



WOMEN'S
LEADERSHIP
CIRCLE®

Why corporate social responsibility matters

Consider volunteerism as a path to more engaged employees

BY CARLA SHORE

A company's reputation for being a good corporate citizen has become just as important as its reputation for good products or top-notch service.

Businesses big and small, global and local are increasingly recognizing the value of creating legitimate, multi-faceted corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs.

Such programs engage employees and customers in viewing the bottom line in more than one way, involve employees in the fabric of your community, and tie your company to the good things that flow to and from the people you help.

Having a strong CSR program can also attract and maintain talent, notably in the important "millennial" generation, who research has repeatedly shown want to work for and buy from companies that are doing good in the world.

CSR is more than just donating to charity. Many forward-thinking organizations are also incorporating a level of volunteering into their CSR initiatives. This can range from taking your team to a non-profit for a day of hands-on help, to loaning an employee to a worthy cause, to taking on pro-bono work for a charity.



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Volunteer roles give employees opportunities to grow their skills and develop leadership outside of their daily roles. The experience can help cement staff loyalty and show that your company respects employee aspirations, while also making your community a better place.

Working through the following points can help you effectively incorporate volunteerism into your CSR program.

Consider your goals

When deciding what volunteering CSR activities are right for your organization, consider what you want to accomplish.

Do you want team-building opportunities? Are you looking for opportunities for your em-

ployees to get away from their day-to-day tasks and expand their skills? What causes align with your organization's values and/or that of your employees?

Think through the logistics

Who will create the CSR activities? Will you partner with another organization that will run the program or events? Will you have internal resources to pull it off? Who gets to take part? Do you have an employee who will champion the activity throughout the company?

Develop a budget

Consider your organization's costs for implementing this CSR program. Don't forget to include employee time for any activities, and donations or grants. Do your CSR activities relate to your company's policies on professional development, human resources, diversity, employee engagement or branding? Can you combine budgets from any of those?

Link to your communications or marketing objectives

For whom are you doing these CSR activities – employees, customers, community, competitors – or a combination of these? How will you promote what you're doing, not just internally, but outside your organization as well?

Would you write it up in a

newsletter, on your website, or post to your social media channels? Will you promote it to local media? Could employees get involved in that promotion to expand their own experience in those channels?

local community centre, business organization or a school?

Don't be afraid to ask your employees or potential community partners for ideas, or to bring in an outside consultant to help you tailor a CSR strategy to your situation.

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Align with your business objectives

Does the activity you've undertaken make the world a better place in a way that relates to what your company does? For example, if you sell products related to children, donating time or money to a children's charity make sense.

If you sell financial services, could you donate financial services to a non-profit? If you work in the construction field, how about donating goods or employee time to a worthy building project? If your business is hyper-local, how can you get more involved in a

Creating a CSR program that incorporates volunteerism can have many benefits – if it's done right. Your community and your employees will thank you for it.

Carla Shore is Principal of C-Shore Communications Inc., a public relations firm that offers expert PR strategy, CSR planning and writing services to create effective communications programs for private and public sector clients (Learn more at cshore.ca). She also sits on the Women's Leadership Circle Advisory Committee.

Wondering how you can get involved in The Vancouver Board of Trade's Women's Leadership Circle? Visit boardoftrade.com/WLC.

Achieving team success on the field or in the office

Don't miss the return of the **Women's Leadership Circle's** Morning Leader series on May 27, featuring a dynamic discussion on achieving team success and the parallels between business and sport.

In anticipation of the 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup, this event will feature an accomplished panel of senior leaders and sports professionals who will share strategies for building and developing successful teams.

Understanding how to build a successful team is a skill that all business leaders can benefit from, whether it's by effectively engaging employees, volunteers, or colleagues. In fact, most out-

standing leaders attribute a significant portion of their success to the teams around them.

The discussion will also explore the benefits of team sports for building leadership skills in young women. According to a 2014 article in *The Atlantic* magazine, girls who play team sports are more likely to graduate from college, find a job, and be employed in male-dominated industries.

The same article also indicates that there is a direct link between playing sports in high school and earning a bigger salary as an adult.

Panellists will discuss how learning to own victory and

survive defeat in sports is great training for succeeding and surviving setbacks on the field or in the office.

Panellists for this event include **Donna Wilson**, Senior Vice President of People at **LifeLabs Medical Laboratory Services**; **Jim Murphy**, Former Professional Baseball Player and Olympic Coach; and **Janet Austin**, CEO of **YWCA Metro Vancouver** and 2014-15 Chair of **The Vancouver Board of Trade**. The discussion will be moderated by **Rita Rogers**, Venue General Manager for the 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup.

For more info, or to register, visit boardoftrade.com/events.



The WLC's Morning Leader series returns May 27, with a panel discussion on creating a winning team. Register today at boardoftrade.com/events. **File photo**