

**BRAND GENETICS**

**POSITIVE  
INNOVATION**

**INSPIRATION FOR  
BETTER INNOVATION**



## BRAND GENETICS

'Positive Innovation' means putting positive human experience at the heart of the innovation process.

Brand Genetics has created these Positive Innovation cards based on 18 scientifically validated insights from psychology to help you develop innovation that drives human happiness and wellbeing.

### **How to Use the Cards**

Each card captures a 'positive innovation' provocation - use these to inspire and guide your innovation thinking.

We also provide a succinct rationale of why this matters, bring it to life with a real-life example & highlight the key evidence.

## BRAND GENETICS

# What if the aim was to improve their sense of autonomy?

The 'ARC of Happiness' describes our three core psychological needs for subjective wellbeing: Autonomy, Relatedness and Competence.

The universal need for Autonomy is about self-determination; freedom, choice and control.

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For example, NIKEiD enables customers to become the designer, allowing them to customize their clothing and shoes to their exact specification, putting the control in their hands.

Evidence:

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 68-78.

## BRAND GENETICS

What if the aim was  
to improve their sense  
of relatedness?

The 'ARC of Happiness' describes our three core psychological needs for subjective wellbeing: Autonomy, Relatedness and Competence. The universal need for Relatedness is about experiencing care, connection and affiliation through social attachment & positive relationships.

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For example, WeLive champions connection by providing shared and flexible housing communities: grouping rental apartments together with shared services, communal facilities and group activities (e.g. comedy nights and yoga).

Evidence:

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 68-78.

## BRAND GENETICS

What if the aim was  
to improve their sense  
of competence?

The 'ARC of Happiness' describes our three core psychological needs for subjective wellbeing: Autonomy, Relatedness and Competence. The universal need for Competence is about experiencing achievement, mastery and success.

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For example, the digital platform Duolingo uses gamification to help users learn new languages easily and effectively. Backed by scientific research, lessons are designed to be short, digestible, and fun, contributing to a consistent sense of achievement and success.

Evidence:

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 68-78.

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What if the answer  
was simply to beat  
their expectations?

The top finding from decades of research into human wellbeing is that happiness is not a state that reflects how well things are going but instead whether things are going better than expected. Beat expectations to promote wellbeing.

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For example, international food chain Pret a Manger encourages employees to give away a certain number of free hot drinks and food every week to surprise and delight customers.

Evidence:

Rutledge, R. B., Skandali, N., Dayan, P., & Dolan, R. J. (2014). A computational and neural model of momentary subjective well-being. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 111(33), 12252-12257.

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# What if the solution was to save them time?

Time is the our most precious commodity and the human lifespan is just 2.5 billion heart beats long. Research shows that people are happy when their purchases save them time – so they can focus on what really matters to them.

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For example, online marketplace Task Rabbit enables people looking for help with everyday tasks (e.g. building IKEA furniture) to quickly match with freelance 'taskers' willing to help out, freeing up customers' time to focus on things more important to them.

Evidence: Whillans, A., Dunn, E., Smeets, P. M., Bekkers, R. H. F. P., & Norton, M. I. (2017). Buying time promotes happiness. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 114(32), 8523-8527.

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What if the objective  
was to help them  
reach their goals?

As humans, we are wired to feel happy when we progress towards and accomplish our goals. By understanding and helping people accomplish their personal goals, positive innovation can contribute to overall human wellbeing.

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For example, **Stickk**, an app for making 'commitment contracts', applies behavioural science learnings to help people more effectively achieve their personal goals – from losing weight to quitting smoking to writing a novel.

Evidence:

Brunstein, J. C. (1993). Personal Goals and Subjective Well-Being: A Longitudinal Study. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 65(5), 1061-1070.

## BRAND GENETICS

# What if the idea was to create a memory?

Humans are memory makers and our happiness depends on creating and recalling happy memories. By making an experience more memorable, positive innovation can contribute to our wellbeing.

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For example, retail store Story curates immersive shopping experiences based around a core theme (e.g. 'wellness', 'made in America') that changes every four to eight weeks. Story "takes the point of view of a magazine, changes like a gallery & sells things like a store" to create truly memorable, distinctive and enjoyable shopping experiences.

Evidence:

Kahneman, D. & Riis, J. (2005). Living, and Thinking about It: Two Perspectives on Life. In Huppert, F.A., Baylis, N., & Keverne, B. (Eds.), *The Science of Well-Being*, 285-304. Oxford University Press.

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# What if the aim was to make it effortless?

Effortless experiences promote happiness because they allow us to focus our finite energy and effort on other things that matter to us. As evidenced by customer satisfaction research using the Customer Effort Score, innovations that offer an effortless experience facilitate happiness – and loyalty.

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For example, Unilever Day2 dry wash spray is designed to freshen and deodorize clothes that aren't totally clean but aren't really dirty, thereby reducing laundry effort and freeing up that time and energy for other things.

Evidence:

Dixon, M., Toman, N., & DeLisi, R. (2013). *The Effortless Experience: Conquering the New Battleground for Customer Loyalty*. Penguin.

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# What if the goal was a happy ending?

The 'Peak-End Rule' states that we tend to remember experiences by how we feel at the end of them. By focusing on happy endings and outcomes, you'll be focusing on what drives happiness.

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For example, Cornetto ice cream cones have a surprise chocolate 'plug'. As people finish their ice cream there's delight in finding the tip of the cone filled with chocolate – a happy ending!

Evidence:

Do, A. M., Rupert, A. V., & Wolford, G. (2008). Evaluations of pleasurable experiences: The peak-end rule. *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review*, 15(1), 96-98.

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What if the answer  
was to create a gift?

Whoever said money can't buy happiness, didn't know how to shop. Research shows we can feel happier when we buy for others, rather than ourselves.

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For example, beauty subscription service Birchbox offers gift memberships, whereby customers can select a specific gift or level of subscription and gift it to someone as a monthly treat, all without having to step foot in a post office (or even outside their home!)

Evidence:

Dunn, E. W., Aknin, L. B., & Norton, M. I. (2008). Spending money on others promotes happiness. *Science*, 319(5870), 1687-1688.

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What if the solution  
was to make it more  
meaningful?

Human happiness depends on a sense  
of purpose and meaning in life. By  
supporting causes and purposes  
championed by a target market,  
positive innovation can  
have a positive impact  
on wellbeing.

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For example, outdoor clothing brand Patagonia fights to protect the environmental health of the planet, reduce the negative impact of its business and donates at least 1% of sales to grassroots groups around the world. By buying Patagonia, consumers feel good knowing they are also supporting the environment.

Evidence:

Dolan, P. (2014). Happiness by design: Finding pleasure and purpose in everyday life. Penguin UK.

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## What if the solution was kindness?

Human nature means we are wired to feel positive when we are kind to others. So when our purchases help others in need, our sense of personal wellbeing is boosted. Pro-social spending can improve our happiness.

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For example, shoe brand TOMS' "One for One" model means that for every new pair of shoes bought by a customer, a new pair is given to a child in need – so customers can feel good knowing they are helping others.

Evidence:

Aknin, L. B., Barrington-Leigh, C. P., Dunn, E. W., Helliwell, J. F., Burns, J., Biswas-Diener, R., ... & Norton, M. I. (2013). Prosocial spending and well-being: Cross-cultural evidence for a psychological universal. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 104(4), 635-652.

## BRAND GENETICS

# What if the objective was to help people look after their body?

Our emotional wellbeing is closely linked to our physical wellness, which in turn is linked to physical activity. With physical inactivity now the fourth largest risk factor for death, one priority for positive innovation is to help people after their body by promoting physical activity.

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For example, Vitality Health Insurance encourages customers to live healthier lives through its app – which tracks and incentivizes good exercise and wellbeing habits with rewards and discounts (e.g. a free coffee, movie tickets).

Evidence:

Dolan, P., Kavetsos, G., & Vlaev, I. (2014). The happiness workout. *Social Indicators Research*, 119(3), 1363-1377.

## BRAND GENETICS

What if the idea was  
to help them feel  
safe?

Human contentment is linked to the experience of safety and security (freedom from fear, anxiety or apprehension). By helping people feel safe and secure, positive innovation can promote wellbeing.

For example, ride-sharing app Uber has created a new safety toolkit that enables riders to select “trusted contacts” who are automatically notified when they take a trip and are able to track your trip status, route, & ETA – providing peace of mind to riders, friends and family alike.

Evidence:

Gilbert, P., McEwan, K., Mitra, R., Franks, L., Richter, A., & Rockliff, H. (2008). Feeling safe and content: A specific affect regulation system? Relationship to depression, anxiety, stress, and self-criticism. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 3(3), 182-191.

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What if the idea was  
simply to remove pain  
points?

Human happiness depends on freedom from pain, distress and misery. By simply removing pain points and reducing the risk of negative outcomes, positive innovation can promote wellbeing.

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For example, digital bank Monzo allows you to 'text' customer support directly. Through the app, you can track average response time, which staffers are "online", when your message is read, and when you've received a response – removing much of the frustration that comes with endless waiting times and automated responses.

Evidence:

Brunstein, J. C. (1993). Personal Goals and Subjective Well-Being: A Longitudinal Study. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 65(5), 1061-1070.

BRAND GENETICS

# What if the solution was to look after our planet?

Nature has a positive, healing  
and restorative effect on human  
wellbeing. We are happier when we  
experience and interact with nature.  
By respecting our planet, we  
promote wellbeing through  
sustainable innovation.

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For example, global beer brand Corona  
- known for being the beer of the beach  
- partnered non-profit Parley for the  
Oceans to take a stand against marine  
pollution, making a commitment to work  
together to protect 100 islands around  
the world by 2020.

Evidence:

Capaldi, C. A., Passmore, H. A., Nisbet, E.  
K., Zelenski, J. M., & Dopko, R. L. (2015).  
Flourishing in nature: A review of the benefits of  
connecting with nature and its application as a  
wellbeing intervention. *International Journal of  
Wellbeing*, 5(4), 1-16.

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# What if the solution was radical simplification?

Leonardo da Vinci may have said that "simplicity is the ultimate sophistication", but simplicity is also a source of happiness. By simplifying our lives, our tasks and our decisions we not only reduce stress and frustration but we also remove barriers standing between ourselves and our goals.

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For example, Amazon Go stores have dramatically simplified the grocery shopping experience. Customers simply log into their account, walk in, take the products they want, and walk out. No lines, no checkout, no hassle – just an easy and painless shopping experience.

Evidence:

Spenner, P., & Freeman, K. (2012) To keep your customers, keep it simple. *Harvard Business Review*, 41(3), 67-72.

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## What if it made us laugh?

Laughter, along with smiling, can make us feel good and enhance our sense of wellbeing. Using humour in innovation, though packaging and communication makes for great happiness therapy.

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For example, furniture company Burrow launched Couch Potato – ‘the world’s first sit-tracker’ – in response to activity promoting apps. Couch Potato cheekily encourages users to be inactive, tracking and rewarding time spent on the couch ‘doing absolutely nothing.’

Evidence:

Berk, L. S., & et al. (1989). Neuroendocrine and Stress Hormone changes during Mirthful Laughter. *American Journal of Medical Sciences*, 298, 390-396.

## BRAND GENETICS

These cards are designed to help inspire and guide new, positive innovation ideas.

Feel free to experiment, play and adapt them for your own uses – but for more information and guidance please visit:

[www.brandgenetics.com/positiveinnovation](http://www.brandgenetics.com/positiveinnovation)

Happy Innovating!



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Brand Genetics is a global insight & innovation consultancy. Our human-centred approach helps us identify scalable opportunities for brand growth.

We champion 'Positive Innovation' as the way for responsible, sustainable businesses to create profitable new products and services that help people and the planet.

Get in touch to learn more about how we can help put a smile on your customers' faces and unlock growth for your business



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