

Corporate Social Responsibility in the Phase of Covid-19



1. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is now a familiar metric of how well a brand interacts with stakeholders and communities, both locally and globally.
2. Supporting the common social good has become just as important a goal as delivering shareholder value and profitability for organizations for all sizes, even up to enterprise level, across every business vertical imaginable.
3. Today, the value of being a good corporate citizen goes beyond the pride and satisfaction of providing simple altruistic support for worthy goals.
4. Strong and consistent CSR policies have become a cornerstone of the identity of many brands with customer bases that strongly identify with causes championed by businesses, from ethical sourcing to contractor working conditions to carbon footprints and a thousand other issues in between.
5. CSR isn't just the right thing to do, increasingly it makes business sense as a way to deepen engagement with modern consumers.
6. As a still relatively new component of corporate activities, CSR began 2020 with enormous potential to combine business and social goals into a symbiotic relationship, with each supporting the other and creating new opportunities for brands and the issues that matter most to their customers.

Role of CSR during Covid-19



1. Even now, without a full accounting of its effects, the impact of the outbreak of the coronavirus cannot be overstated. Our lives, both personal and professional, have come to a standstill while authorities take on the challenge of stopping and then reversing the spread of the epidemic.
2. While previous challenges to effective CSR typically affected a certain brand or vertical, the current crisis is unlike anything we've seen before.
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4. And while every business is faced with navigating the new economic landscape for its long-term survival, there are also short-term challenges and opportunities that can be addressed using the values of CSR.
5. Those values have a place in this time of uncertainty and anxiety. One of the core components of CSR is about putting a human face on business entities by communicating empathy, understanding and support, both moral and financial, for those who need it most.

6. We're definitely in a time of need right now and transferring the ideals of CSR to the dislocation caused by COVID-19 can be of great benefit now for all of us, as employees, as consumers and most importantly, as people trying our best to get through an extremely challenging time.
7. Obviously, we all hope for the fastest, safest resolution possible to our current problems and a return to our previous lives as soon as can reasonably be expected.
8. With this in mind, we've put together a list of the ways that pre-COVID-19 Corporate Social Responsibility strategies can be applied to the reality we're going through right now.

Some examples of CSR during Coronavirus



1. Here are some points to consider as businesses try to deal with their own staff and their customer base, both of which are highly sensitive to even the smallest actions taken on behalf of a brand.
2. The principles behind CSR can help to maintain social accountability to stakeholders and the broader community while ensuring the best possible business performance during this difficult time.

3. Let's start with employees inside an organization. CSR is too often framed as being for consumers only but good social responsibility starts at home. Here's how:
4. Businesses should first focus on the people they depend on most, their employees. **The absolute top priority should be ensuring employee comfort and safety.**
5. Nothing else even comes close at a time when a dangerous health threat covers the globe. No doubt you've seen the screens at store checkout counters and tape on the floor telling customers where to stand.
6. This is, of course, the responsible thing to do for all of us under the circumstances but first and foremost it shows that employers are primarily concerned with creating a safe workspace with all the reasonable precautions that can be taken.
7. While there's no one-size-fits-all solution (every role and workspace will have its own particular circumstances), **give employees as much flexibility as possible** to carry out their work tasks.
8. For many, this has meant working remotely from home but not every job allows for such an arrangement.
9. "Flexibility" here also extends to working hours as well. Child care and elder care has suddenly become a major issue for millions and forcing employees to choose between work and home responsibilities is not going to end well for anyone involved so focus on staff needs first.
10. It's also important to be aware that **employee well-being extends to mental health** as well. We can't deny that these are stressful times for any number of reasons associated with anxiety about the future and legitimate fears about the spread of the epidemic.
11. The last thing employees need is additional job-related stress. Businesses need to acknowledge that different rules apply right now

and part of that may necessarily involve a more relaxed approach to certain things that had no flexibility before.

12. Be aware that staff are likely more concerned about their families than following certain workplace practices that may or may not be worth a confrontation if they are not followed as normal.
13. There's nothing wrong with erring on the side of preserving a more relaxed atmosphere for everyone at work. We all have enough stress already, right?
14. This is an extension of the previous point, but place a greater emphasis on **listening to your staff**. Just as listening to customer feedback is key under normal circumstances, keeping constant and open communication with employees is part of maintaining a relaxed atmosphere and a comfortable work space. Check in more often than you otherwise would and keep it conversational.
15. Just knowing someone wants to know how they're doing can keep staff engaged and feeling connected.
16. Remember that, going forward in a post-COVID world, you may be in a position to keep in place some practices that you were forced to adopt. You might accidentally find some new efficiencies and other temporary habits may prove to be especially popular among staff.
17. Any opportunity to become more flexible and agile as an organization are worth a look and so keep an open mind when the time comes to switch back to "normal" mode.
18. Now let's turn outward to consumers and customers. Managing a company's reputation during any crisis is a delicate balancing act but the current threat presents especially tough challenges:
19. **The public simply wants reassurance in any form.** It could be reassurance that a brand or store they depend on is functioning normally or that a product they need is available. Brands should

resist the temptation to constantly update customers through, for example, social media, adding to the general noise and anxiety. Keep it simple, keep it positive and keep it short.

20. By now, we're all used to announcements of cancellations of every imaginable kind of event or gathering. Some of these decisions have been handled more gracefully than others and the ones that were done badly will be remembered for all the wrong reasons. The public is not forgiving of a reluctance to cancel events because of financial considerations, no matter how painful they may be to organizers. Cancellations should be made earlier than later and always explained in terms of a desire to **keep participants safe and to avoid endangering anyone**. No matter who the gathering was meant for, they will be happy to attend when you return next year.
21. This should be an obvious point that applies to 99% of all brands but it bears repeating—**this is not a time for self-promotion**. Even the appearance of trying to take financial advantage of current circumstances is radioactive for any brand and is certainly not worth the (probably imaginary) potential benefits. Yes, Netflix and HBO GO can get away with a kind of real-time marketing to attract more subscribers but they're the exception to the rule. UBER Eats is suddenly everywhere and we all know why but they're meeting a genuine surge in demand and they're not referencing the current context that's driving it.
22. Outside of a handful of such examples, the vast majority of products and services has no relationship to the needs created by the coronavirus crisis and trying to somehow create one is risky, to say the least. The takeaway here is that there should be zero actual or implied links between any promotional materials and the health crisis we all face, which should only be treated as the deadly serious issue it is. One false step in this area is exactly what makes corporate "fails" go viral and the damage to a brand can be severe. Managing your social media page when there are a few attacks to

deal with is hard enough—what would dealing with thousands be like?

23. Give when, where and how much you can. Isn't it great to see so many contributions of every kind coming from so many brands? Not just contributions of cash, although of course, that's always helpful, donations of goods, materials and volunteer time. Look around and it won't be hard to see an organization in any community that will gratefully accept any help you can provide.