Corporate Social Responsibility: A Lever For Employee Attraction & Engagement

While the notion of “corporate social responsibility,” may have once been regarded as a corporate philanthropy, it has quickly become a crucial part of any large company’s long-term strategy – not just in marketing, but in recruiting, too: As consumers are ever more concerned with where products come from, employees now want more from their employer than a paycheck. They want a sense of pride and fulfillment from their work, a purpose and importantly a company’s whose values match their own.

In a survey detailed below, by the nonprofit Net Impact, 53 percent of workers said that “a job where I can make an impact” was important to their happiness, and 72 percent of students about to enter the workforce agreed. Most would even take a pay cut to achieve that goal.

The Following are Very Important or Essential to My Happiness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Workers</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial Security</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Job Where I Can Make an Impact</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prestigious Career</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wealth</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Leadership</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
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This phenomenon, which is particularly apparent in younger generations, was a key finding in my recent book *The 2020 Workplace*, where the focus on people, planet, and profits known as the new “*triple bottom line*” is increasingly becoming the main way organizations attract and retain new hires. Research conducted by Cone Millennial Cause group, detailed in *The 2020 Workplace* found that 80% of a sample of 1,800 13-25 year olds wanted to work for a company that cares about how it impacts and contributes to society. More than half said they would refuse to work for an irresponsible corporation. What’s more, according to research conducted in *The 2020 Workplace*, by the year 2020, Millennials will be 50% of the workforce.

This is great news for companies already committed to social responsibility. But since so much of the corporate world has now jumped on the CSR bandwagon, it can be hard for those exemplary companies to set themselves apart. Annually, about 40,000 CSR reports are released from over 9,000 companies, according to the Corporate Register.

Luckily, the social media boom has brought about more and more ways for companies to communicate their CSR efforts. And just in time, says Tim Mohin, director of Corporate Social Responsibility at Advanced Micro Devices (AMD), because the standard 40-page PDF is a relic of past decades and has gone the way of the fax machine and the desktop computer.

“CSR has become such a common practice, we believe no one is really paying attention anymore,” Mohin said.

That’s why AMD now touts their CSR findings via Twitter and Facebook, and engages in conversations about them with its audiences on those platforms.

And to stay ahead of the curve, this year AMD also released condensed versions of their CSR findings – with easily digestible headlines and messages – via apps for iPad and Android, the technologies most directly aimed toward the all-important Millennial base. In this move, AMD joins a growing number
According to a survey conducted by Symantec, 71% of global enterprises are either looking into or actively deploying their own mobile apps. With mobile apps eclipsing the 1 million mark, a growing number of companies are creating their own app stores: consider Barclays, Facebook, and Cisco to name just a few.

So what can other companies do to learn from AMD’s success? Here are 3 important tips.

1) Use CSR to boost employee engagement

Not only is CSR crucial to recruiting talented employees, it’s also a great way to maintain the engagement of your existing work force.

That’s certainly proven true for AMD’s “green teams” – groups of eco-minded employees who work together on things like reducing waste in the cafeteria, saving energy, saving water. “We asked our green team members,” Tim Mohin said, “does being able to contribute to a cause while you’re at work improve your commitment and level of engagement to your core job function and to the company? 96% agreed.”

But employee engagement – in the form of feedback – can also help companies improve their CSR practices. AMD seeks for input from their employees regarding what they can do to enhance their CSR efforts. “By increasing accessibility to corporate sustainability, AMD’s aim is to crowdsource the ideas that will take us to the next level of performance,” Mohin said in a recent blog post.

After all, who has a better perspective on the company’s progress on their CSR agenda than the employees themselves?

2) Leverage CSR as a tool to develop global talent

Engaged employees are happier and more productive, but CSR has benefits even beyond the trickle-down productivity of high employee engagement. Research suggests that involvement in the company’s corporate responsibility practices teaches workers valuable new skills that they bring back to their regular roles for the company.

IBM found this to be true with the launch and growth of its Corporate Service Corps program, which is explained in detail in The 2020 Workplace.
Essentially this program operates like a corporate version of the Peace Corps where IBMers bring their core competencies and skills in such areas as project management, strategic planning, marketing or engineering to an entrepreneurial company based in one of the countries designated by IBM as emerging market for growth such as, Brazil, China, Ghana, India, Malaysia, Romania, South Africa, to name a few. These IBMers build their global mindset by working and living in one of these developing countries. What’s important here is that IBM launched Corporate Service Corps as an integral part of a larger effort to facilitate the development of IBM employees into global leaders and global citizens. What better way to build global leaders than by having them be part of a global team to build a new business in an emerging market. CDC Development Solutions estimates 27% of Fortune 500 companies have programs such as this one at IBM.

3) **Maximize your investment in CSR by leveraging all forms of social media:**

CSR has moved from a type of corporate philanthropy to a strategic investment for the organization. And this investment and its benefits need to be communicated to all the key stakeholders.

These stakeholders include not only investors current employees and consumers, but also prospective new hires to your company.

Given the growing value placed on a company’s CSR practices by Millennials and the impending explosion of Millennials in the workplace, CSR must become part of company’s recruitment strategy to attract top talent.

In a 2011 report by Forbes Insights, 60 percent of companies surveyed either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, “Philanthropy and volunteerism are critical for recruiting younger qualified employees (i.e., Millennials/Gen Y ).”

Since Millennials are the most socially-conscious consumers to date, according to the 2006 Cone study on the Millennial Generation – companies would be remiss to not emphasize their achievements when recruiting for the future workplace. These strategies will only become more important as we approach the 2020 workplace.

*Readers, does your company have a Corporate Social Responsibility agenda? Do you know what it is and how it has impacted your company? What impact does your company’s CSR agenda have on your day-to-day work experience? How do you want to become more involved in your*
company's CSR efforts? Please comment below!