

## Corporate social responsibility: 4 ways business can care about caring

A concept I talk about in my company is Generation Responsible — the serendipitous partnership of Generation X (those born 1965 to 1980) and Millennials (those born 1981 to 2004) — and the power they have in shaping today's business landscape through social good.

Together, these two groups influence business owners to make decisions that benefit society.

If you look around, you'll see countless examples of companies implementing corporate social responsibility (CSR) plans. From U.S. Airways, which volunteered 28,000 hours with more than 250 nonprofits through their Do Crew volunteer group, to Target's mission of being the first major retailer to sell direct trade coffee, consumers are paying attention and paying it back with fierce brand loyalty.

Have you thought about how your company can do the same?

Any company can incorporate a CSR plan into its brand strategy. Whether you are a family-owned restaurant or a global energy company, partnering with consumers to encourage philanthropy is an effective way to create meaningful change. Creating a giving culture takes time and effort, but these few simple steps will set you out on a path for success.

1. Look at your community and note those around you who are already making social contributions. The most effective way to invest in CSR is to work with what is already available. Collaborating with established nonprofits or charities that align closely with your mission is a great way to connect with others to elevate impact and project your company culture to the world.
2. Get your employees involved. What better way to get your CSR plan ingrained in your organization's culture than by creating an army of invested and inspired advocates ready to spread the word about your mission. Encourage them to promote the plan through social media, and don't shy away from recognizing exemplary employees who dedicate time to this new mission.
3. Consider creating a giving program with established rules and structure. It may initially be difficult to be selective with your resources, but a strategic partnership devoted to one cause can often be more meaningful in the long run. A well-defined program will strengthen your message and help illustrate to the community exactly what you stand for.
4. Be authentic, and take the time to carefully craft your CSR plan. Consumers are smart, and they can spot a half-hearted attempt at charity work faster than a Snapchat. The best way to ensure your plan is genuine is to invest time in choosing a mission that fits in with your company's voice and values. Talk to your employees. Evaluate the things they care about and determine the key areas that align with your core values.

If you thoroughly invest time and resources, and choose a mission that makes sense, consumers will notice and flock to your brand. The cause you support will become stronger, your employees will feel more invested in their work and the culture you have created will inspire others to follow suit.

Consider the possibilities. What can you do if you allow profit and purpose to collide?