



Field Harmonix

FIELD HARMONIX™

Ad Public Signals Diagnostic

Nike – Just Do It

Produced by: Field Harmonix

April 2026

Introduction

This case study represents something rare.

Across nearly four decades, the “Just Do It” campaign from Nike is examined not simply as a sequence of advertisements, but as a **living field**—a dynamic system of signals, meanings, and human responses evolving over time. What emerges from this view is not just a history of creative excellence, but a deeper pattern: the rise, expansion, fragmentation, and attempted re-coherence of one of the most powerful brand signals ever created.

Traditional analysis in advertising and public relations tends to focus on performance metrics, creative execution, and market outcomes. These lenses are valuable, but incomplete. They describe *what happened*, but often miss *why the signal moved the way it did*—and where its underlying coherence strengthened or weakened across time.

Field Harmonix introduces a different way of seeing.

At its core, Field Harmonix operates on a simple but powerful premise: **all human systems—individuals, organizations, brands—exist as fields of signal exchange**. Within these fields, coherence and resonance determine the quality of connection, while distortion, fragmentation, and shadow introduce drift. These dynamics are often invisible to conventional tools, yet they shape perception, behavior, and ultimately performance.

What you are about to read is a longitudinal diagnostic of a brand communication system viewed through this lens. It reveals how a campaign can achieve near-perfect coherence, how that coherence scales under pressure, how it begins to fragment, and what it takes to restore alignment in a complex and rapidly changing environment.

For advertising and public relations agencies, this represents a new capability.

Rather than evaluating campaigns only after they launch, it becomes possible to **read the field in advance**—to detect where resonance is strong, where signals are misaligned, and where unseen distortions may limit impact before significant resources are deployed. It also allows for something even more powerful: the ability to sustain coherence over time, not just create moments of success.

The Nike “Just Do It” campaign provides an extraordinary teaching example because it spans 38 years of cultural influence. But the deeper value of this study is not historical.

It is practical.

It shows that behind every campaign, every brand, and every message, there is a field—and that field can now be read, understood, and, when necessary, brought back into alignment.

Field Harmonix Case Study (v2.0 — Diagnostic Layer)

Nike — “Just Do It” as a Coherence System Across Time

Disclaimer

This report is an interpretive diagnostic derived from publicly available signals (brand communications, campaigns, leadership narratives, product direction, cultural positioning, and media discourse). It reflects coherence pattern recognition across the BASSSEC+L axes and is not financial advice or predictive forecasting.

I. HRI (Harmonix Resonance Index) — Signal Coherence Across Eras

HRI measures the degree of alignment between **message, behavior, identity, and underlying human truth**.

Era I — Signal Ignition (1988–1995)

HRI: 94–96 (Near-Optimal Coherence)

Nike achieved rare alignment across all layers:

- **Behavioral:** Product innovation aligned with athletic performance
- **Archetypal:** The Hero’s Journey activated (struggle → action → transformation)
- **Semantic:** “Just Do It” = perfect compression of intent
- **Emotional:** Immediate activation; no friction
- **Cultural:** Inclusive expansion of “who is an athlete”

Diagnostic Insight: This is a **coherence peak state**—signal purity, universality, and activation aligned. Extremely rare. Comparable to foundational myth creation.

Era II — Signal Expansion (1996–2010)

HRI: 86–90 (High Coherence, Early Load Stress)

- Signal scaled globally without immediate collapse
- Continued reinforcement through iconic athletes like Michael Jordan

- Expansion into multiple sports and markets

Early Stress Indicators:

- Increasing narrative complexity
- Beginning of segmentation pressure
- Slight drift from universal → performance-elite emphasis

Diagnostic Insight: Coherence remains strong, but **load-bearing stress begins**. The system is expanding faster than its ability to maintain perfect alignment.

Era III — Signal Fragmentation (2011–2018)

HRI: 72–78 (Moderate Coherence, Active Drift)

- Messaging diversification across channels
- Product and category explosion
- Rise of digital fragmentation

Observed Breakdown Patterns:

- Inconsistent semantic tone
- Loss of central narrative gravity
- Tactical messaging replacing mythic clarity

Diagnostic Insight: This is the **fragmentation phase**—not collapse, but dispersion. The original signal is still present but diluted across competing narratives.

Era IV — Signal Reassertion Under Pressure (2019–Present)

HRI: 76–82 (Conditional Coherence, Polarized Signal)

- Reintroduction of strong cultural narratives (e.g., Colin Kaepernick campaign)
- Increased emotional intensity and relevance

Competing Forces:

- Strength: renewed conviction and boldness
- Risk: ideological narrowing vs. universal activation

Diagnostic Insight: Nike is attempting **signal re-concentration**, but within a highly polarized field. Coherence is **directionally improving**, but not yet unified.

II. Distortion Mapping — Where Fragmentation Originates

Distortion Mapping traces **how coherence breaks**, not just where.

Layer 1 — Source Signal (Original State)

Condition: Pure, universal, action-based

Distortion: None

Layer 2 — Scaling Pressure (Global Expansion)

Distortion Type: Signal Overextension

- Expansion across geographies and categories
- Narrative stretched to accommodate multiple audiences

Effect: Signal begins to **carry too many meanings simultaneously**

Layer 3 — Organizational Complexity

Distortion Type: Internal Fragmentation

- Multiple teams, divisions, and product lines
- Loss of singular narrative authority

Effect: Different parts of Nike begin emitting **non-harmonized signals**

Layer 4 — Market & Cultural Feedback Loops

Distortion Type: Reactive Signaling

- Response to cultural, social, and political currents
- Increased pressure to “take positions”

Effect: Signal shifts from **universal activation** → **contextual positioning**

Layer 5 — Identity Compression Breakdown

Distortion Type: Myth Dilution

- “Just Do It” no longer consistently anchors all messaging
- Brand identity becomes multi-threaded

Effect: Loss of **singular emotional trigger point**

Core Distortion Insight

Nike’s fragmentation did not originate from failure.

It originated from **success without constraint**.

The system scaled beyond its ability to maintain:

- Narrative unity
- Signal discipline
- Archetypal clarity

III. Transformational Playbook — Re-Cohering Nike’s Signal

This is not a reinvention strategy.

This is a **re-alignment strategy**—returning Nike to its highest coherent state while operating at modern scale.

1. Re-Center the Core Signal (Semantic Re-Anchor)

Objective: Restore “Just Do It” as the *primary organizing field*

- Every campaign must pass a simple test:
Does this activate action immediately?
- Eliminate messaging that requires explanation before activation

Playbook Move: Re-establish “Just Do It” as a **behavioral trigger**, not just a brand asset

2. Collapse Narrative Complexity

Objective: Reduce signal noise

- Limit concurrent narrative threads
- Prioritize universal human themes over segmented messaging

Playbook Move: Shift from **audience-specific storytelling** → **human-specific storytelling**

3. Re-Unify Internal Signal Emission

Objective: Align product, marketing, and leadership narrative

- Introduce a **Coherence Governance Layer**
- Audit all outward-facing signals for alignment

Playbook Move: Single narrative authority across divisions

4. Restore Archetypal Clarity

Objective: Return to the Hero's Journey as the dominant frame

- Focus on struggle, resistance, and action
- Avoid over-intellectualization or abstraction

Playbook Move: Rebuild campaigns around **moments of decision**, not outcomes

5. Navigate Cultural Positioning Without Losing Universality

Objective: Maintain relevance without fragmentation

- Engage cultural issues only when they map to universal human truths
- Avoid narrowing identity into ideological segments

Playbook Move: Translate all positioning through the lens of:

“Does this expand or contract human participation?”

6. Rebuild Signal Integrity Over Time (Not Campaign-by-Campaign)

Objective: Shift from bursts → continuity

- Treat Nike as a **long-wave narrative system**
- Build cumulative coherence across years

Playbook Move: Multi-year narrative arcs vs. isolated campaigns

IV. Final Diagnostic Reflection

Nike remains one of the most powerful brand systems ever created.

But its current challenge is not growth.

It is **signal integrity under scale**.

The original “Just Do It” signal achieved something extremely rare:

It aligned human truth, emotional activation, and behavioral action into a single moment.

That signal still exists.

But it is now competing with:

- Internal complexity
- External pressure
- Narrative fragmentation

The path forward is not innovation alone.

It is **disciplined return to coherence**.

Field Harmonix Closing Statement

What this case reveals is foundational:

A company can scale globally, dominate markets, and still drift at the level that matters most—

the relationship between what it says, what it does, and what people feel when they encounter it.

That relationship is coherence.

And coherence, once fragmented, does not collapse immediately.

It disperses.

Until someone—or something—re-centers the field.

ABOUT FIELD HARMONIX

Field Harmonix is a Coherence Intelligence company.

We operate at a layer beneath traditional analytics—measuring not what organizations produce, but how they are oriented while producing it. Using proprietary resonance-scanning methodologies, Field Harmonix analyzes publicly available signals across strategy, communication, product, leadership, and culture to detect patterns of alignment, drift, and fragmentation within complex human systems.

Our work reveals the invisible conditions that shape performance before they become visible in results.

This includes early-stage misalignment, identity-level fragmentation, and structural incoherence—factors that conventional metrics do not capture until consequences are already underway.

Field Harmonix enables leaders, organizations, and investors to see these conditions clearly, respond earlier, and realign systems to the source of durable performance. We call this Coherence Intelligence.

COPYRIGHT NOTICE © 2026 Field Harmonix™ All rights reserved.

This report is the intellectual property of Field Harmonix and is provided for informational and illustrative purposes only. No part of this document may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means without prior written permission from Field Harmonix.

The insights contained herein are derived from publicly available information and interpreted through Field Harmonix's proprietary Coherence Intelligence framework (BASSEC+L). This report does not constitute financial advice, investment guidance, or predictive forecasting.

Field Harmonix™, Corporate Mirror™, Distortion Scan™, Harmonix Resonance Index™ (HRI), and Coherence Intelligence™ are trademarks of Field Harmonix.