The four factors outlined in the preceding chapters—purpose, delivery, resonance, and differentiation—combine to create a brand’s meaningfully different experience. This is not a sequential process. For instance, your brand’s purpose will inform the audience to whom the brand appeals, what is most important in terms of delivery, and what will differentiate your brand from the alternatives. Identifying a brand’s meaningfully different experience is not linear; it is a matter of synthesis. The fusion of the four key factors is what determines whether or not a brand is meaningfully different.

The successful definition of what makes a brand meaningfully different is the tipping point in our ValueDrivers workshop. We have yet to conduct a workshop in which there was complete clarity regarding the brand’s purpose, let alone regarding what made it meaningfully different, but without that definition, the remainder of the workshop, which is focused on successful amplification, is useless. The critical nature of the definition makes this section of the workshop very stressful for both the participants and the facilitators.

In the workshop, we have the participants work in groups. Each group has completed a series of exercises designed to examine the brand’s purpose, delivery, resonance, and competitive standing. By the time the participants have to define the brand’s meaningfully different experience, they have been thinking about the brand from different perspectives for over three hours, and it is time to pull together everything they have discussed in one succinct statement. We are not looking for a tagline, but for something that captures the essence of the brand. We give participants twenty
minutes to complete the exercise and provide them with the following instructions:

Craft the meaningfully different experience for your brand in just a few words (four to eight!). The meaningful difference

- Must be backed by the brand’s purpose
- Reflected in the brand experience
- Informed by what is differentiating about the brand
- Defined in a way that resonates with consumers

While this activity is probably the most intense section of the workshop, with people working under pressure to complete a relatively complex task, we always end up with a set of well-crafted concepts that usually display remarkable consistency across the groups. Providing a framework for exploring the brand and allowing time for feedback on and synthesis of the output from the exercises invariably leads to a more consistent viewpoint of what the brand really stands for. This definition acts as the connection point between what the brand does and how people respond to that experience.

One of the questions that often comes up during this session is, “Are we defining what the brand stands for now or what we would like it to stand for?” The answer is both. You have to assume that you are starting from where your brand stands today. Too big a stretch will leave your customers and consumers floundering.

Obviously, I cannot share the output of specific client engagements in this book. So in order to give you an idea of how things work, let us examine one of today’s well-known brands and see if we can identify what makes it meaningfully different.

THE BIRTH OF A MEANINGFULLY DIFFERENT BRAND

A while ago, I came across an article originally published in the August 17, 1981, edition of People magazine that described how Häagen-Dazs came to be.¹ What initially caught my attention was that the Häagen-Dazs name was made up—it does not mean anything. But as I read on, I realized that the article was describing the birth of a meaningfully different brand, one I could easily map using the ValueDrivers framework.