

Corporate Philanthropy 2017

The Principles of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) – A Detroit Model



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America is more generous than ever before, according to the 2016 Giving USA report. Corporate giving exceeded \$18 billion, which is a 3.9 percent increase from 2014. This growth points to a larger trend of generosity among the individuals who make up our society — and our workforce. In cities across the nation and in places like Detroit where there is a history of business leadership, corporate giving and philanthropy continue. As a result, more employees and key stakeholders across the country are seeking partnerships with small businesses and corporate partners that share the desire to give back to the community. But determining the best way to direct company resources is challenging for many companies across the country. There is also an underlying concern that a group effort will make employees feel coerced into giving their time or money. Even the most generous individuals may not appreciate being told how and where to make donations. Yet giving money, time, or valued resources as an organization and rallying employees behind a single cause can lead to greater impact. A strategic approach to corporate giving can make each individual's contribution and a company's efforts more effective. The key is determining what approach suits an organization and its employees. These solutions are derived from effective **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)** initiatives.




How CSR Can Attract Business Talent in Detroit

In recent years both public and private sector leaders in the State of Michigan have grown familiar with the conversations about the “brain drain” problem and the need to create competitive advantages over other places like the Philadelphia, San Francisco, Chicago and Boston. Research shows that the jobs of tomorrow’s economy will require a mix of technical skill, advanced education and global knowledge. The demand for such skills is rapidly spreading through all sectors of the global marketplace. This is especially true for businesses which integrate science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM) and other high-skilled fields. This is a priority which we are still wrapping our arms around as a region here in the Midwest.

As we look beyond 2017, many Michigan companies are realizing the need to more intently focus on talent attraction and retention. This practice also promotes the business sectors’ willingness to fundamentally secure the region’s critical high growth verticals. There is no question when you take a hard look at the data that in today’s knowledge-based economy in areas such as Grand Rapids and Detroit, there is a significant opportunity to further strengthen global corporate positioning in business units like manufacturing, design and research. I believe that one way to further attract and retain talent across all business sectors is the utilization of effective corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives and authentic employee engagement in local communities.






Attracting and retaining talent from the millennial generation has been a significant challenge for many businesses in Michigan. As a result, we are seeing new strategies emerge in Detroit and across Southeastern Michigan. Just visit popular downtown areas which are now designing and installing bikeable pathways, trolley/trains and urban gathering areas in order to continue to support the interests of professional residents who are expressing a desire to live and work in the state. This attention to detail is a must in order to attract and retain a diverse workforce.

***Effective Corporate Social Responsibility Programs
Enhance Employee Experiences and Increase Teamwork***


As an employer, whether you are a small, middle market or a Fortune500 type, it is important to know what will appeal to the current cohort of prospective employees and adjust your recruiting, communication, engagement and training practices accordingly. How do you address such a shift? By adapting to more “progressive” ways of thinking, by understanding that these individuals bring diversity to their workplaces and the communities in which they live and by creating authentic opportunities for personal growth. When these practices or similar tactics are implemented, Michigan companies will be able attract, develop and retain skilled talent and ultimately future leaders which will significantly boost our regional ecosystem and our shared economy.

The most savvy job seekers today want to clearly understand how the work they are doing (both in the office and in the community) impacts their organization as a whole, and how their ideas can be communicated and potentially implemented in order to increase efficiency, production and sales. Helping your businesses’ employees and recruits understand how the company’s community engagement practices support the corporate strategy will allow Michigan employers to promote a diversified work experience and impact in the community in which it operates. Today’s employees thrive on this type of broad work experience. Internal job experiences and a robust corporate social responsibility strategy which provides meaningful experiences enhance the work experience and can improve the retention level of corporate talent. This is the new model for corporate success in America.



So what do businesses need to do in order to attract and retain talent?
How can Detroit based companies capitalize on these trends?

- **Utilize technology to both share and demonstrate team experiences.** Highlight your company's community and CSR projects. This will also strengthen your corporate brand and perhaps lead directly to product sales and more engaged customers. Social media platforms, such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter, are all important tools for supporting this strategy because employees can directly connect, share content and provide personal insights to their experiences.
- **Articulate your corporate mission on your website.** Your company's career page will likely be the first place people look for information. They will look for your mission statement, benefits and anything else they want to know about your company. Use this area of your website to emphasize your company's participation in corporate philanthropy and in the community. A business that can offer employees opportunities for career growth as well as personal improvement will have a major advantage in recruiting and retaining the best talent.
- **Integrate social responsibility with your brand.** Show the impact that your company is making locally or globally. Make sure candidates know that you consider social impact an important part of your workplace culture. Also link the company's giving efforts and community participation to your organizational values and specific product lines.
- **Prepare your recruiters, trainers and communications teams.** Make sure your company's external relations members understand that they need to sell the company's CSR initiatives to candidates and the community. Recruiters should be trained on all of the policies, and should be capable of demonstrating these elements to candidates.



Corporate philanthropy is an additional asset that U.S. companies should consider in order to attract and retain employees in today's competitive environment. Often times, corporate social responsibility programs are the deciding factor when a candidate is juggling multiple job offers and is trying to figure out which would be the best career move. Millennials in particular, that are passionate about social impact, are likely to become your company's CSR champions of the future. It's time for companies around the world to embrace these practices and continue to push the needle in order to develop a stronger regional economies and a more robust national workforce.



Maximize Corporate Social Responsibility and Improve Productivity, Brand Alignment and Corporate Morale

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Chris Polk has nearly twenty years of experience in fundraising, business development, philanthropy and corporate partnership strategy engagement. His primary focus is working with entrepreneurs, impact investors, large social service organizations, institutions of higher education, independent schools, professional associations, progressive non-profits and Fortune500 companies interested in corporate citizenship and community engagement. Chris is also a self-trained multi media artist, a motorcycle enthusiast and former NCAA Division 1 athlete.

Chris is the Principal at Forte' Management Group Inc, based in Detroit MI. He also serves as an Advisor at Boulevard, an agnostic Investment Banking & Private Investment firm located in Detroit, MI. The company is focused on working with and advising entrepreneurs, owners, operators and businesses in the middle market. Chris is an active blogger, writer and researcher and he is a contributor to DBusiness Magazine (*Detroit's Premier Business Journal*).

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