speak our minds and encourage others to do the same

we embrace open communication

We speak out if we see something that worries us

we dare to speak up but first we listen

We foster an environment of togetherness and teamwork

we thrive under teamwork

we are not afraid to speak up

not afraid to speak our mind

we dare to speak up

team love

support each other

we are supportive and caring, no matter what

we support and nurture creatives

We support others to do their best work and we always empathise

we set a high bar for everything we make

With everything we do, we put in effort to do it well

We accommodate everyone's strengths

We make ourselves available for others when we can

creative and skilled

put time, attention and effort in

We act in our users' best interest, but we don't blindly follow them

we act in the interest of our users

We ask people how we can help and listen to what they need.

we follow words with actions

we like to take on a scary challenge

we are not afraid to upset bigots

we are good at change

we are good at change

Our starting point is positive

We are openminded, excited by change and by challenges

We are not afraid to upset bigots

We just go for it

we are enterprising people who pursue good ideas

we contaminate each other with creative energy

We thrive on people's positive energy

We are openminded, excited by change and by challenges

we thrive when we embrace our own way

we dare to speak up but first we listen

We pay attention to including and hearing everyone

we value every opinion

We do things our own way

we all do things our own way

We look beyond our bubble

We ask people how we can help and listen to what they need.

we are autonomous and feel responsible

W. Dilemma pilot

Pilot test

To benchmark the dilemmas and make sure the phrasing does not nudge respondents strongly towards one of both sides of the scales, a short pilot was conducted. Three participants, employed at respectively a Dutch bank, a publisher and a general practice, were presented the eleven dilemmas. They answered what they think an employee at their company would do. A 7-point scale was used, with 1 being the one extreme and 7 being the other extreme - as depicted in the image below.

1

A manager communicates a taken decision to their team. However, X has some doubts about the outcome.

What would someone at your company do?

Stay silent   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Speak up

2

X learned their colleague has received a better bonus than X has, despite X thinks they have been working hard enough to deserve the same.

What would someone at your company do?

Leave it   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Go after it

3

The end of the day is nearing at the office, but X is just getting into the flow of working on a project. At the same time, drinks with their team are kicked off.

What would someone at your company do?

Join the team   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Stay in their zone

4

It's a busy day and X is working hard to manage. Then, one of their coworkers comes up to X because they are not feeling too well mentally. The coworker asks X to join them for a coffee.

What would someone at your company do?

Focus on self   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Focus on coworker

Outcomes

Participant 1

1. 5
2. 6
3. 5
4. 6
5. 5
6. 6
7. 3
8. 7
9. 6
10. 7
11. 6

Participant 2

1. 5
2. 6
3. 2
4. 6
5. 5
6. 3
7. 5
8. 2
9. 6
10. 3
11. 3

Participant 3

1. 5
2. 3
3. 2
4. 5
5. 5
6. 6
7. 2
8. 5
9. 3
10. 3
11. 6

Adaptations

For a good benchmarking of the dilemmas, the mean of the respondents' answers should not be too high or too low, but rather lie somewhere around the 4 points. For dilemmas where the mean deviated more than one point from the 4 (and the mean of which thus ends up below 3 or above 5), phrasing was reconsidered. The means of the three pilots are as follows:

Dilemma	Mean
1	5
2	5
3	3
4	5,67
5	5
6	5
7	3,33
8	4,67
9	5
10	4,33
11	5

Only dilemma 4 shows a strong deviation in its mean. Respondents tend to answer towards the higher side. Because of that, the phrasing of the dilemma was adapted to attempt to make it less extreme and to avoid socially desired answering.

From:
It's a busy day and X is working hard to manage. Then, one of their coworkers comes up to X because they are not feeling too well mentally. The coworker asks X to join them for a coffee.

To:
Tomorrow is deadline day. A WeTransferian is working hard to manage. Then, a coworker comes by to ask if the WeTransferian has time to sit down and explain a procedure.

X. Walk-in session

Diabolical dilemmas

Eleven dilemmas were formulated and printed on A1 posters. Participants walked past a wall and used post-its to put their 'vote' on the scale. They had the opportunity to write any thoughts or explanation on the post-it.

The following pages show how all dilemmas were presented and responded to in the session. The pictures show the raw data and below each picture, a summary of the elaborations on the post-its is given.
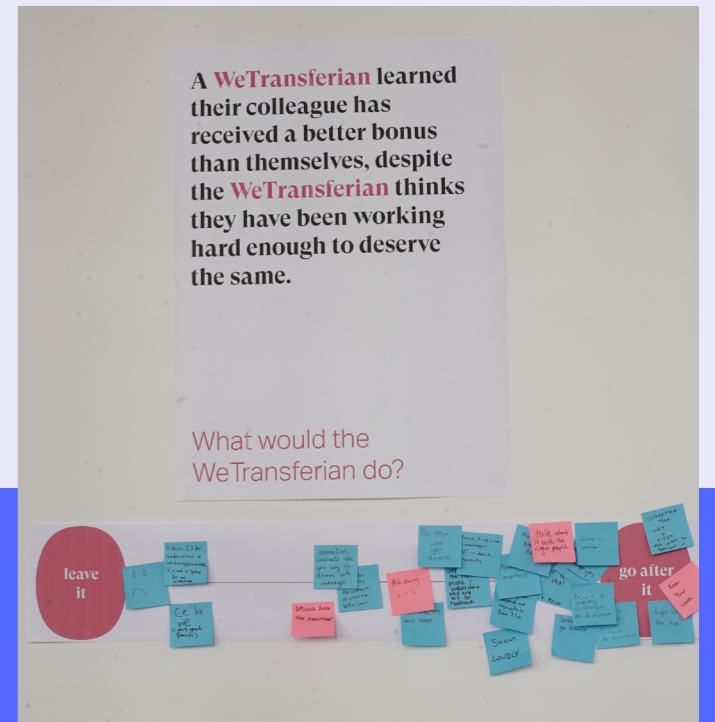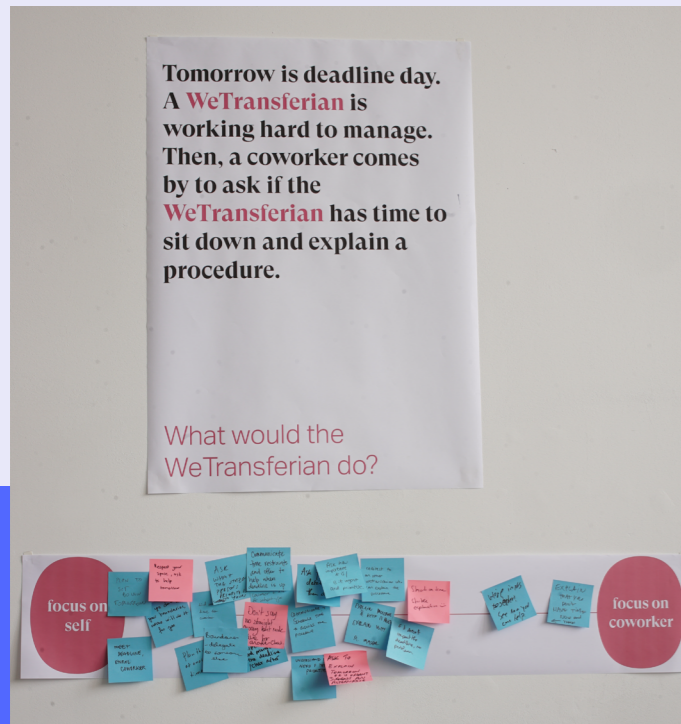

WeTransferians should fight for what they believe in. Equality and fairness are sacred. Discuss this with your manager.
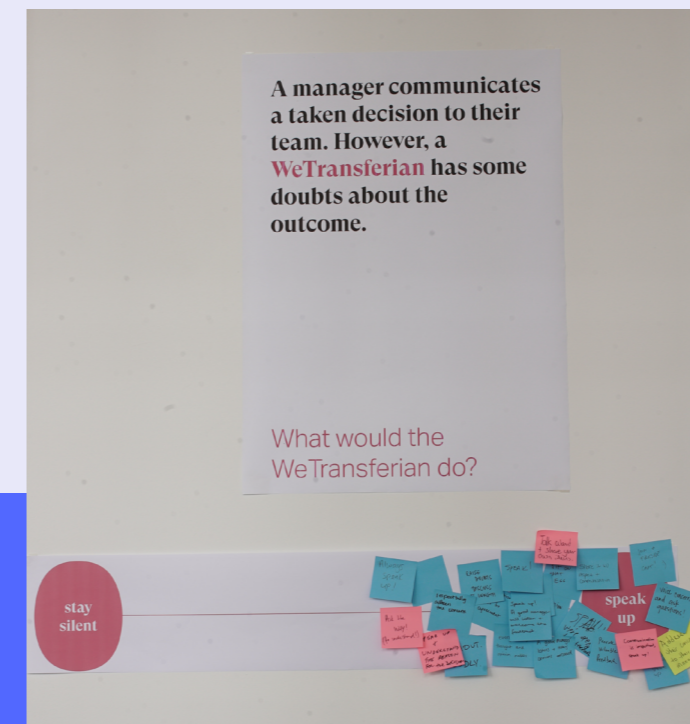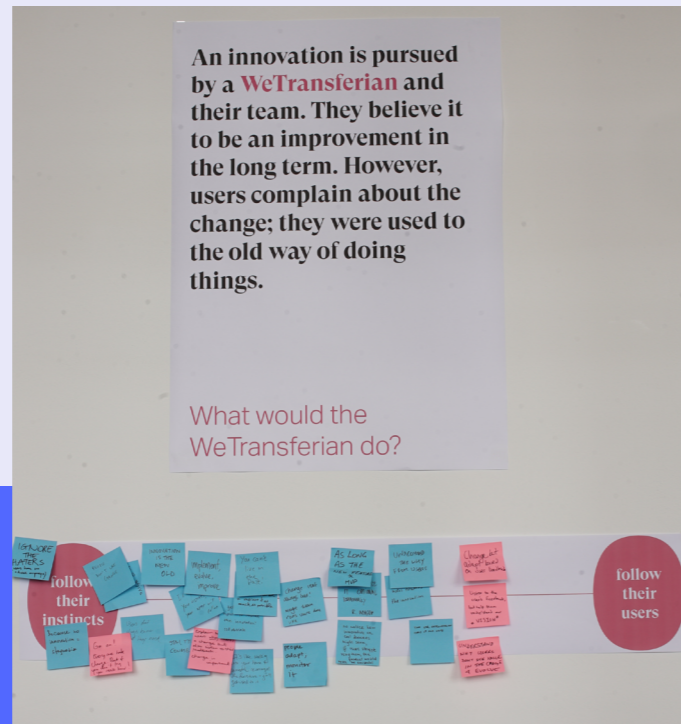

Ask about the why and always speak up. N.B.: do that with respect. A good manager listens.
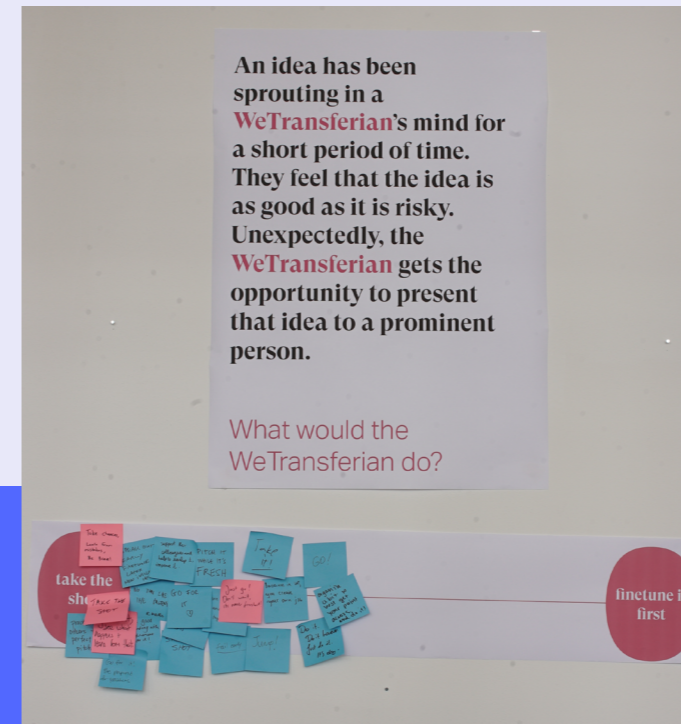

Fun is important and so is the team. Also, it is important to do what feels right. It feels like every decision a WeTransferian would take here would be accepted and understood.

Tomorrow is deadline day. A **WeTransferian** is working hard to manage. Then, a coworker comes by to ask if the **WeTransferian** has time to sit down and explain a procedure.

What would the WeTransferian do?
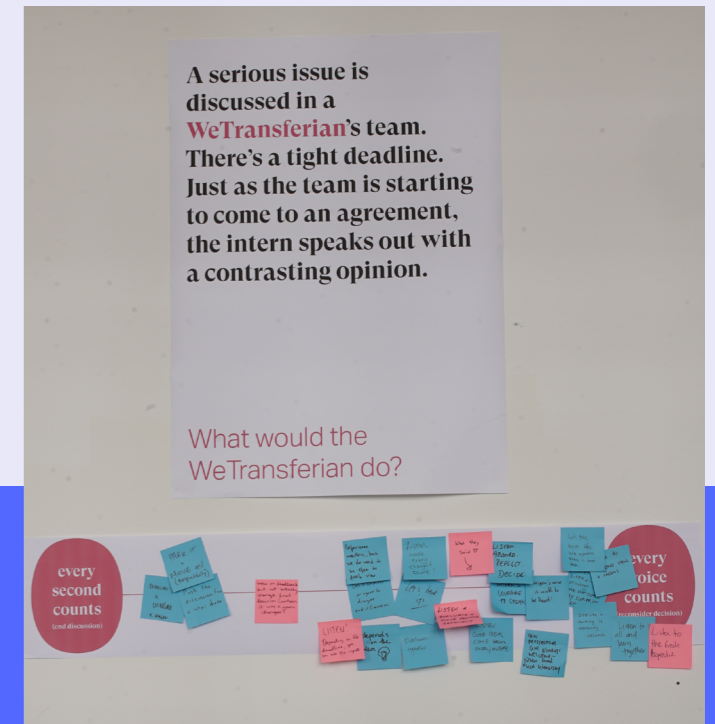
focus on self — focus on coworker

Again, communication is key. A WeTransferian would not say no right away, but try to reschedule to another time. They are aware of the need to prioritise and set boundaries.

An innovation is pursued by a **WeTransferian** and their team. They believe it to be an improvement in the long term. However, users complain about the change; they were used to the old way of doing things.

What would the WeTransferian do?
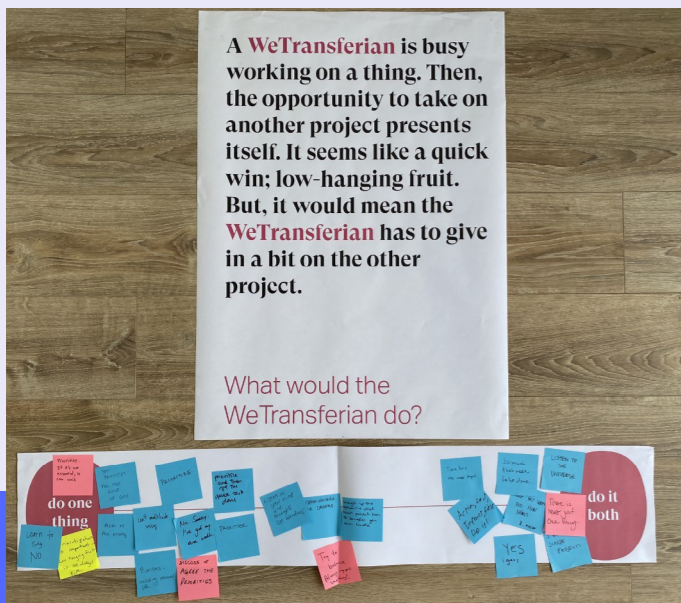
follow their instincts — follow their users

Innovate, don't stagnate. Really understanding the users and their motives is important here. A WeTransferian would go for innovation and change and engage with users to guide them in the new way.

An idea has been sprouting in a **WeTransferian**'s mind for a short period of time. They feel that the idea is as good as it is risky. Unexpectedly, the **WeTransferian** gets the opportunity to present that idea to a prominent person.

What would the WeTransferian do?

take the shot — finetune it first

Jump, go for it, take it! You can finetune after, fail early and learn fast. Overthinking has no value for WeTransferians. Putting yourself out there gives you the most valuable insight.
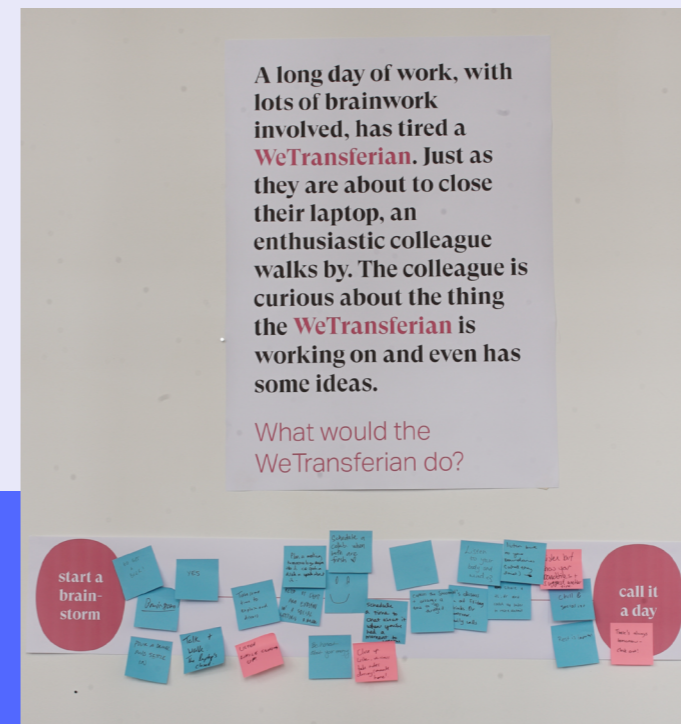
A serious issue is discussed in a **WeTransferian**'s team. There's a tight deadline. Just as the team is starting to come to an agreement, the intern speaks out with a contrasting opinion.

What would the WeTransferian do?

every second counts — every voice counts

Listen! Every idea and perspective is valuable and that diversity is cherished. The best idea wins, no matter who it comes from.

A **WeTransferian** is busy working on a thing. Then, the opportunity to take on another project presents itself. It seems like a quick win: low-hanging fruit. But, it would mean the **WeTransferian** has to give in a bit on the other project.

What would the WeTransferian do?

do one thing — do it both

Elaborations express the internal tension within WeTransferians. They know they have to prioritise, but there is still the urge to do more to make an impact. Channelling the energy right is a struggle.

A **WeTransferian** is collaborating with a client on an important project. At some point, when they get together to talk business, the client makes a comment that seems inappropriate and makes the **WeTransferian** feel uncomfortable.

What would the WeTransferian do?

shake it off — go for the confrontation

People agree that the blame is on the client here. Maybe it isn't the right client then... However, many mention staying respectful and even curious while confronting the client. Setting boundaries is needed.

A long day of work, with lots of brainwork involved, has tired a **WeTransferian**. Just as they are about to close their laptop, an enthusiastic colleague walks by. The colleague is curious about the thing the **WeTransferian** is working on and even has some ideas.

What would the WeTransferian do?

start a brainstorm — call it a day

Being honest about how you feel is important. Discuss and look for an alternative. It will be understood. It is no option to either brainstorm against your gut feel or completely ignore your coworker.

An experienced coworker has taught a **WeTransferian**, who is new to the company, how to execute a certain task. However, the **WeTransferian** reckons they know a better way to do it.

What would the WeTransferian do?

do it their own way — do it as they're taught

The main approach would be: discuss and explore. WeTransferians like doing new things but communication is key. Stay curious, ask, and learn together.

It's the remix

To reflect directly on the draft of the manifesto, participants tore off their five least favourite principles, added one they thought was missing and expressed their favourite principle.

It's the remix.

Before you is a draft of the WeTransfer manifesto (the rules we work by). It's a draft, so help improve it now. S'il vous plaît.

1. Take a manifesto draft
2. Tear off the 5 principles you'd least like to be in there
3. Add 1 principle
4. Draw a <3 on your favourite principle

WeTransfer Manifesto Draft
The rules we work by.
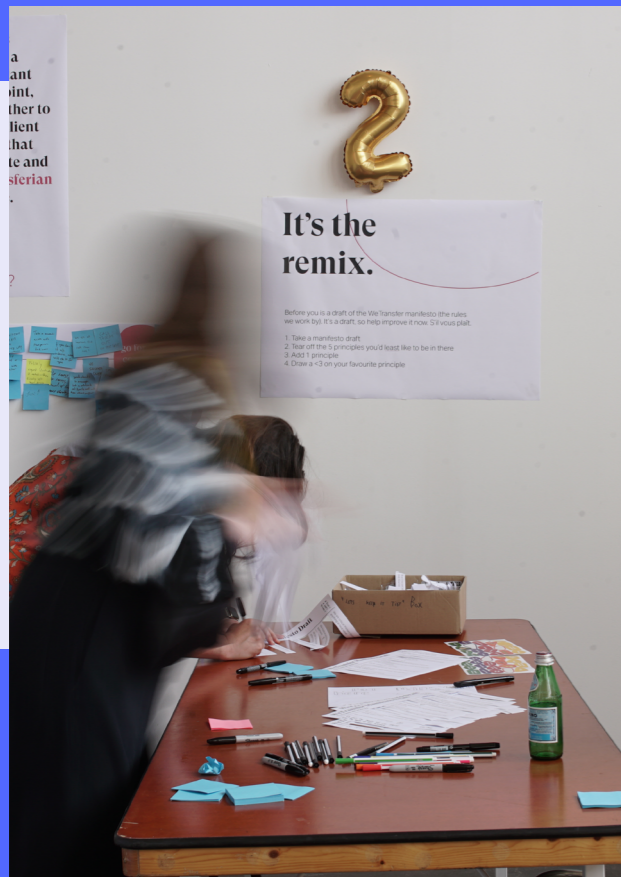
✗ Tear 5
+ Add 1
♡ Like 1

We are critical thinkers because we don't take anything at face value
We thrive on people's positive energy
We foster an environment of togetherness and teamwork
We dare to speak our minds and encourage others to do the same
We just go for it
We pay attention to including and hearing everyone
We support others to do their best work and we always empathise
We do things our own way
With everything we do, we put in the effort to do it well
We act in our users' best interest, but we don't blindly follow them
We are not afraid to upset bigots

Outcomes of 'It's the remix'

Principle	x Torn off (-1)	x Left on (+1)	x Favourited (+2)	Points
We are critical thinkers because we don't take anything at face value	7	7	0	0
We thrive on people's positive energy	7	7	0	0
We foster an environment of togetherness and teamwork	6	6	2	4
We dare to speak our minds and encourage others to do the same	1	13	0	12
We just go for it	10	4	0	-6
We pay attention to including and hearing everyone	1	12	1	13
We support others to do their best work and we always empathise	6	7	1	3
We do things our own way	10	2	2	-4
With everything we do, we put in the effort to do it well	6	6	2	4
We act in our users' best interest, but we don't blindly follow them	11	3	0	-8
We are not afraid to upset bigots	6	7	1	3

Added principles:
- Make it bold and beautiful, always!
- We respect + listen to people's perspectives
- We put the needs of our planet over the needs of our business
- We are not afraid to question ourselves
- We are not afraid to speak up
- We want the best for everyone
- We empower ourselves and others
- We aren't afraid to dream big
- We are responsible
- We appreciate/celebrate the wins, even the small ones
- Our creativity is fluid. We live a brainstorm.
- We remember the human behind the (job, account, user, etc)
- We remain open and curious and creative

Conclusion

Previous exercises indicated whether or not principles are lived and supported by employees. This conclusion puts these results together. Green means the principle was very much supported, orange means it is a doubtful case, red means the principles was not supported.

Principle	Dilemmas	It's the remix
We are critical thinkers because we don't take anything at face value	🟩	🟧
We thrive on people's positive energy	🟥	🟧
We foster an environment of togetherness and teamwork	🟧	🟧
We dare to speak our minds and encourage others to do the same	🟩	🟩
We just go for it	🟩	🟥
We pay attention to including and hearing everyone	🟩	🟩
We support others to do their best work and we always empathise	🟥	🟩
We do things our own way	🟩	🟥
With everything we do, we put in the effort to do it well	🟧	🟧
We act in our users' best interest, but we don't blindly follow them	🟥	🟥
We are not afraid to upset bigots	🟩	🟩

What if...

Finally, participants were presented a short introduction of the journal idea. They could put their thoughts and first impressions of the idea on the poster. Below, the written answers are depicted.
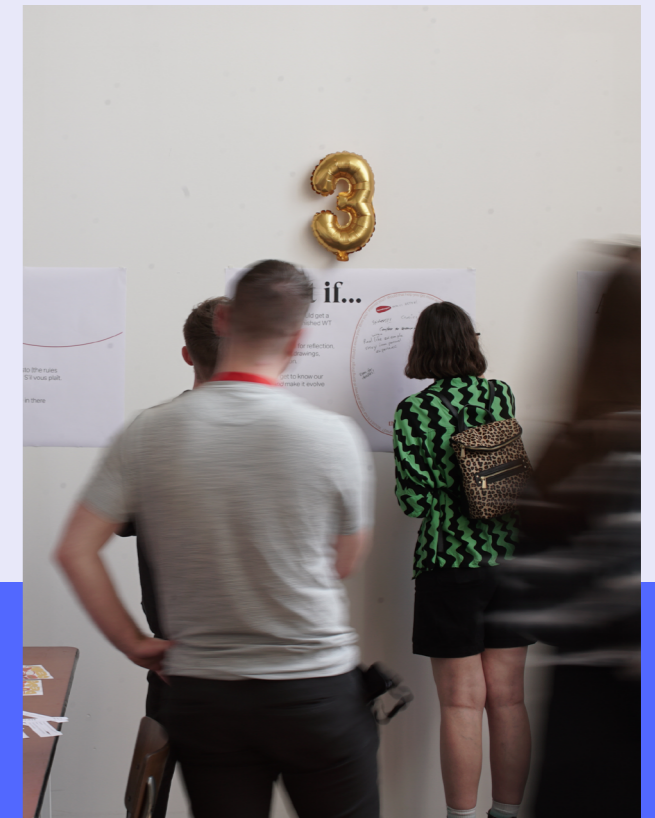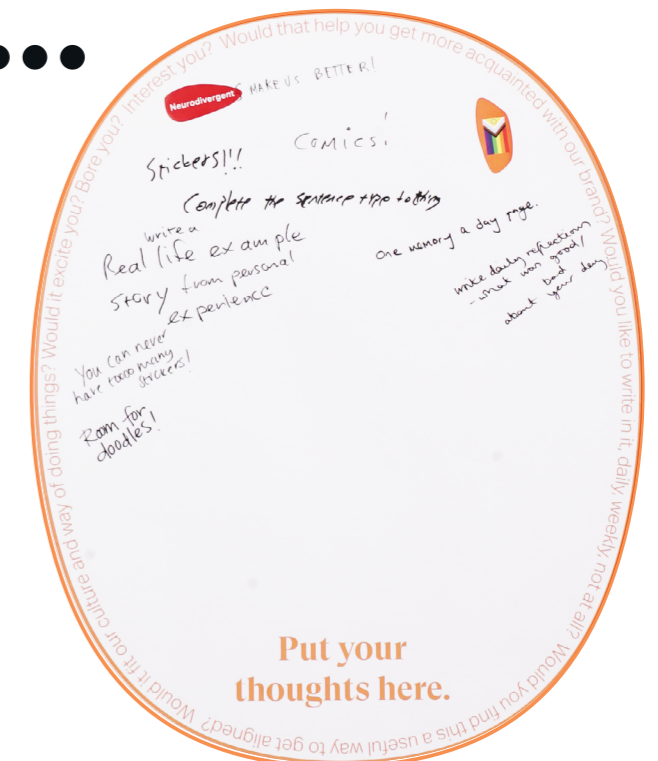

What if...

... every one of you would get a **journal**. With our unfinished WT manifesto in it.

It would have room for reflection, ideas, inspiration, drawings, stickers, and so on.

All for you to get to know our manifesto *and* make it evolve with us!

Something like this. But then it'll look way cooler.

Put your thoughts here.

Y. Design of one journal section

In this Journal, you will find the principles of the living WeTransfer manifesto. A *living* manifesto indeed, because it is ever-evolving and this Journal will bring it to life for you. The manifesto describes the six principles we work by. It is about putting our values and ideals into action. We are a rare species, us WeTransferians. What makes us especially unique is the ability to be daring and caring at the same time. Daring to be ourselves and daring to say what we think. Caring for the people around us and caring to keep improving ourselves. This Journal will guide you through the manifesto. But the most important ingredient is still missing, that is: YOU. We always say the people make WeTransfer. So go ahead and start this journey: make the manifesto your own. **Ready, set, action!**

We dare to speak our minds.

That means we stand for what we believe in and we are not afraid to express that loud and clear. Actually we want people around us to show the same level of authenticity and honesty. We stay true to who we are, no bigot can make us shy away from that.

They went before you.

Let's start with some true stories of people speaking their minds; told by WeTransferians, to WeTransferians.

At an in-person All Hands with the entire company, during Q&As, there were many questions that were **pointed and direct** about the company strategy. Specifically, I remember someone asking a question about why we made certain decisions around our product roadmap.

I felt like leadership **welcomed the question** and it created **good dialogue** within the company, even though the question could have been seen as confrontational or tense. It made me feel like WeTransfer is a place that welcomes debate and differing opinions. People are not afraid to speak their mind, especially to people in power. When there are concerns, they don't wait but actively **raise the red flag**.

George

THESE ARE FICTIONAL NAMES AND STOCK PHOTOS, BUT TRUE STORIES.

Sara

THESE ARE FICTIONAL NAMES AND STOCK PHOTOS, BUT TRUE STORIES.

In October 2019, a new set of embargoes were announced from Trump's White House. This announcement ended up negatively effecting **creatives in Venezuela**, as a lot of US-based companies, such as Adobe, enforced these sanctions. This meant that, for example, if you were a Venezuelan photographer, all of a sudden, you had zero access to the tools to, y'know, work.

So, what we did was offer any and all Venezuelan creatives **1 free year of WeTransfer Pro**, in order to give them somewhere to at least keep their work safe until the embargo lifted.

This idea came from **a single member** of WeTransfer with Venezuelan connections, and I distinctly remember the speed and passion that went into this initiative. I think it took about 3 days, from "hey, we should do something about this." to "yes, we've done something about this," which **impressed the hell out of me** as I was only about 6 months at the company at that time. Someone felt **comfortable enough to speak up** about something they felt strongly about, and 'management' was clever enough to listen.

Find your voice.

You're probably thinking: what am I going to speak up about then? Well, out of the fullness of the heart, the mouth speaks. What is *your* heart full of?

Inspo.
We'll start easy: the happy things. What do you get your inspiration from?

MY FAVOURITE PLACE

MY POWER SONG

Stick it here.

MY HERO

THINGS I LIKE

Drive.
On a more serious note: what drives you? What are things you feel strongly and passionate about?

3 What is your absolute dream for speaking up? Think big! Write a book? Ask something bold in front of 1.000 people?

2 What are your ambitious challenges, that will take you some effort? Practice makes perfect!

Step. by. step.

Speaking your mind can be terrifying. Taking baby steps is totally okay. Use this page to determine your goals, small and big. Setting goals makes our dreams come true. You'll be on Mars before you know it.

1 What are your first steps? Think of little things you can do to start being more open and making your voice heard.

Hip, Hip, Hurray!

Wow.

Well done!

Celebrate the wins

Never waste an opportunity to celebrate. Put everything that made you just that little bit more confident to speak your mind in the balloons.
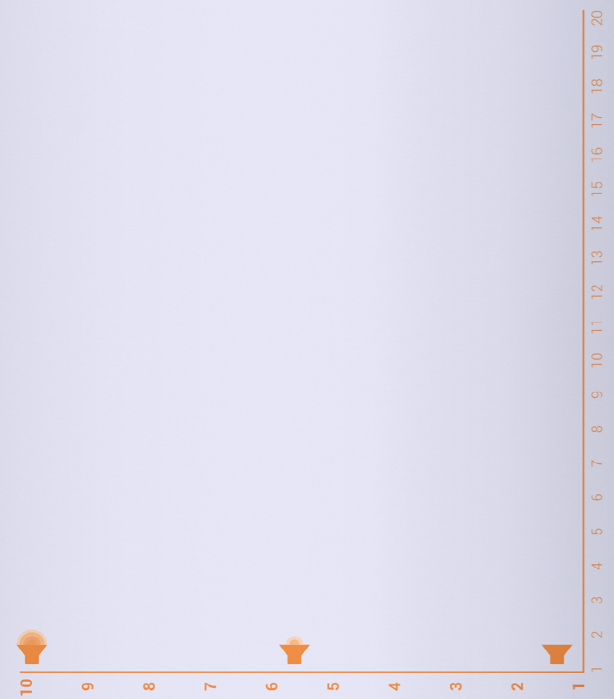
How you doin'?

Life's like a rollercoaster: it has ups and downs. Keep track of your rollercoaster here. Every two weeks, reflect on how well *speaking your mind* went for you. On a volume level from 1 to 10, how loud did you shout?

20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Special moments

At times you will face a challenge and be unsure what to do. Cherish these moments: that's when you learn! So: here's a little pocket for all your special learning moments.

Special

DATE

What happened? What

take your special moments along to peer-to-peers with your team

What happened? What was your challenge?

DATE

how loud did you shout?

Special 'speak your mind' moment

Notes & doodles

TELL ME MORE TELL ME MORE...
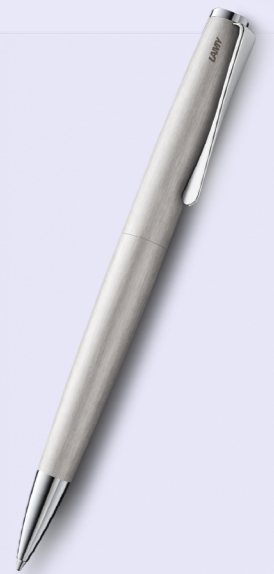
Z. Brand ambassador hours

Activity	Hours	Times per year	Hours per year	Notes
BA meetings	1.5 h per session	4	6 h	
SLT/BA sync	2 h per session	1	2 h	
Manifesto mindfulness	2 h per session	7	14 h	(350 employees / 10 = 35 peer-to-peers per quarter. 140 peer-to-peers per year. Every BA has 7 peer-to-peers to facilitate yearly)
Updating information	0.5 h per month	4	5,625 h (> 5,5)	(Notion, All-hands, Magpie, ...)
Prepare sessions, process results, reflect	2,5 h per week	45	112,5 h	
		Total	**140 h per year (3,1 h per week)**	