

Strategic Corporate Philanthropy:
A Guide for Success



2016 continues to shine light for a comprehensive corporate responsibility agenda. At CyberGrants, we see the movement headed to companies both big and small. Social engagement and a dynamic philanthropic platform is still a missing piece within companies today. From employee engagement to attracting the millennial workforce and retaining them, corporate philanthropy and corporate responsibility (interlinked but not synonymous) are panaceas that are finally getting their due.



2015 proved that responsibility, transparency and purpose are all expectations for the modern company. In 2016, expect brands to grow even more creative, collaborative and inclusive as their corporate responsibility initiatives come of age.

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Forbes Contributor

Today's companies understand that it's about more than signing up for a new system or creating another nameless, ineffective program.

Corporate responsible companies continue to invest in thought leadership and strategies that not only create these programs but align them with employee and community values too. But the job doesn't stop there. Retention, engagement and consistent connection are all ongoing investments.

We have taken time to look at the expectations of the modern company from employees, job seekers and the communities where these corporations thrive. We'll break down the outlook and decipher the trends in corporate responsibility and philanthropy with practical solutions and tips for every company, no matter how big or small.

Learn how to navigate the challenges of identifying and aligning your corporate philanthropy programs with business practices; then build and execute a strategy that works!

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Storytelling

Storytelling Over Stats

One of the largest challenges in creating a corporate responsibility initiative is that of participant engagement. For many, a reliance on statistics and corporate reports is the only approach offered. However, storytelling, despite its slightly hokey-sounding name, is the best way to encourage participation and convey the meaning of your cause.

Borrowed from marketing, storytelling is just what it sounds like. Instead of relying on statistics few employees understand or annual reports read by even fewer, the act of couching your cause inside a story brings new life to a corporate philanthropy effort.

However, before a company can embark on a storytelling effort, they must first understand the consumer or employee to whom they are communicating. For many companies, this may be the first foray into social responsibility and aligning values with employees or prospective employees. **It's so very important to understand your audience to whom you are telling a story, otherwise you may tell the wrong one.**

So who is this audience?

For starters, we know that by 2020, the largest generation within the workforce will be the millennial. And while it's not recommended to build entire philanthropic efforts around one generation or another, it's been stated that millennials are the generation driving social responsibility initiatives, inside companies and outside of them. So while we can't profile everyone at your company or everyone in a single generation, we can draw some conclusions about this millennial generation that will be helpful in creating a story around corporate philanthropy or responsibility efforts.

All this boils down to the idea of reputation. Your brand may boast stats that seem impressive in comparison to other peer companies, but that's not how people make decisions. There is an understood need to seek the story behind why they are being asked to do something. That's where storytelling and a comprehensive approach to user experience come in.

The same holds true for your employees. Chances are, none of your people will talk about your annual report when they head home for dinner or meet up with friends to have a drink. What they WILL share is the story you're telling about your change initiative, and that's what we have to learn to craft. Because these stories, when combined with one another and spread throughout your employees' social networks, become your reputation.

Tech-savvy

They have more access, more years of experience and more tech than any generation before them.

Skeptical

Super Bowl ads and newspaper columns do nothing for this generation. Try new media to reach them.

Environmentally & socially conscious

Put simply, they care about the world and the people in it.

Crowd-based

They care where their friends and family shop, work and play. Reviews matter.

Choosy

The average consumer only shows affinity for 4.6 brands at a time on social networks.



Tell me a fact and I'll learn. Tell me a truth and I'll believe. But tell me a story and it will live in my heart forever.

Indian Proverb



WARNING: Before you tell a story, make sure you've mapped your corporate values. It's extremely difficult to create a CSR or **corporate philanthropy program** or strategy without these things firmly in place. Bonus points for ensuring you have some idea of what might align with the values of your company and employees. A simple survey might tell you whether your employees have a good grasp on the company values and give you a glimpse into what they value highly.

So how does A BRAND tell a compelling story? The same way a person does. By showcasing ideas important to your listeners, avoiding clichés and slang and using specific imagery!

Tip Jar

- **Acronyms?** JSN. Just say no. CSR, LEED CE, A/E/C, GRI... just STOP. Not only is this confusing to the reader, but it takes any humanity out of philanthropic work. People need meaning, not alphabet soup.
- **Cross-purposes beware.** It's way harder to sell corporate philanthropy when it has NOTHING to do with your company. Are you a media company? Perhaps build websites for a local shelter. A grocery ecommerce platform? Support a food bank.
- **Excessive Back Patting.** Act like a company, not a charity. People can tell when you are asking for more than your due from charitable interests plus businesses can often assist non-profits with inefficiencies that may have gone unaddressed.

Once you've realized what not to do, you're ready to craft your story. A great story has some unique markers, but remember you need a story that will go as close to viral as you can make it. If you're working within a large company, it has to be shareable and compelling.

A great story is easy to remember and simple to share, it has a lesson and it's compelling to your audience. There are a few ways to compel your audience to action. One is by shocking them with an unexpected twist or turn. You can also appeal to the emotionality of your audience. With the advent of video as a leading way to reach people both in and outside company walls, appealing to the emotional side of your audience is even easier. Corporate social responsibility lends itself very well to both **emotional and shocking storylines.**



Another storyline that is rarely used (perhaps due to corporate PR worries it will fall flat) is the comedic storytelling option. However, if you do have a program that lends itself to lighthearted humor, you may have a winner!

Tip Jar: Build your stories with one (or more!) of these key elements

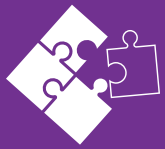
- **Highlight your employees.** Crowdsource stories from your employees using YouTube, Screencast-o-Matic or Zoomforth to give your campaign more oomph and take advantage of social proof to bolster your numbers and engagement.
- **Give some background.** Can you visually show or tell the story about how your product or service impacts a community, the planet or a specific group of people? If so, giving a glimpse into your supply chain is the perfect story element to add.
- **Bring it to an individual level.** Every great story has a protagonist. Find yours and bring the high minded ideals of your campaign into stark focus.
- **Customer impact.** Sometimes a great corporate philanthropy story can go beyond the walls of a company to its customers and clients as well. Find customer feedback and impact to further tell your story.
- **Alternate Reality.** What would happen if your campaign worked? What would the world look like? Sell this vision to your audience.

Now that you've identified your audience, defined their values (and mapped them to yours!) and created a story worth telling, you need to be able to communicate this story via every available channel. It helps if you've built a communication plan early on, however most communication plans follow a similar format to the one on the next page.

My Storytelling Communication Plan:

- 1 Target Demographic:**
Who are you talking to? Who do you want to participate and/or share this story?
- 2 Spearhead Statement:**
State as plainly as possible who is doing what, who your company wants to benefit, why you've decided to do this and what goals you are hoping to achieve.
Ex. Acme Medical Corp is creating emergency packs to hand out at their coastal region locations to help prep customers and employees against coastal storms. Acme Medical Corp was started in the South and we want to help those in need when disaster weather starts. We hope to hand out over 1 million emergency medical kits in 2016.
- 3 The Story**
Here is where you should craft what your story looks like overall. While it may have multiple characters and plotlines, the crux of the story should remain the same and act as a cornerstone for the overarching messaging on different channels.
- 4 Keywords**
Make sure to set up Google alerts and other updates to let you know if your campaign name, hashtag, or company name is getting any press or employee chatter around the story.
- 5 Email**
While often debated, email isn't dead yet! Craft several versions of your story, each with a "take action" section that specifically details what you want the reader to do.
- 6 Twitter**
140 characters please! While this isn't a crucial part of every storytelling strategy, it is quite the challenge to try to limit your story "ask" to this short-form communication arena. Try to build out at least 10 tweets that tell the story and direct the reader to something more compelling, like a landing page.
- 7 Facebook**
Facebook may be where your employees congregate and even its private groups frequently beat out platforms built specifically for communication. Whether you are building out a group, page or event, you should have a version of your story written for Facebook. It should include imagery, a custom link and once more, a compelling reason for people to jump onboard.
- 8 Company Intranet**
Whether you use Slack, Yammer or a more traditional browser-based intranet, make sure you're communicating and have a space for your corporate philanthropy efforts... meaning your story of course.
- 9 LinkedIn**
If you want to use your CSR efforts to attract new talent, LinkedIn should be part of your communication plan. Not only can you add your CSR efforts to your company page, you can link to your efforts on various job postings and even allow employees who participate to put the volunteer experience (if applicable) on their profiles.

Corporate storytelling is clearly the way of the future for brands who want their corporate philanthropy efforts to be noticed and acted upon by employees and their clients and customers. But how to focus on working together with employees? Next, let's look at collaboration and how to create a collaborative, socially-conscious workforce.



Collaboration

Your company can't deliver the story and engage consumers and employees in your overall philanthropic efforts without a collaborative approach across all departments. Finance, IT, Marketing, HR, Communications and more all work together to bring corporate philanthropy initiatives to life. In larger companies, how do you determine which department is responsible for driving stakeholder engagement? Is it Human Resources or your Executive Suite? Is it Public Affairs or is it Marketing's responsibility? The fact is: all departments are directly responsible for carrying out corporate philanthropy initiatives.

However, we're still missing one very important overarching division of the company: the employees. Yes, **your employee network or resource groups are going to be one of your greatest assets when it comes to building a collaborative approach to tackle CSR.**

The Boston College's Center for Corporate Citizenship states that all CSR programs must rely on total company and employee involvement if such initiatives are going to be successful.



To that end, different employees and managers have significant roles in gauging stakeholder engagement. And while the tasks will vary based who engages with suppliers, vendors, employees, customers, and shareholders, the entire effort is cross-functional and depends on clear communication and sharing of information between various departments.

@ LeonKaye

So how should companies leverage this employee network and turn CSR efforts into a collaborative, cross-departmental duty?



Employee engagement tactics need to be collaborative across every department to truly understand what drives employee participation. Key identifiers of employees who are engaged and participate are ones that feel recognized and appreciated and overall satisfied with their work and workplace.



39% of employees feel underappreciated at work, with 77% reporting that they would work harder if they felt better recognized!

Employees would work harder if they felt recognized? There's more! **TINYpulse surveyed** over 4,500 employees across the globe and found that a whopping **80% of employees felt they were not strongly valued for the work they did**. The study also found a strong correlation between "recognition when you do great work" and "happiness at work" which clearly shows the impact employee recognition has on employee happiness, which in turn influences employee retention, workplace perception, and peer and supervisor relationships.

The study delivered 4 key insights that tie employee recognition to:

- 1 Better Employee Retention
- 2 Positive Workplace Perception
- 3 Improved Peer Relationships
- 4 Improved Employee-Supervisor Relationships

How can companies bring employees and departments together to collaborate in CSR?

Through team-based volunteering of course. However, we're talking about cross-departmental teams, not the ones your employees already work with. Encourage employees from other departments to make up teams based on shared interests and shared causes.

Use HR analytics or employee surveys to find relevant shared causes among your employee network. Encourage employees to break down departmental barriers and create new teams based on causes near and dear to them.



Tip Jar: Employee-Centric Corporate Philanthropy

- Collaborative corporate philanthropy programs drive employee retention, improve workplace perception, and boost peer relationships at virtually no cost.
- Align corporate interest with employee interest by pushing down decision making, keeping employees informed and training staff to respond to future challenges.
- Organizations need a culture where ideas flourish, collaboration flows, and high levels of employee engagement motivate people to work harder and smarter.

Employee-centric corporate philanthropy programs are a proven way to attract, hire, engage, motivate and retain workers, and foster workplace camaraderie, teamwork and communication, which ultimately boosts revenues and profits. It's time for companies to see the potential success their company can achieve through employee-centric philanthropy programs. Now, let's dive into why corporate philanthropy programs must be inclusive.

✓ Inclusion

Currently, the global workforce is comprised of four different generations with millennials becoming the increasingly dominant demographic. On that same note, there is also a heightened recognition of the need for more diverse hiring, in regards to gender, ethnicity and work experience. This means the needs and values of the workforce will be increasingly ever-changing and diverse, making inclusion in employee engagement and satisfaction strategies inherently crucial.

What does inclusion means for the workforce?

Inclusion across the board in strategic business decisions has become increasingly significant in talent management and employee engagement strategies. Did you know about these facts?

67% of active and passive job seekers **feel a diverse workforce** is an important factor when evaluating companies and job offers.

Racially diverse companies are **35% more likely** to experience financial returns above their industry average.

Gender-diverse companies are **15% more likely** to financially outperform the competition.



According to [McKinsey's Diversity Matters](#) study, diversity management positively impacts these areas:

- **Improves talent acquisition:** stronger focus on women and minority groups
- **Strengthens customer orientation:** women and minority groups are key decision makers
- **Increases employee satisfaction:** diverse groups improve collaboration and loyalty and are less prone to conflict
- **Improves decision making:** Diverse groups are more innovative and creative thinkers and tend to be better with problem solving
- **Enhances the company's reputation:** Employees and customers expect companies to be socially responsible and inclusive in their hiring and philanthropic decisions

Why do companies need to take an inclusive approach to philanthropy?

Today's working generation has a fresh new attitude towards life and work that centers on a feeling of shared responsibility in a diverse, multi-ethnic and connected world, with a common global heritage.

80%

of millennials

want to work for a company that cares about how it impacts and contributes to society, and over half would refuse to work for an organization that is socially irresponsible.



The carnage of devastating natural disasters, world wars and violations of human rights are seen by today's society as a shared problem irrespective of boundaries. There is more connection now than ever in a world filled with striking diversity. That's why giving, volunteering and philanthropy for causes important to people play a central role in their personal and professional lives.

The more inclusive employers are, not only in how they develop their workforce, but how they choose to fulfill the needs of a diverse workforce through inclusive giving options, will lay the groundwork for highly effective, strategic corporate philanthropy decisions.

Today's perception of corporate philanthropy isn't what it once was. **Employers today are not afraid to implement corporate philanthropy campaigns dedicated to, what some might consider, controversial or social causes.**



There is a growing understanding between people in today's society that **everyone has the right to their beliefs and values and that means giving to any array of causes without judgement.**



A glowing example of this indifference to judgement comes from companies that support many of the causes stealing today's headlines:

- **H&M:** In the Fall of 2015, **the company began** using transgender models in their ads. They have even stepped up their diversity game by employing trans stylists, photographers and makeup artists to work on their ad campaigns.
- **Macy's:** **With vigorous support** for same-sex marriage, Macy's not only celebrates same-sex marriage as a company, but they've dedicated entire fashion lines to the cause. Their website has its own section dedicated to gay pride, even going as far as keeping customers updated on gay pride events throughout the year. Increases employee satisfaction: diverse groups improve collaboration and loyalty and are less prone to conflict
- **Twitter:** The company opened NeighborNest in May 2015. The center sits just blocks away from their headquarters and is **open to low-income individuals** so they can learn about tech education and how to use technology in this day and age.

Parting thoughts on inclusion

It's one thing to understand the need for inclusive giving and another getting those wheels in motion. Here are some questions to think about to get your company more focused on diverse philanthropy

- *What causes are most important to our employees?*
- *What are some of today's biggest social issues that we can consider giving to?*
- *What kind of inclusion efforts are our competitors making in philanthropy?*

Today's workforce thrives on innovation, diversity and finding meaning in everything they do from the purchases they make at the local convenience stop to the corporate philanthropy opportunities provided to them by their employer. Inclusion is becoming a staple of the world's biggest and most innovative brands and not just in the people they hire, but in the causes they support. Employee satisfaction, engagement and retention all rely on the ever growing need for inclusive principles.



Transparency

What does this have to with Corporate Philanthropy?

Today's society and especially today's workforce has an increasing intolerance for lack of transparency, in consumer purchases, career choices, politics, current events, you name it. The Great Recession and the discouraging number of companies over the past decade committing fraudulent business activities broke the trust of many of today's employees.

Now, with social media outlets like Twitter, Facebook and Glassdoor, there are a wealth of opportunities for people to openly vent their dissatisfaction about virtually anything -- restaurants, stores, teachers, and employers, just to name a few. What's more is **65% of millennials** are even less trusting today of employers' claims than they were in 2011.

What does this have to with Corporate Philanthropy? Employees (and consumers) want to know everything about the companies they're working for or buying from, and corporate citizenship is becoming an increasingly influential aspect on their decision making.

Desire to Trust

First and foremost, today's society puts a very strong emphasis on relationship building and, ultimately, trust in their employer and the places they choose to spend their time and money. Trust is at the root of transparency, and it's difficult to win over a society that has unfortunately been witness to the dishonest and greedy decisions made by fraudulent companies over the years. Outlets like Glassdoor have caused a shift in recruiting.

Organizations that choose to engage their workforce in corporate philanthropy are not only building on the trust of those people, but creating a shining brand that consumers will want to buy from.

78% of job seekers rely on ratings and reviews from current and past employees when deciding where to work and almost **90% of employees** today feel it's important to work for an employer that is responsible to society and the environment.

Growing Concern for the Society and Environment

Nielsen Global recently did a survey and found that **66% of respondents** said they will pay more for products or services that come from companies committed to positive social and environmental impact. From a strategic HR perspective, **45% of millennials** are willing to make less money to work for a company with corporate philanthropy programs, making employee-centric corporate philanthropy programs even more critical to impacting the bottom line. This desire to improve the world goes even deeper with this generation with 61% admitting they would prefer to work for a company that offers volunteering opportunities!

Not only is the bulk of today's workforce concerned about philanthropy, they want their employers to support their passion through corporate volunteer opportunities.



Why else is skills-based volunteering quickly becoming one of the most effective corporate philanthropy programs today?

Engaging through Shared Values

When it comes to the workforce, **employees have a growing desire to work for a company with values that align with their own.** And the same goes for today's employers. Aligning values means fitting for culture and, ultimately, leading employee attraction, engagement, retention and productivity. But work values is only one part of the equation. Employees want to be tied to their organization in a more deep and meaningful way.

It engages employees in their work, provides opportunities for leadership and strengths-building and gives companies a strategic advantage that directly impacts their bottom line, all while fulfilling the desire to give back to the world.



Conclusion

Corporate responsibility is ever evolving and 2016 will continue the trend where employers are going to step up their game in corporate philanthropy programs with multifaceted purpose, significantly contributing to employee engagement, satisfaction, and performance and creating a unique, compelling and desirable employer and consumer brand.

By crafting a compelling story, employers can provide the catalyst for change in their workforce in a way that resonates with employees' innate needs and desires to have a fulfilling career with a responsible employer.

Understanding collaboration as an integral component to making employee engagement strategies successful and especially in planning corporate philanthropy programs, is a vital step in creating strategic, corporate philanthropy programs that will resonate and be carried out across each level of the organization.

And, not forgetting the power of inclusion, it's ever growing impact on today's engagement and retention strategies and how it will impact the philanthropy decisions an organization makes.

Finally, the role transparency plays in employee attraction, engagement and retention and also in consumer brand perception is wholly supported by evidence that corporately responsible employers are winning the war for talent, and ultimately, growing their profits.

● **Additional Resources:**

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/susanmcperson/2016/01/08/5-csr-trends-that-will-blossom-in-2016/#4b8919ce742a>

http://www.accprof.org/core/fileparse.php/107032/urlt/Benchmarking-Report-Full_1.pdf

● **Storytelling resources:**

http://www.sustainablebrands.com/digital_learning/white-paper/corporate-storytelling-and-your-csr-strategy

● <http://www.ifis.cs.tu-bs.de/sites/default/files/A-Model-for-Interactive-CSR-Campaigns-using-Storytelling.pdf>

Collaboration resources:

<http://nbs.net/knowledge/improve-csr-in-your-value-chain-through-collaboration/>

● http://www.huffingtonpost.com/william-brindley/nethope_b_3186042.html

Diversity resources:

● <http://www.slideshare.net/CathyGL/diversity-as-an-essential-component-of-csr>

Transparency resources:

http://dotearth.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/01/25/with-imposed-transparency-and-concerned-millennials-a-boom-in-corporate-responsibility/?_r=0

<http://www.sedexglobal.com/why-transparency-and-collaboration-are-vital-to-the-european-commissions-csr-strategy/>