



July, 2019



## Prepare for Impact: 4 Guiding Questions when Choosing a Corporate Cause

Just last month, RRG hosted our third annual [HIRE Education event](#)—a free workshop focused on providing college-aged students with actionable advice for successfully jumpstarting their careers. We are fortunate in that this growing initiative stemmed organically from a passion point, but it got us thinking (and others asking)—how is it that a socially-motivated organization finds its cause?

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), that is—an organization’s efforts to improve society—is a growing business practice that includes everything from corporate foundations and charity donations to employee volunteer programs and socially responsible workplace policies. According to *Harvard Business Review*, Fortune Global 500 firms currently spend around \$20 billion a year on CSR activities, and that number continues to rise. As explained in *Forbes*, responsibility, humanity, and impact are now more entrenched than ever in the corporate sector, with companies feeling increasingly compelled to publicly stand up for values like inclusion, empathy and environmental preservation.

But despite the recent surge in CSR programs, many business leaders continue to struggle with how and where to best direct their resources. For those still deliberating, below are 4 guiding questions to ensure your first (or next) CSR effort delivers maximum benefit to both your cause and your organization:

### Does it Align with your Company Values?

The first and most important question you need to ask is what cause best reflects and amplifies your organization’s own values. It’s highly possible that your cause will have a direct tie to your business or industry, but it may also address a more general issue that’s important to your employees, customers, or community. In either case, authenticity is non-negotiable, and the more organic your cause feels based on your own corporate values, the more genuine your efforts will be perceived and rewarded in the marketplace. Just as the way you conduct business speaks volumes about your values, so too do the

partnerships and initiatives with which you choose to associate your brand and organization.

### **Will it Provide Strong Opportunities for Employee Engagement?**

In addition to bettering society, the most successful CSR programs also benefit their organizations by helping to attract, engage, and retain top talent. Not only would two-thirds of people rather work for a company that's committed to positive social and environmental impact according to Nielsen, but a 2018 Benevity Study revealed a 57% drop in turnover for employee groups most deeply connected to their companies' giving and volunteering efforts. Today, it's clear that employees of all ages are seeking meaningful opportunities to connect with their colleagues and communities, and the more integrated your talent can be both in developing and executing your CSR program, the more impactful your efforts will be internally as well as externally.

### **Will it Enhance your Connection with your Customers?**

Assuming your efforts are consistent with your values, the great news is that today's conscious consumers will not only want to hear about your CSR initiatives; they will also be eager to reward them. In a recent study by Cone Communications, 87% of consumers said they would buy a product based on a company's advocacy of an issue they care about. But it's not just the passion points of your long-time customers that you should be paying close attention to when brainstorming your next impact campaign. Millennial and Generation Z consumers are particularly motivated to support organizations tied to social causes, and a relevant, well-executed CSR program can also be a great opportunity to deepen your relationship with the younger generations who will hold significant buying power for decades to come.

### **Will It Help to Attract and Retain Investors?**

Among the largest 250 companies in the world, over 90% currently produce a CSR report to inform shareholders of their impact efforts—and for good reason. A recent study from Oxford University found that more than 80% of mainstream investors now consider 'ESG' (environmental, social and governance) information when making investment decisions. Not only do investors increasingly want to support businesses whose priorities extend beyond sales, but as it turns out, a strong CSR program may also be an indicator of a strong bottom line. According to Interbrand's Best Global Brands 2017, "Brands with a purpose set on improving our quality of life outperform the stock market by 120%," making socially-motivated organizations doubly attractive to today's investors.

### ***So what does this all mean?***

Corporate Social Responsibility isn't just a "nice to do"; if done right, it's a proven opportunity to enhance your relationship with your employees, customers, investors, and community. Far more than just a passing trend, CSR may soon become a requirement for organizations to succeed in the marketplace. As explained in *Forbes*: "[The] upswing in investor interest, paired with consumer and employee demand, will bring impact to the top of the agenda at board and C-Suite meetings. It will no longer be a choice for

companies to embed social impact into their business and brand strategies—it will be required to thrive and compete for talent, customers and investors.” But even if you are new to the impact arena, there’s no reason to feel overwhelmed. As the most experienced leaders will tell you, if you stay true to your values and lead with your heart, it will not be the amount of work going into your CSR efforts that will surprise you; it will be the immense value coming out.

***Does your organization have a strong CSR program in place to help attract and retain top talent? At RRG, our certified management coaches help forward-thinking organizations put the right strategies and programs in place to engage current and future employees while also contributing to long-term company goals. To learn more, give us a call today at 708.738.5040, or visit our website at [RRGExec.com](http://RRGExec.com)***