Brand Humanizing

An inevitable and humane turn on business in an increasingly robotic world.

By Jonathan Flores and Ferry Hoes

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What is Brand Humanizing?

It is 2018, and technology has never before been such a driving force in company growth. Everybody is reaping the fruits. It started with companies that invested in websites in the 90s, and companies right now that heavily invest in things such as Automation, Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence.

However, technology has driven business and marketing away from what it was meant to be, namely an economic, behavioral and human-focused science.

In efforts to increase efficiency and decrease company spending, companies are focused on automating as much human labor as possible. More automation and less people, means faster money, scalability and more profit.

It all sounds like magic, right? Yet, it all has a dark side.

We both have personally seen it ourselves. After working for a combined 150+ companies (famous corporates, venture-backed and fast-growing startups and SMEs), we have concluded that today's businesses are massively misusing modern technology. And it is impacting their business, our future and human sanity.

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Some examples:

- Without you knowing it, your email address is scraped, shared and uploaded to platforms such as Facebook or emailclients such as Mailchimp so companies can target ads at you and spam you with their email newsletters.
- And then, when you click on their ads or emails and go to their website, these companies can see specifically what you as an individual click on on their website. They go as far as to create video recordings of your behavior with tools such as Hotjar that even display what you typed in forms that you have not submitted.
- Think that's insane? Guess what, it gets worse. Experiments are constantly run on websites without you knowing to be a part of them and yes, even when you don't buy. These websites are programmed to automatically put you in a specific group of people that sees a different version of the website so they can tests what makes them more money. So you are not merely browsing a website. No, you are unknowlingly helping companies make more money with your scrolling and clicking behavior.
- Let's say you bought something, but there's something wrong. Some companies go as far as to cut costs by eliminating customer service departments and replace human beings with FAQ's and chatbots, so you don't even get a posibility to get into contact with an actual human being and complain about it.

Although technology is great, it has current business applications that definitely are not. We need to drastically look different at how we are abusing technology for business at the expense of humans

Something has to change, *now*.

The Privacy and AI Problem

Privacy has never before been such a hot topic as in today's debates. Your data is being sold and used, and combined with AI, companies understand your needs even before they consciously manifest themselves to yourself.

AI optimizes for results. And this might for example mean that AI optimizes ads for unstable people because they are more easily to convince. And since AI is programmed to be completely rational; ethics and human feelings play no role in what it decides to optimize for. It merely follows the money.

Moreover, AI has struck fear to many people in today's world. People are losing their jobs, and will increasingly continue to do so in the near future. Why? Because there are many jobs around that robots simply can do much better, faster and way more efficiently.

Is that a bad thing?

No. Not at all. It is actually great.

We'll explain why.

# Business Leaders have been using technology for the wrong things

What we have failed to do as human beings, is understanding how our technology should be used in the business field.

As a marketer/business person, do you sell to human beings or to robots?

Let me guess.. If you belong to 100% of the marketers/business people out there, your answer was probably human beings.

Humans and robots (or AI) possess different qualities, and both should be used accordingly.

On the next page is a breakdown of a couple of skills required in the marketing field, and who's better at it; humans or robots.
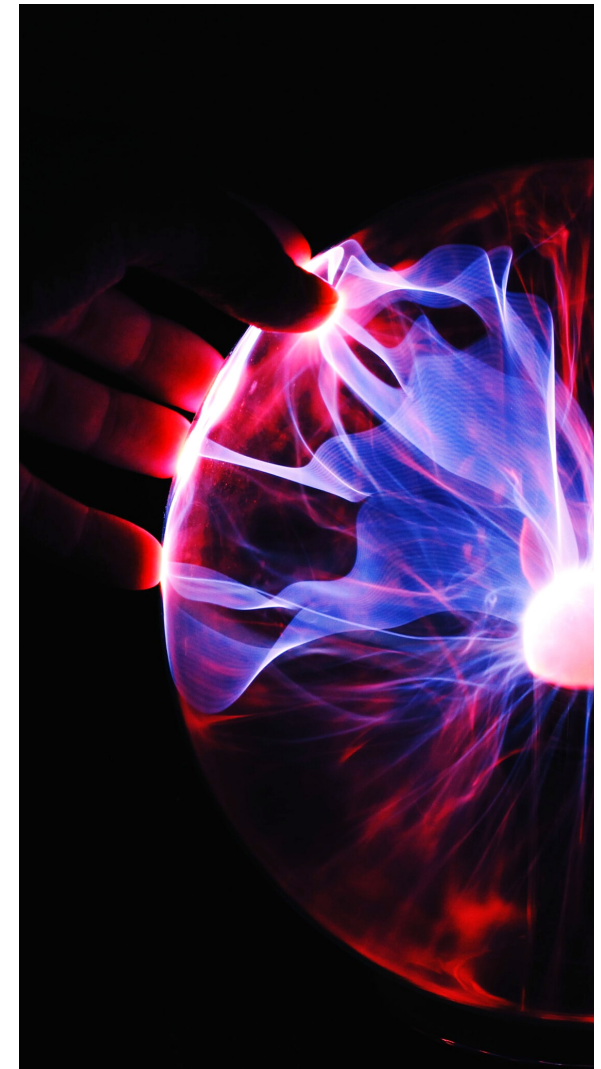
Humans v.s. Robots

The diagram explains why:

- Your automated email blasts to random strangers are quite ineffective on the long-term
- Robots are better accountants than humans
- Factory processes should mostly be run by robots
- Customer services with robot voices are not considered to be customer friendly
- Facebook often has gotten into much trouble due to uncontrollable AI
- Unstable people may be targeted by online ads because AI has uncovered they are more easily convinced to buy certain products
- Chatbots in most cases provide shitty customer service

Human			Robots
👎		Making calculations	👍
👎		Avoid errors	👍
👎		Run repetative processes	👍
👎		Decide the optimal time and placement for ads	👍
👎		Making cost/profit projections	👍
👎		Send automated messages and e-mails	👍
👎		Collecting and processing quantative data	👍
👎		Keep on going 24/7	👍
👍		Create genuine relationships	👎
👍		Creativity	👎
👍		Telling compelling stories	👎
👍		Manage employees	👎
👍		Costumer service	👎
👍		Deal with ethics	👎
👍		Establishing company values	👎
👍		Deal with interpersonal context	👎

"But, companies such as Amazon are very successful",

I hear you say.

And yes, they truly are.

But let's imagine all companies around the world start to automate and use AI such as Amazon. What would we end up with?

Unfriendly and inhumane monopoly machines, run by just a few people and many robots, that start to have trouble attracting customers because most people are left without jobs.

An indefinitely shrinking economy would never be the answer to a prosperous future.

Brand Humanizing:

A mindset and way of working that generates customer loyalty and business growth

Technology is a great thing. And it in fact should be used to automate jobs and processes. But they should only automate the right jobs and processes. Those that humans are simply inferior in.

Basically: humans shouldn't try to be robots and robots shouldn't try to mimic humans. Technology should aid humans so they can be more human, not less.

Robots can almost take over every aspect in business except for those parts that require human contact. All jobs that require human contact shouldn't simply be automated. In fact, these are jobs that often are understaffed because the company doesn't see the "value" and because it is hard to "automate" human behavior. Yet, we know that building personal relationships, by humans, is a high predictor for turning one-time buyers into returning customers. .

Humans can build trust and a sense of mutual connection that technology simply can't

Say for example there's this certain coffee bar you like going to. Where they are happy when you come in, because they recognize you and are grateful for your business. Where they ask you about how your life is going, just because they're interested, not because they want to sell you more coffee. How easily would it be for another coffee bar to just simply convince you of going to their bar, instead of the one you're used to and happy with? That's going to be a hard sale. This new bar in your perception just offers you coffee, the one you are used to visiting offers you human connection too. And for social creatures such as ourselves, that provides a lot of value.

This is why jobs that become automated, should not result in the person being fired. In fact, the automation of a job should be celebrated by everyone in the company, because it enables the human in question to transfer to another (a new) job that much better aligns with their natural human talents; one that requires sincere human connection, context-aware empathy and ethics.

Automated Jobs

Soon to be automated jobs

Human Jobs
(AI cannot yet catchup with it)

Flow of humans
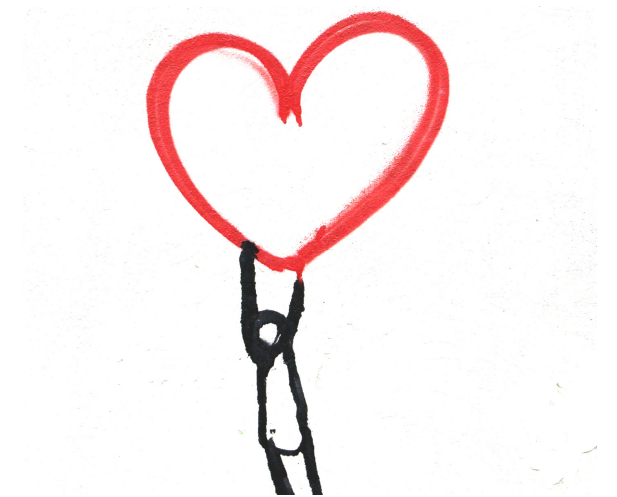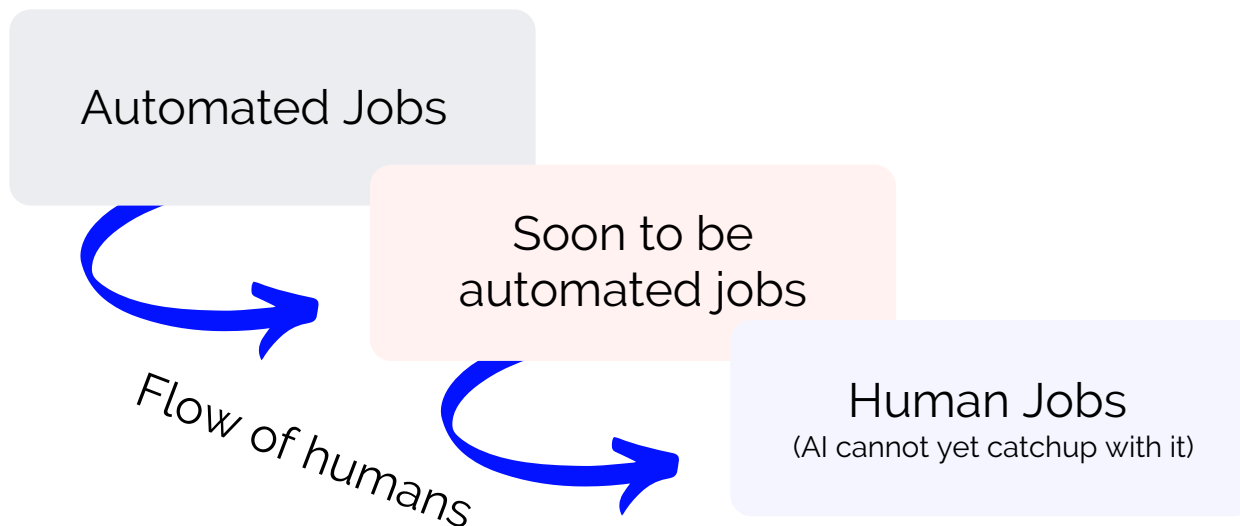
The automation of a job, should thus result into the further humanization of the company, as illustrated in image 2. By repositioning humans from automated jobs to human jobs, the company becomes better able to establish long-term relationships with their customers that are sincere and quality-driven. This means that new jobs will be created, such as the Brand Humanizer (more on this later in this blog). Jobs that help customers buy in a better way, jobs that help provide a better service, make a better product, etc. All with a humane touch and in the interest of the customer and the company's employees, which in the end enables company growth.

And with humanizing a job we even go as far as to humanize jobs that actually are run by human beings. Look at how many companies handle human customer support by phone for example. They have their employees rambeling some pre-written script to a customer. That is like asking a human to behave like a robot (remember image 1?). A script should merely aid these customer service employees to follow company guidelines so they can apply their human skillset of EQ and context-awareness to find the best suitable solution for their customer.

In short:
Technology should be leveraged to unleash human potential, not break it down.

Why Branding?
The role of Branding in Business Success

There are not a lot of people that truly understand what branding is.

Some people think it's a company's logo, others think it's their design. The likes of companies such as Nike, Zappos, Apple and Unilever however know, that it's the holy grail of their business and that branding is **everything** and **everywhere**.

At their most basic level, brands serve as markers for the offerings of a firm. For customers, brands can **simplify choice**, **promise a particular quality level**, **reduce risk**, and/or **engender trust** (Keller and Lehmann, 2006).

Branding is a long-term strategy. Something that requires a lot of consistent work, every single day, and with the sole purpose of building what we call brand equity.

In a general sense, brand equity is defined in terms of the marketing effects uniquely attributable to the brand — for example, when certain outcomes result from the marketing of a product or service because of its brand name that would not occur if the same product or service did not have that name (Keller, 1993).

In a Stanford study performed in 2007 (Robinson et. al.) for example, researchers found that kids said that fries in a McDonald's wrapper tasted better than those in a neutral wrapper.

However, the kids were of course tasting the exact same fries. The only thing that was different, was one wrapper featured the famous golden arches and the other one did not.

So the sole presence of the brand's logo influenced the kids' taste buds. They were not tasting something different, but the McDonald's logo made them think they did.

Yet, increasing the perceived value of your product or service is not all that brand equity does. It also helps you improve marketing productivity (Keller, 1993).

Through this way, branding can better withstand changing markets and economic downturns because it creates **customer-loyalty** (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001).

In turn, this leads to certain marketing advantages such as **reduced marketing costs**, **more new customers** and **greater trade leverage** (Aaker, 1991).

Additionally, it can also lead to **favorable word of mouth** and **greater resistance among loyal customers to competitive strategies** (Dick and Basu, 1994).

In essence:

- Branding is a strategy for the long-term, not the short-term;
- You build a unique set of favorable associations around your brand;
- The only goal is increasing brand equity;
- Positive brand equity can survive changing markets (e.g. new platforms, algorithmic changes in Google, etc.).

This doesn't however mean that all before-mentioned companies are already very human-focussed. Where they have been able to build great trust with regards to the quality of their products, they often still fail into building true human relationships. The kind of relationships that existed in the last century, but that technology has "automated" away for efficiency purposes.

This is why branding and humanizing as a combination serves as a golden combination for business success on the long term.

A warning though:

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It's not fast and it's definitely not easy. It is however very sustainable on the long term and assures long-term business success. So forget about the "hacks" and black-hat tactics that you read about on the Internet for quick wins. It is time to genuinely build great products/services and relationships with your customers/users, so you can build a company that lasts for decades rather than a few years,

The importance of Company/Employee Fit and Company/Client Fit

In today's marketing world it's all about Product/Market Fit; making sure that you build a product/service that the market actually wants and cannot live without. But why has no one really thought about establishing Company/Employee Fit and Company/Client Fit at the same time too? They both have big effects on final business results.

Company/Employee Fit

is achieved when at least 70% of your employees would be very disappointed if they could no longer work at the company. Controlling for this metric forces the company to investigate their internal problems and truly fix them; not masking them (a ping pong table doesn't make your employees happy, caring about them does). Happy workplace = Happy Employees = Good for Business.

Company/Client Fit

on the other hand is achieved when at least 40% of your clients would be very disappointed if they could no longer be your client, regardless of what you sell. Happy Clients = Good for Business.

Note that Company/Employee Fit has a direct effect on the Company/Client Fit, which forces the company to optimize for this metric because it leads to bigger company success.

Below, we propose **The Brand Humanizing Pyramid**. By using this model, a company is able to build a great:

- Product
- Brand
- Relationship with both employees and customers
- Company to work at

It is a powerful model that not only impacts business growth, but also the many lives of employees and customers in a technologically advanced civilization such as ours.

Growth

Company/Client fit

Branding & Positioning

Product/Market Fit

Company/Employee Fit

What a Brand Humanizer is and does

We hope that by now you understand that Brand Humanizers are huge fans of technology, because it enables them to better serve their customers.

They are storytellers, and true brandbuilders in their core.

They dream of companies where its processes are completely automated by technology, and where its people are empowered and stimulated to interact with their customers on the most personal and direct way possible, with or without the help of technology.

Brand Humanizers see technology as a tool, rather than a goal. This enables them to spend twice as much of their efforts into truly getting to know their customers. Rather than filling out endless forms in a CRM and getting distracted from the true stories behind every individual. Whilst the technology takes care of all the processes, people take care of the people.

Looking at the actual description of a Brand Humanizer, it is someone who is capable of mixing marketing, sales and especially customer service into an unseen personal approach.
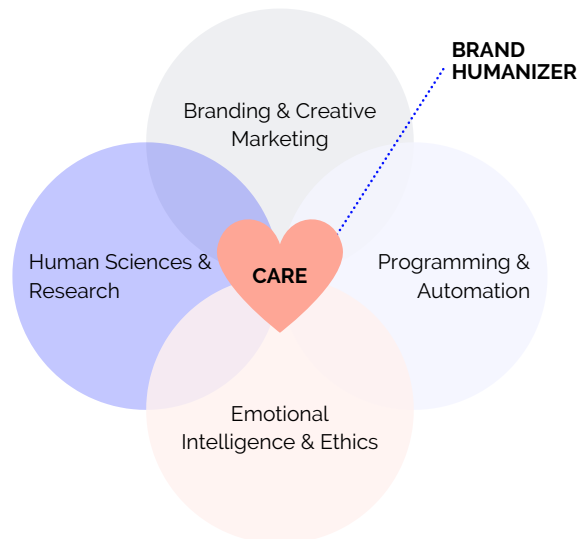
They use empathy to place themselves into the minds, needs and wishes of every individual, each customer, every contact person both internally as well as externally. Using detailed human interaction and high-level customer service to fulfil the need of every client and give them a feeling of true understanding and satisfaction.

A Brand Humanizer has a couple of goals:

- Identify processes that can be automated so that human resources can be better allocated (putting robots and humans in their best positions);
- Identify possibilities in the entire customer journey for the company/brand to become more "human" in the eyes of the end-consumer;
- Constantly talk to clients with the sole purpose of getting to know their customers better at **the clients' expense / benefit** (the goal is to build genuine long lasting relationships, not finding reasons to sell more)
- Build and protect the brand identity and -equity along the entire customer journey (if opportunities for short-term growth affects the brand, they don't do it)
- Make sure the company internally is also extremely human focused; happy people leads to happy clients
- Control leadership for sincereness and EQ/Empathy; bad leadership drips down the entire company and results into weaker Company/Employee Fit and Company/Client Fit

In order to achieve these goals, the Brand Humanizer needs a couple of skills and personality traits that are crucial for success.

BRAND HUMANIZER

Branding & Creative Marketing

Human Sciences & Research

CARE

Programming & Automation

Emotional Intelligence & Ethics

High level IQ:
Has a T-shaped skillset and performs active research in order to make data-driven decisions.

High level EQ:
Demonstrates genuine empathy to others, knows how to deal with ambiguity and builds relationships like no other.

Company leadership is however most responsible for this mindset and way of working. Without true investment and dedication from leadership, Brand Humanizing cannot be correctly implemented into companies. The implication here is that the CEO and the C-Level team should obtain the Brand Humanizing mindset themselves.Their active role in working with The Brand Humanizing Pyramid is crucial; business growth lies in their hands.

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We need more Brand Humanizers:
Will you join the revolution?

We're going through a huge paradigm switch and automation threatens job security for many on this planet.

Moreover, automation is making companies increasingly less humane, resulting in today's many problems of privacy violations and low customer trust. Where brand loyalty is the mother of all long-term business success, it is the very thing that many companies are gambling away with their automation and AI efforts.

This is why the business owners and marketers of the future need a new skillset, one that is a combination of hard (technical) skills and soft (humane) skills; The Brand Humanizer Skillset.

With the lives of many at stake and companies struggling to retain their customers on the deepest levels of relationships, it is time for a change.

Our question to you:
Will you join the future of business and marketing?
Are you ready to become a Brand Humanizer?

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