EWING™

U.S. Consumer Attitudes and Perceptions: New Rules to Innovate and Drive Customer-Centricity

Insights@Work™

Insights@Work™ by EWING Provides Insights Into What's Shaping Consumer and Business Buying Behaviors

This report summarizes the first of an ongoing series of monthly primary research studies exploring and documenting the attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors of consumer and business buyers. EWING began its exploration of humans in 1996. By 2016, EWING had a hand in conceptualizing, designing, and fielding hundreds of quantitative and qualitative studies with consumers and business buyers across the Americas, Europe, and Asia to understand a range of attitudes and behaviors, from core needs and drivers, methods of interactions, nuanced preferences, and internal and external influences on perceptions and actions across generations, lifestyles, industries, and interest areas. The depth and breadth of the *nowhere-but-here-insights™* that EWING uniquely possesses and continues to reveal in ongoing studies help companies identify future-shaping new global megatrends, as well as isolate market and consumer gaps and opportunities that give our clients an advantage that competitors can't replicate. This means greater value delivery, better customer experiences, and stronger customer connectivity that translates to more customers and meaningful growth.

EWING.

U.S. Consumer Attitudes and Perceptions: New Rules to Innovate and Drive Customer-Centricity

Objectives

To understand U.S. consumer attitudes and perceptions of companies and brands.

Methodology

Online Survey
Quantitative & Qualitative

Population

U.S. Consumers
Ages 16 to >54

Field Date

February 5, 2022

People relate to people, and if your brand feels like people, they'll relate to you too.

Those of us who have been studying consumer attitudes and behaviors for decades and building businesses and brands to align with their needs and wants know a simple truth: People relate to people, and if your brand feels like people, they'll relate to you too. EWING's latest consumer research findings support this.

But today, our corporations don't feel like people; they feel like giants. In Greek and Roman mythology, the Giants, also called Gigantes, were a race of great strength and aggression, though not necessarily of great size. Isn't that what most businesses are doing today—i.e., racing for strength against the competition?

And if we focus monomaniacally on that, where does that leave our stakeholders - particularly our customers and our communities - i.e., their perceptions of us as leaders and our companies? According to a recent study fielded by EWING Innovation, not in a very good place.

The study, however, also revealed great hope in the form of clear and tangible opportunities and actions organizations can take to fuel innovation and drive greater customer-centricity.

Earning Customer Admiration

We weren't surprised by the level of frustration toward companies and brands that revealed itself in the study—the country and our collective heads are not in a good place right now. We'll share more of these insights and implications later, but first, we want to tease out the optimistic insights because there's plenty to be inspired by and act on.

For example, what qualities do U.S. consumers want from the companies/brands they admire most to reflect? At the highest level, study participants prioritized two qualities:

TOP 2 Box Results

Trustworthiness (87%) and **Honesty (82%).**

Fairness, **Respect** and **Integrity** follow closely behind at 78%, 78%, and 77%, respectively.

And, interestingly, while **Courage** and **Humor** rounded out the bottom of the TOP 2 Box results at 59% and 42%, respectively, these are the very qualities that are needed to step out, step up, and "live" key values each day and press on when mistakes are made on the journey toward higher ideals.

Take note of the relatively low Top 2 Box score (60%) for **Ingenuity**. There are some interesting dynamics going on that we will address a bit later.

How important is it for the companies/brands you ADMIRE MOST to reflect the following qualities?

	BOTTOM BOX	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Very	Extremely	TOP 2 BOX
TRUSTWORTHINESS	4%	1%	3%	9%	19%	68%	87%
HONESTY	6%	2%	4%	12%	19%	63%	82%
FAIRNESS	11%	2%	9%	11%	36%	42%	78%
RESPECT	6%	1%	5%	16%	22%	56%	78%
INTEGRITY	8%	3%	5%	15%	25%	52%	77%
EXCELLENCE	3%	2%	1%	21%	39%	37%	76%
COOPERATION	8%	4%	4%	22%	32%	38%	70%
EMPATHY	15%	4%	11%	23%	31%	31%	62%
INGENUITY	14%	5%	9%	26%	30%	30%	60%
COURAGE	16%	8%	8%	25%	29%	30%	59%
HUMOR	22%	10%	12%	36%	22%	20%	42%

It's a widely held belief today that consumers want the companies/brands they buy to reflect their personal values, but our findings indicated something a bit more complex.

> *How important is it that the companies/brands you buy reflect your personal values (where "values" = attributes of the person you want to be)?*

5% Not at all Important

13% Slightly Important

33% Moderately Important

22% Very Important

27% Extremely Important

Yes, it's true that nearly half (49%) of participants indicated it is **Very Important** or **Extremely Important** that the companies/brands they buy reflect their personal values; another 33% responded "nah… not so much."

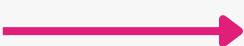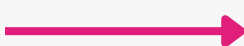These participants indicated **company/brand values | personal values** alignment as **Moderately Important** to them.

What can we learn from this?

We know that U.S. consumers have the most admiration for companies that reflect **Trustworthiness** and **Honesty**. In other words, **these two values - not total alignment with their personal values** (or a host of values in general) - are the basic expectation of consumers.

This makes the job of becoming an admired company/brand a little easier, doesn't it? So, how does an organization reflect **Trustworthiness** and **Honesty?**

Quite simply, the first imperative action is to make these values a **top priority** in your organization. *What gets prioritized gets done.*

The second imperative is to *show* your employees - via specific and tangible examples - what "trustworthy" and "honest" behaviors look like and what they do not look like. It's the same playbook required for all change and transformation to occur within organizations: it starts with people and helping them move along *The Change Curve.*

The Change Curve

01 → Receive (new) Information (i.e., desired behaviors)

02 → Understand It

03 → Believe It

04 → Agree with It

05 Act upon It

Teams and Shared Values

Interestingly, while study participants indicated that the companies/brands they buy are somewhat off the hook in terms of reflecting their personal values, this same sentiment does not necessarily extend to teammates they collaborate with to achieve a goal.

How important is it that people you work with to achieve a goal (e.g., work colleagues, student or volunteer team mates) reflect your personal values (where "values" = attributes of the person you want to be)?

4% Not at all Important

10% Slightly Important

21% Moderately Important

37% Very Important

28% Extremely Important

37% of respondents indicated that it is **Very Important** for the people they work with to achieve a goal to reflect their personal values. Another 28% indicated **Extreme Importance**.

These results raise some interesting issues. For example, ample research provides compelling evidence that diversity unlocks innovation and drives market growth - a finding that should intensify efforts to ensure a diverse workforce and teams. But one common way managers kill innovation and creativity (albeit inadvertently) is by assembling homogeneous teams. The lure to do so is great - "likeness" keeps conflict in check. And conflict can interfere with productivity and control - two important measures of managerial performance.

The kind of innovative thinking that leads to organizational innovation requires differences in how people approach problems and solutions - their capacity to put existing ideas together in new combinations. It also depends quite a bit on personality and values, as well as on how a person thinks and works.

Now, more than ever, given the high degree of conflict in our nation's cultural and political climate, Americans (and, yes, your employees) want to surround themselves with people *just like them*. If, as employers, we allow homogeneity to define our teams and our workforces, what is the impact on innovation?

EWING posits that team diversity can coexist with outstanding team performance with the help of strong leadership and instituting known best practices of high-performing teams such as clearly defined roles and responsibilities, making trust and respect a team imperative, and articulating clear goals tied closely to team and organizational priorities. These actions and others are highly effective levers to influence productivity and successful team outcomes.

The Drivers Of Customer Loyalty

When asked, **"What company/brand won your long-term loyalty and how did they do it?"** the majority of participants responded in product and service terms - i.e., that the company created a great product or service. Specific, verbatim responses included:

HEINZ KETCHUP	*Making the best ketchup in the world.*
NIKE	*Making great products.*
JOHNSON AND JOHNSON	*Because of their great products.*
APPLE	*By providing the best products.*
DUTCH BROS.	*By being the most delicious coffee.*

It seems like a no-brainer that a company would make optimizing their product or service to align with consumer needs their #1 priority. A decent product and service are *table stakes* for a business, right? But this is not always the case, as we all know. There are plenty of not-so-great products and services in the marketplace today, which is often the byproduct of trying to push products or services into a market versus uncovering a meaningful opening or unmet need.

How many products or services can you think of that are disappointing or altogether substandard? Probably quite a few.

How do you build market and customer-winning products and services?

It starts with customer insights - the kind of *nowhere-but-here-insights™* that demonstrate to your customers that you understand them. Distinctive insights - like the kind EWING is known for - give you an advantage that your competitors cannot replicate. This means greater value delivery, better customer experiences, and stronger customer connectivity that translates to more customers and meaningful growth.

Customer loyalty is increasingly elusive. Just providing a great product or service—or even focusing on only incremental innovation—is rarely enough to keep customers coming back for more.

And while participants in our study indicated product and service as the main driver to loyalty, two other variables comprised a second tier fueling company/brand loyalty: **Customer Experience** and **Values.**

Although several definitions of customer experience abound, we like to think of it this way: **every touchpoint you have with a customer either makes or breaks their perception of your business and brand.**

So, what specific experience or value mentions did study participants share that explained their long-term loyalty to a company or brand?

EXPERIENCE

BEST BUY	*Shipping and sales*
MICROSOFT	*Game pass flexibility*
IPHONE	*Customer service*
T-MOBILE	*Consistent service*
AMAZON	*Speed and loyalty rewards*
KVD COSMETICS	*Frequent discounts*

VALUES

LUSH	*Earth conscious and animal friendly*
NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC	*Balanced storytelling*
WALMART	*They are good to just about anybody*
TARGET	*They're cool*
TOM'S SHOES	*They give back*
STARBUCKS	*Environmentally friendly*

From Good Company to Great Company

Who doesn't want to be remarkable - if even at just one thing? Greatness sits within reach of every organization. And consumers in our study made it clear what catapults a company from good to great:

01   Be
        Good

02   Be
        Innovative

03   Surprise
        and Delight

01

Be Good

In most contexts, the concept of *good* denotes the conduct that should be preferred when posed with a choice between possible actions. Good is generally considered to be the opposite of bad. And this is what consumers revealed through their responses to the survey.

Based on the variety of organizational actions that consumers deem as "good" in our study, what's fascinating **is that what matters most, at a macro scale, is not the specific ACTION but the INTENTION behind it - the desire to do something kind** *for someone else.*

As companies, we spend a lot of time centered on our products, our competitors, our performance, and our profit, and rightfully so; performance is our surest path to success and longevity. What consumers in our study indicated, however, is that to tip the balance from good to great, a company must, at some point, *think of and do for someone other than the corporation.*

This desire for corporations to "be good" came through the responses to a few questions, including a question probing into what catapults a company to "hero status," another asking about today's most exciting companies and another inquiring about the companies that have gained their loyalty.

Specific mentions included:

Focus on **sustainability** *and paying good wages.*

Taking part in the **community.**

SpaceX giving trips into space for **regular people.**

Bombas **donating** *socks.*

Veterans United **giving free homes** *to veterans this year.*

Donating *to hunger relief.*

Sprint **gave us some time when we couldn't pay** *our bill.*

A local construction company **paid employees** *to be substitute teachers during the pandemic.*

Amazon **keeps their word** *and follows up on stuff.*

REI gave their employees a **paid "Yea Day" to lighten things up.**

"M&M **helping** *the blind.*

Any company that **gives back.**

It's clear that it's good business to do good works in participants' minds. And the thing is, it's just not that hard to be good - it's a simple, even momentary flip of the switch from *me-thinking* and *us-thinking* to *we-thinking* and *other-thinking.*

Who can't do that? And we're not even talking about empathy training, which may require a meaningful investment in time and money.

What if you asked every employee to close each week with these two simple questions?

What good did I do for my company this week?

What good did I do for our stakeholders?

The reality is that colossal leaps aren't really colossal leaps at all. They're a series of ordinary choices that suddenly become perceptible. If you look for the Big Moment, you'll miss how ordinary becomes extraordinary.

Be Good

02 ——————————

Be innovative

Ironically, when asked about the values that were most important for companies to reflect, **Ingenuity** was not a leading response - only 60% of respondents gave it a Top 2 Box rating (see page 2) But when it came down to what companies excite them the most right now (as well as what companies they'd like to work at for a day), innovation was a key driver:

Verbatim responses included:

TESLA	*The progress they have made in private space travel. The continuous search for innovation – not only in cars.*
THE CRYPTO SPACE	*Modern technology forming a better world.*
ADIDAS	*Because they are releasing new products.*
BLOOMINGDALES	*(their communications) Hearing about all the exciting new products.**
APPLE	*Always coming out with brand–new things.*
MICROSOFT	*Always coming up with new things.*

*Note that this comment is as much about marketing communications and outreach as it is about innovation. In fact, other participants made note of marketing strategies and tactics that they noticed and appreciated.

So, what's the lesson and the opportunity here?

Consumers get excited about new stuff. And you don't have to be a technology company to innovate. (Actually, every company is a technology company today so there really aren't any excuses to cop out of product, service, experience, delivery, or any other kind of innovation activities altogether.)

And while resistance to change is a consumer (and human) reality, that shouldn't stop organizations from building a potent, data-backed approach to innovation pipeline development, finding new ways to delight consumers, or telling them about inventive company activities where and when they prefer.

New products and services have the potential to expand consumers' worldview, connect them to new communities, and make their lives easier. If you're standing back on the sidelines watching other companies innovate, it's time to jump in the game.

Be Innovative

03

Surprise and delight

In business, *surprise and delight* is an approach that seeks to attract and nurture customers by enhancing interactions with them and offering them unexpected rewards. But aren't *surprise and delight* just basic human kindness, delivered out of the blue? We think so.

In our study, the joy consumers receive from surprise and delight actions taken by companies fell into two categories: (a) the little things companies do that are totally unexpected and (b) the big things companies do to swiftly and meaningfully overcome a service or experience issue - or "Service Recovery Strategies."

When asked, **"What was the most impressive action that a company/brand has taken that catapulted them into 'hero status' in your mind?"** study participants mentioned both types of organizational behaviors:

The store clerk at Michael Kors gave me a discount "just because."

McGraw-Hill Publishers gave me gift cards to give them input on my job.

Any brand that listens to reviews and fixes their mistakes.

Clorox – went above and beyond to repair a product mishap.

Chewy sent alternate food to bridge the stressful gap between my hungry cat and her out-of-stock brand/flavor.

Little acts of kindness as well as thoughtful, high-impact service recovery strategies executed consistently tells customers - through actions, not words - that they and their satisfaction is your top priority.

Not only do consumers talk about and share extraordinary service recovery strategies (putting the potency of word of mouth to work for your business), but they also often come back time and again, enabling you to benefit from higher customer lifetime value.

Everyone screws up occasionally – companies and customers. It's what you do when the screwup happens that is the difference between making things messier or making things downright memorable.

A remarkable failure response strategy is the best customer loyalty program any organization can have.

Surprise and Delight

Consumer Frustrations

Our study revealed quite a few practices that companies commonly follow that frustrated consumers. When asked, "**What unreasonable thing has a business/brand encouraged you to do or believe"?**

Nothing irked respondents more than actions that fell into the general category of "misrepresentation" - i.e., the action or offense of giving a false or misleading account of the nature of something. Study participants shared several frustrations:

Convincing me that my skin needs 18 skincare products.

Telling me, as a long-term customer, that I'm entitled to a new tablet, and not following through.

That I need to replace my phone each year.

Telling me that they put customers first when they don't.

Not truthful about a reward.

Mishandling my information without my permission.

That my product would arrive on time.

Making false advertisements.

That I was getting the best deal with them.

Teaching me, as an employee, how to misdirect people to get them to pay.

That they were good to their employees, when it came out later that they weren't.

Believing everything is as it seems. The truth is different.

Advertising about a person who inspired the company but never existed.

Using celebrities who don't really use the product for promotions.

What the foregoing responses point to here, and others just like them, is an issue of integrity—the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles.

As shared previously, for companies to be admired, respondents just really want companies to reflect two values: **trustworthiness** and **honesty**.

Related to this is the basic customer expectation for companies and brands to **say what they do and do what they say.**

What's worth noting is that, more often than not, *the organization itself defines expectations* for customers through their mission, vision, and values (MVV.) These standards of behavior and ethics are meticulously crafted and shared broadly through internal and external communications. However, words without action are meaningless. And that's what respondents said. They are frustrated because they are tired of companies saying one thing and doing another.

This frustration relates to the theory of cognitive dissonance developed in the 1950s by psychologist Leon Festinger of MIT and the University of Michigan. Festinger's theory proposes that a mismatch between beliefs and behaviors causes psychological tension (i.e., cognitive dissonance).

Understanding Festinger's theory and ensuring that words and actions align gives organizations and leaders the metaphorical grease for not only satisfying customers but motivating employees. When words and actions are not aligned, it dampens the impact of the company's message, reduces credibility, and breeds discontent.

"Living" one's values requires the hard work of rewarding those employees who actually do exemplify stated values and taking action against those who don't. But, too often, other things get in the way of making wonky behaviors straight - like profits, performance, politics, and poor leadership.

Not surprisingly, it appears that consumers are cynical because not only are companies today not reflecting the most basic values of goodness like honesty and trustworthiness, but **they're also not reflecting the very values they themselves defined and espoused.**

This is an issue because it points to a lack of integrity and authenticity.

Recall that for a company to be admired, according to study results, consumers don't necessarily need organizations to reflect *their personal* values; they need them to reflect a shortlist of basic values - the most common ones that many companies select to underscore their MVV. And they need them to reflect who they say they are.

Authenticity

It's interesting to consider that today, more than ever, Americans admire the truly authentic individuals. These people hyper-refine the qualities that epitomize what they're all about as human beings - and that earns them respect and admiration. Authentic people rise above the fray by harnessing the forces that actually typify themselves.

Companies and brands have been hyper-refining themselves for decades through their mission, vision, and values. However, what differentiates them from individuals doing the same is that **not only are many companies not "living" who they profess to be, they also are not *owning* it.**

It takes courage to take ownership. It requires putting a stake in the ground about values and value provided; it takes knowing that you can't serve everyone and taking the risk to serve the someone you've targeted as your audience(s) extraordinarily well.

When we asked participants, **"What is the most disappointing thing that a company/brand ever did that changed your perception of them forever?"** the responses spotlighted a company behavior that was not aligned with their personal values and beliefs (e.g., anti LQBTQIA, changed product labels to appeal to "woke" culture) or, more frequently, called out a company that they believed wasn't being forthright about their history, values, or intentions. (e.g., "When I found out about the leanings of Chick-fil-A, I never viewed the company the same again.")

From a consumer perspective, this isn't the 1950s, and the Cleavers don't sleep in separate beds—despite the TV network's insistence that they did. It's interesting to ponder the fact that all the veils have been removed in our world, except those guarding big business and corporations. In our study, consumers weighed in:

they want straight talk from straight leaders.

The Company/ Brand B.S. Meter

Yes, we asked it, **"What quote or saying do companies spout, but it is complete B.S.?"** Interestingly, the responses fell into three broad categories relating to customers, employees, and performance.

According to study participants, the following lines have been spouted so much (and delivered against so little) that the words no longer have credibility:

What quote or saying do companies spout, but it is complete B.S.?

CUSTOMERS	EMPLOYEES	PERFORMANCE
We care about you	*We are a family*	*We are number one*
We're by your side	*We care*	*We're the best*
We care about your needs	*We're a team*	*We provide the best services*
We're here for you	*We care about our employees more than the bottom line*	*We are the best company to join*
We put customers first	*We got you*	*Customer satisfaction guaranteed*
Your call is important to us		*Voted #1*

As leaders who believe in our organizations, our people, and our bright future, the foregoing statements resonate for us - *we believe in them.* But, through perhaps no fault of your own, consumers no longer do. It's time for new words - words without baggage, words that can be supported consistently with action.

Communications Central

When asked, **"Does the number of interactions (e.g., social, email, text, ads) a company/brand has with you increase your feelings of connection and loyalty to them?"** the responses pointed toward more interactions mean more loyalty:

Does the number of interactions (e.g., social, email, text, ads) a company /brand has with you increase your feelings of connection and loyalty to them?

56% Yes

42% No

2% Other

When we probed further to ask, **"Where do you want your favorite brands to show up in your life?"** the overarching theme was fairly clear: **most consumers want companies to connect with them via different means but only sometimes.** And fully 45% and 42% of respondents **never** want their favorite brands to show up in their lives in the form of phone calls or chatbots, respectively, which points to both a desire for greater personal distance on the one hand and greater personal connectivity on the other.

Where do you want your favorite brands to show up in your life?

Channels	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Text Messages	19%	20%	36%	12%	13%
Phone Calls	45%	14%	22%	8%	11%
Social Media	4%	9%	38%	29%	20%
Print Ads	17%	14%	35%	26%	8%
TV & Radio Ads	12%	13%	38%	30%	7%
In-App/Software	19%	21%	29%	19%	12%
Places you play - e.g., bars, restaurants	17%	17%	35%	22%	9%
Places you work - e.g., work space, conferences	26%	20%	25%	17%	12%
Mailbox / U.S. Mail	13%	21%	30%	26%	10%
Chatbots	42%	16%	25%	10%	7%
Live Customer Service Reps	27%	17%	26%	16%	14%

The Power to Change The World

If corporations came together to change the world, what areas do you think are most important for them to focus on?

	BOTTOM BOX	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Very	Extremely	TOP 2 BOX
Make sure every child has access to public education	9%	3%	6%	14%	24%	53%	77%
Improve health and nutritional education	6%	3%	3%	17%	34%	43%	77%
Access to power/electricity for all	9%	4%	5%	16%	35%	40%	75%
Ensure decent jobs for all	9%	3%	6%	16%	28%	47%	75%
Be an examles to others by being authentic, ethical, fair and decent	10%	3%	7%	16%	28%	46%	74%
Poor treatment to animals	14%	7%	7%	14%	35%	37%	72%
Stop deforestation	13%	2%	11%	16%	34%	37%	71%
Find ways to turn a profit without harming the planet	12%	4%	8%	18%	43%	27%	70%
Listen to - and act on - the important needs & demands of employees and customers	6%	1%	5%	24%	29%	41%	70%
Stop collecting and using consumer's data for their benefit without permission	10%	3%	7%	20%	27%	43%	70%
Stop bullying	15%	6%	9%	17%	26%	42%	68%
Eliminate apathy towards inequality, pain, and suffering in the world.	8%	3%	5%	26%	29%	37%	66%

If corporations came together to change the world, what areas do you think are most important for them to focus on?

	BOTTOM BOX	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Very	Extremely	TOP 2 BOX
Funding green technologies and businesses	11%	3%	8%	24%	28%	37%	65%
Take active steps to change corporate culture toward one with greater humanity, empathy and care	15%	4%	11%	22%	32%	31%	63%
Lobbying for environmental protections	18%	3%	15%	6%	23%	33%	56%
Redirect security hackers' talents to productive uses rather than causing destruction	20%	9%	11%	25%	30%	25%	55%
Rethink the traditional carrer mentality to lead people toward work the love	15%	7%	8%	32%	18%	35%	53%
Bridge the divides between viewpoints and cultures	23%	6%	17%	29%	25%	23%	48%
Change gun policy and weapon availability	34%	16%	18%	19%	18%	29%	47%
Find people more time and reverse gravity's effect on their lives	36%	23%	13%	18%	23%	23%	46%
Encourage humor / laughter - we're all taking ourselves way too seriously	22%	9%	13%	32%	19%	27%	46%
Promote employee tree planting to contribute positively to the natural environment	23%	6%	17%	35%	22%	20%	42%

When it comes to where corporations could contribute to change the world, if they came together to do so, study participants favored areas related to education. Specifically, if we look at Top 2 Box results, two focus areas standout with an importance rating of 77%:

Make sure every child has access to public education.

Improve health and nutritional education.

These are interesting findings because they both put corporations in the role of *empowering* U.S. citizens through education. This sits squarely with the principles of freedom guaranteed in the Bill of Rights and the first ten amendments to the Constitution. It speaks to Americans' independence, which is a prime motivator for self-determination.

Not surprisingly, given the direct influence companies have on people's lives and livelihood through employment, *Ensure decent jobs for all* was **Very Important** or **Extremely Important** to 75% of participants, with *Be an example to others by being authentic, ethical, fair, and decent* following closely behind with 74% of respondents giving it an importance rating of **Very** or **Extremely Important.**

The importance of and belief that basic safety needs should be met for all citizens so that they can live a 21st century life were reinforced by the 75% of respondents who stated that *Access to power/electricity for all* is **Very Important** or **Extremely important**. A third tier of areas emerged with a Top 2 Box rating of 70%:

Find ways to turn a profit without harming the planet.

Listen to – and act on – the important needs and demands of employees and customers.

Stop collecting and using consumers' data for their benefit without permission.

All the foregoing tier-three responses and the previous *Be an example* response reinforce participants' attitudes revealed throughout the study - i.e., there is both frustration toward companies and brands yet a clear desire and hope for them to raise the bar of and take responsibilities for their own behaviors.

Although there are many intriguing findings, a couple of additional findings stand out.

The first is that 72% of respondents said that it is **Very Important** or **Extremely Important** for companies to address the area of *Poor treatment to animals.*

We love the fact that study participants "went there" - i.e., gave voice to animals. Not too long ago, we recall a famous national newscaster who chided an equally famous celebrity for favoring animal charities over human charities - as if it were shameful to want to improve the circumstances and longevity of the animals with whom we share the planet and who are key to the delicate balance of the natural ecosystem.

The second, and related, intriguing finding, is that 71% of participants stated that *Stopping deforestation* is **Very Important** or **Extremely Important** for corporations to address.

With some industry and company exceptions, both of these areas represent relatively untapped areas for corporate support, creating an opportunity to step out in new ways and engage different consumer groups.

There is a growing importance for companies to ramp up their focus on social responsibility, and these two areas offer a fresh focal point. Corporate social responsibility initiatives have shown to help attract and retain employees, improve customer perceptions, and show a sign of accountability to stakeholders.

Learning from Celebrities—Yes!

We're not certain how many business leaders look to Hollywood celebrities as their role model. We suspect few. But there's no denying a celebrity skill worth stealing. When celebrities find themselves out of favor with audiences and no longer culturally or economically relevant, they engage in an age-old practice:

re·in·ven·tion

/rēinˈven(t)SHən/

noun

the action or process through which something is changed so much that it appears to be entirely new.

Kim Kardashian went from Paris Hilton's lowly assistant into one of the biggest stars in the world. Arnold Schwarzenegger transformed himself from a professional bodybuilder into a successful actor in Hollywood. Then he followed his hero, Ronald Reagan, and became the governor of California. After serving two terms, he returned to the big screen at age 65.

And then there is Madonna, the master of reinvention. With a career spanning 30+ years, the iconic singer has made movies, written books, launched style trends, courted controversy, sold over 200 million records, and taken on the roles of wife, mother, and humanitarian. This year she's back on the stage with a new tour... and a new Madonna.

Sure, a great agent and greater PR helped these icons along, but growth and transformation run deeper than that; it cuts to core value – i.e., keeping what's timeless, shedding the old, and building the new.

EWING™

Becoming a Future-Ready Organization

Is your organization thinking about undergoing a transformation such as developing new growth businesses outside your traditional core?

If so, think **EWING**. Our market and customer insights-driven innovation process is your practical and market-winning approach to business innovation.

We combine pioneering thought, market research, strategy, and design to build the most remarkable businesses and brands, infusing innovation where it matters most to propel your business forward:

01 Understand your market and customer

02 Launch a new company

03 Develop your growth strategy

04 Build or revitalize your brand strategy

05 Develop your go-to-market strategy

06 Innovation consulting

All of these are firmly centered on one purpose: accelerating your growth and transformation.

Let us help you identify and tease out meaningful growth opportunities that improve your performance through innovation in products, services, processes, and business models.