Part One: Conscious Design

Intro

Conscious design is a philosophy my company has been using to create brands and products that help to restore and sustain our planet. As excited as I am to explore new worlds throughout space, our home planet is the only one we have to give to our children for the time being. The Peterman Method for conscious design is the culmination of my 15+ years working in product development and Jessica's 20 years working as a healer and studying regenerative technologies and tools for both people and our planet. Together, we've written this book to lay out a culmination of our combined experiences to help other people start looking at the world and designing in a more conscious way.

First, we will define conscious design as an ongoing process supported by 4 key pillars; observation, impact, connection, and inclusion. We will dive into the importance of a strong creative foundation built on observation. Our focus on impact will show conscious design in action across the three main areas of design impact: social, environmental, and financial. Connection will be explored through the lens of systems with an emphasis on alignment within larger ecosystems and healthy communities. Inclusion, being the final component of the conscious design process, will ensure diversity and equity among people or practitioners as well as within the design industry and educational community.

Then we will discuss the importance of sustainability, not just in products but in the brands that steward the lifecycle of their products. Legacy branding is the ultimate sustainable and social-first stance a company can take because it requires creating a business that you expect to outlive you. In that regard, it must also ensure that its multigenerational impact is positive.

With these concepts in place, we can lay out the Peterman Method for those who would like to begin putting the conscious design into practice within their own companies and communities. This method is the backbone for how my design firm launches conscious products right from a brand's inception and continues to evolve its product lines into a lasting legacy of positive impact. It's how we get those key pillars of

conscious design into the DNA of a company's products, brand, and practices as a way of living and creating solutions within their own unique path.

Finally, we will explore the realm of disruptive technologies with some suggestions for navigating the uneasy terrain of a necessary path for integrating the frontier of heroic solutions available to us as soon as possible. We hope this synthesis of design ideas and business practices will be the catalyst for a new generation of entrepreneurs and consumers to improve our world through our natural human instinct to care for each other and solve problems for those who come after us.

Observation

The first key of conscious design is observation because the first result of consciousness is awareness, which is born from observation. The more you observe, the more you will design consciously. When following a conscious design approach, you end up spending more time observing the systems into which your product will be introduced rather than predicting its impact once you have launched it. Most sustainable designs thus far have focused on only the most obvious and consumer visible areas of impact; however, the end game can no longer be ignored. Blindness to a product's possible impact and interjected risk has proven catastrophic to our environment and communities, so many times, the term "profit over people/planet" has been coined. We challenge you to take greater care even in your observation of what the true impact of a product or brand is. You can never be certain of the full range of impact your product will create, but you can get much closer to your predictions by investing more in this pillar before your product is launched.

We analyze and look for gaps when we observe for our clients or our projects. In the engineering world, this is often called gap analysis. In the medical world, it's a treatment plan. Basically, looking at what you are observing, then tying it to where you want it to be. That gap is often the product, service, feature, etc., that we design into our clients' products. The path to success is determined by how we close the gap.

If an impact is the fruit of conscious design, then observations are its seeds. We guide our clients through a unique observation process that fits each product's needs and goals and we support our teams with observational tools and methods that make data collection and interpretation easy and useful. There are many areas you need to observe to be conscious of your design approach and process. When we put ourselves to the task of observation, we strive to remove as many blind spots as possible in order to increase the chances of attaining our desired impact. Our observation process often begins with the different areas and levels of an impact our clients would like to create and then works backward from those points. Your project may require you to be aware of additional sectors, but this will put you on the right path for impacting the social, environmental, and financial areas of life that your product will affect.

One of our favorite examples of the power of observation is the drawdown project.[1] The drawdown project has been incredibly inspiring and informative for many organizations, who want to counteract the accumulation of greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere. The project itself took no direct action to reduce CO2 accumulations, and its sole purpose was to observe and track where most of the emissions are coming from, so we can intelligently design behaviors and systems that have the most impact on creating effective drawdown. This eye-opening study quickly demonstrates why people should not put off purchasing an electric car in order to help the environment. According to observations in drawdown strategies, simple and immediately accessible changes like adopting more plant-based meals into their diet and preventing food waste will make a much larger and lasting impact than we used to assume.

The study also courageously reports that in addition to focusing on replacing the use of CFCs in our appliances, we also need to devote our collective efforts to support the education and development of young women in their economic communities. Cheers to the scientists who so aptly pointed out that women's health and safety are crucial to the health of our global economy and our planet.

SO, WHAT ARE WE LOOKING AT?

The major areas that any sustainable company can no longer choose to be blind to will be covered in our next section on impact. These include:

- — Product Lifecycle, including manufacturing and materials
- — Customer Experience, both micro and macro
- — Regenerative, drawdown, and upcycling practices & effects
- — Healthy Profits & Social First Missions
- — Exemplary Company Culture

In conscious design, based on our clients' impact goals, we choose to look at all of these areas to varying degrees. The degree to which you choose to spend energy observing each of these areas will determine how important your goals and these areas are to your brand.

OBSERVING A PRODUCT'S LIFECYCLE, INCLUDING MANUFACTURING & MATERIALS

Part of what makes a conscious design approach is observing and being aware of a product's lifecycle. What do people do with products like yours when they reach the end of their life? It's a combination of understanding people's habits, understanding how the product was created and designed, and seeing what you can come up with. We all use products, but when was the last time you gave serious thought to the entire lifecycle of a product you use on a daily basis? Probably never. Do that, and you'll start to see how products impact far more than you think they do. Consider any product you see and think about all the materials involved. Where did those materials come from? What is impacted or consumed while the product is being used? What happens to the product at the end of its life?

This segues well into impacts. Products impact each of the three areas, sometimes in multiple ways that people aren't always aware of. A big area frequently overlooked is social. We typically know how products impact a specific user because we design products to fit a user. But what about the larger picture of how a product impacts connection or how they interact with other people? This gets into the realm of experienced designers and UI/UX. However, it's important to understand this on the micro and macro levels, which we'll go into later.

What is the market like? Being aware of the market on multiple levels will ensure you are able to be conscious about choosing the product and direction. Generic market research and sales data will only get you

so far. We help our clients to get customer input from people who are actually in the market. The caveat to be conscious is that when launching a truly disruptive or blue ocean product, your customers may not directly give you useful feedback. If you had talked to consumers before the launch of the iPhone about what they wanted, they probably would have said a smaller phone, one that lasted longer, or had better service. Few, if any, would have said a smartphone.

Observing manufacturing processes is important, especially if you are unfamiliar with the topic. While you don't need to understand every manufacturing process in detail, you should have some basic knowledge and understanding, even if you hire all the work out to a design firm. If you aren't even aware in the slightest what a factory actually looks like when it's working, not the shiny pictures people like to show off of brand new, never used ones, then you should probably plan a tour. Going to manufacturers and walking their floors and getting tours was a part of design school. Coupled with the fact that I've been walking on factory floors for decades, watched hundreds of hours of videos showing manufacturing machinery working, and have a deep understanding of how manufacturing works across many different materials and processes. You don't need that much, but if you have no idea at all, then it's hard for you to conceptualize the impact and work that goes into making a product.

There are many tools and resources available to give us insight and understanding into the lifecycle of products. In manufacturing, you can work with actual manufacturers to get tours and be given an overview of their process and what they do with raw materials and their waste. When it comes to material, you can usually trace it back to the mine, farm, or other location that produces the rawest form of the material. Because people are more aware of full supply chains, companies share more when they have good practices and share how raw materials turn into their products or get processed for production. If you really want to get into it, there are many YouTube videos showing manufacturing processes, factories often have tours, and of course, you can contact manufacturers directly and ask for details on operations as a prospective customer. When wanting to observe longer cycles of materials in nature, you can do research and talk to experts in geology,

horticulture, or agriculture, for example, to understand the natural cycles around the materials you are using. This can be especially useful when looking at grown material.

Interviews and surveys can be helpful tools. I've often used LinkedIn or a similar platform to get feedback from industry experts on a manufacturing process or material lifecycle. Talk to the people who know about your materials. These advisors can easily tell you more about the raw material extraction, refinement, collection, and integration of recycled material, as well as final manufacturing, than you would have ever thought of on your own. Logistics play a big part in this because a material often travels between different locations based on the step it's being used in. For these types of things, nothing will beat industry knowledge, so talk to the experts.

This article shows a great example of how taking a deeper look into the product lifecycle can unearth simple and sustainable solutions in reducing its energy consumption and improving longevity. We are all familiar with the textile industry as its products have become our favorite clothes, products on which we rely every day.[2] When you think about the lifecycle of your clothes, you may imagine an ideal scenario in which textiles are manufactured from organically or even regeneratively grown plants and spun into cloth that is sewn into your favorite shirt in a factory founded on worker safety and the right to a living wage, how lovely is that? As consumers, we leave the product lifecycle business up to the manufacturer, assuming their investments in materials and worker rights will be all that's needed to make our clothing environmentally sustainable.

Independent lifecycle analysis of textiles, including cotton and polyester fabrics, showed that 75% of the products' energy consumption was based on the consumers' household laundering practices. Yep, no matter how green your organic fair-trade garments are, they will have a negative impact on the environment because of the detergents and hot water we use every day to care for them. On the bright side, these studies, which were paid for by clothing retailers, helped direct consumer education to reduce clothing energy requirements by 10% just by lowering the temperature setting on your washing machine. In the case of fashion, it turns out that we do have a much bigger part to play, and we can make a 10% dent in energy efficiency just by cleaning our clothes in slightly cooler water.

Fabric lifecycle studies show that product lifecycle and energy efficiency are not always the sole responsibility of the manufacturer; your brand can sometimes make more impactful changes by educating on consumer care.

OBSERVING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE BOTH MICRO & MACRO

A keen devotion to customer experience can usually be seen in luxury brands. Take the Ritz Carlton hospitality brand, for example. Their customer experience values are centered on a very relatable problem, the Ritz Carlton customer who forgot their laptop charger in their hotel room. But before the customer could even call the hotel, the charger was couriered to them. This kind of magical customer service exists because Ritz Carlton employees are empowered to spend up to $2,000 per day to improve the customer experience for any guest. All employees fall within this program, from front desk receptionists to housekeeping staff.[3]

Another great way to boost customer experience is by injecting your brand's sense of humor into its product descriptions. We love how ASOS clothing usually includes a quippy nod to its millennial customers on their clothing tags, in this case, a dry clean only garment with a tag that reads "Dry Clean only, requires a 3rd party, welcome to adulthood." [4]

Observe the customer experiences for your brand and other brands. What do your customers enjoy, what's remaining lackluster? We're not endorsing throwing thousands of dollars into all your customer interactions; we know it is often just shining the light of observation on each touchpoint and adding in your brand's personal touches. Whether your aim is to under-promise and overdeliver or just to surprise and delight it, it is the thought that counts.

Talking to your current or prospective customers will give your insight that you can't get anywhere else. Sometimes new products come around just because the customer experience is terrible with other products. Ever heard of the sanitary belt? [5] It's a pre-1970s feminine torture device used to hold a menstrual pad in place and provide the lady trapped inside one a 24hr wedgie. Thanks to the industry finally taking input from its customers, we now have products like the Diva Cup and Thinx.[6]

What kind of experience do your customers actually want? Do they really want to talk to you on the phone? Or do they want to use chat if they need customer service? Some generalizations can give you an idea, but it's far better to know actual customer experiences. Being aware of this goes beyond just launching a new product or brand. It should be a continual part of what you do, whether it's product development or content creation in your marketing copy or education and outreach. Remember, your customer experience lasts from the moment they first hear about you until they are no longer a customer. So be conscious of the entire process and every touchpoint. There isn't just one single customer experience. There are many across the time.

Companies that provide more autonomy results have happier employees who perform better. Cases such as the Ritz Carlton example provide some clear feedback that autonomy can help employees serve their customers better and quicker.[7]

Be open to both customer criticism and positive input, and both are incredibly valuable. Only one out of every twenty-five unhappy customers will directly complain, so being aware of unhappy customers and listening to them can provide huge benefits beyond the "one" customer you are directly addressing.[8] Mind Tools uses a concise seven-step method for turning an unhappy customer into an opportunity to improve your brand's customer experience. Here are their steps:

1

Put yourself in the customer's shoes

2

Use Active Listening

3

Repeat their concerns back to
confirm you understand them

4

Offer empathy and or an apology

5

Present a solution

6

Take action and follow up

7

Implement what you learned

Why are we grouping social-first missions with healthy profits? Because they go hand in hand. Consumers vote with their dollars, and when you have plenty of choices among similar products and brands, you'll garner more emotional satisfaction from a purchase that serves more than your personal needs. It may be a terrible idea to treat corporations like people, but brands definitely carry a personality and a reputation that we all must pay attention to. It just so happens that brands with high-ranking reputations also have high-ranking profits to match. Reptrak is a company that surveys and compiles a list of the most reputable companies with annual profits of more than $2 billion.[9]

Leading Reptrak's top 100 are mega brands including:

— Lego (#1)
— Walt Disney
— Microsoft
— Adidas

Remember when we talked about conscious design principles lowering the risk of blind spots? Successful CSR plans are doing that too. "A report by Babson College reviewed hundreds of CSR program studies. The reviewers found that the programs can have a strong impact on a company's market value and brand as well as lower risk. The report's findings found that CSR programs have the power to do the following:

— Increase market value by up to 6%
— Reduce systemic risk by up to 4%
— Reduce the cost of debt by 40% or more
— Raise price premium by up to 20%
— Reduce staff turnover rate by up to 50%" [10]

No matter what your intentions are when you start your company or launch your product, it's important to realize that when it becomes robust and profitable, it will have a growing impact on the communities it touches. This is why we recommend our clients take a proactive approach to social impact and create goals that align with their brand's legacy. Observation of social first missions is as important as liberating for any brand that wants to participate in one of these hidden agendas. Whether your company is a more private Clark Kent type or a fully outed superman, there are limitless ways to enable and expand your company's resources and profits to help whatever community you feel drawn to serve.

Notice how we said resources and profits? Sharing profits is only one simple and direct way of spreading around the good that your brand is doing, but what if you're a start-up that's buried in debt? That doesn't mean you have to wait till you're in the black to have a social-first impact. If you spend time observing a wide variety of social-first approaches, you'll find there are numerous creative ways to leverage your company's resources to support your community.

Here are a few more really creative examples of social first missions that go beyond giving back profits....

Subaru has had a donation program that gives to charities that are relevant to their customers since 2008.[11] These different causes are represented by the Subaru Loves branding: Subaru Loves Pets, Subaru Loves the Earth, Subaru Loves Learning, Subaru Loves to Help, and Subaru Loves to Care.

For people in the developed world, the need for a new pair of glasses is a chance to accessorize, but it can also be a chore to find the right ones. Warby Parker helps simplify the task by sending customers five different frames of their choice to try on before deciding.[12] But knowing that for many people, a functional pair of glasses can be life changing. In addition, the B-Corp works to provide glasses to those in need. Through its Buy-A-Pair, Give-A-Pair program.[13] Warby Parker a monthly donation to its nonprofit partners, such as VisionSpring,[14] to provide people in developing countries with prescription eyewear. Since its inception in 2010, the company has distributed over four million pairs of glasses.

Some brands are created to support their community. Alaffia is a brand originating from Africa that sells organic soap and bath products made from coconut and shea butter grown by women-run fair trade organic co-ops. In addition to how their co-ops have supported the local economy, Alaffia also donates profits from their sales to build schools and women's health clinics and donate bikes to kids. The brand is constantly responding to the needs of its community and using profits to meet those needs. Alaffia also has excellent B2B relations simply by sending newsletters to their buyers and fans. The stories about their incredible impact on countless families make it morally difficult to justify buying soap from any other company.

What if you haven't yet found "your community"? Don't let your brand's abundant positive impact be hampered by a lack of a strong and clear conviction to help a specific cause. If you don't know who you'd like to help, we recommend a method we call "deepening your "why" and widening your "I." To "deepen your why?" Explore your brand's bottom line mission and purpose and make sure it aligns with your strongest core beliefs. To "widen your I" means to expand the community with which you identify to increase your potential to serve and reciprocate. The widest I available to most people is a citizen of the universe. However, the title of "a fellow earth dweller" will connect you with our planetary community and its ecosystem. The point

isn't to achieve the impossible (in making everyone happy) but to offer the most service from your unique place to do so. The gift of humanity being intrinsically tied to the fate of the earth means that when we help people evolve, we will improve our care for the earth, and when we support the health of our planet, we are also supporting the health of all its inhabitants.

For easy ways to make a global impact, consider joining forces with other organizations that have a global focus, like B Corp,

> *We envision a global economy that uses business as a force for good.*
>
> *This economy consists of a new type of corporation, the B Corporation, which is purpose-driven and creates benefits for all stakeholders, not just shareholders. As B Corporations and leaders of this emerging economy, we believe:*
>
> *That we must be the change we seek in the world.*
>
> *That all business ought to be con ducted as if people and place mattered.*
>
> *That, through their products, practices, and profits, businesses should aspire to do no harm and benefit all.*
>
> *To do so requires that we act with the understanding that we are each dependent upon another and thus responsible for each other and future generations.* [15]

Climate Neutral is an organization dedicated to helping consumers find and support businesses working to reduce their carbon footprint to zero.[16] One percent for the planet is a profit-sharing mission allowing their members to donate 1% or more towards environmental impact. According to their website, only 3% of philanthropy goes towards supporting our environment.[17]

Carbon Neutral, and %1 for the Planet. B-corps' group of over 4K businesses willing to have legal accountability backing up their CSR missions. Some of our favorite B Crops include Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream, New Belgium Brewing, Dairy and Thrive Market. The B Corp collaborative upholds their following Declaration of Interdependence

As brand developers, the first thing we do is create a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) plan together with our clients. There is a ton of information on this topic, though knowing the name will help in your research. There are four types, or areas, that CSRs fall into typically, philanthropy, environment, diversity, and volunteerism. There are specialized software programs and tools for tracking these missions. In order to be a truly first brand, you should be sharing what you are doing with your entire organization and customer base. Using your social first or CSR plan as a source for content in your brands' communications will help 1) create accountability among your team 2) get supportive feedback from your audience.

Tracking what success looks like will depend on what you are doing. If it's your team volunteering, then maybe it's tracking volunteered hours. If it's philanthropy, then dollars donated is a pretty typical one. There are many approaches on the topic of tracking goals, though we typically prefer the OKR system. It is an entire system with its own book. A great place to start is by reading the book "Measure What Matters" by John Doerr, who learned about OKRs from Andy Grove, who developed them at Intel. Really, it's a great system for any type of tracking and management.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

What tools or resources do you use to track new methods for social-first missions?

How do you track their success/effectiveness?

How do you know your first mission has the intended result?