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## **“Grow Business Bottom Line through Marketing Communications Strategies that Leverage Your Social Responsibility Investment”**

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Two critical business imperatives drive corporate operations – revenue enhancement and human resources. If both of those business levers could be augmented and sustained through one program, would you apply it? That is the outcome when organizations purposefully align Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) with Marketing Communications (MarComm).

“Business performance is tied to social responsibility,” according to the Committee for Encouraging Corporate Philanthropy’s (CECP) *Giving in Numbers 2016* report. This finding presumes two things: first, companies are connecting their public and business strategies. And second, they are skilled at sharing that information internally and externally. If either of these presumptions is untrue, then a great deal of time and money is being wasted.

Paralleling CSR and MarComm enables a business to derive the full value of their civic investments. This symbiotic relationship touches every level and function of the organization from operations to sustainability, from regulatory practices to growth.

Once a leadership team decides to leverage CSR with intentionality, it’s time to develop a platform and programs that support organizational opportunities and to engage the MarComm team to amplify success in that area. In this first of a two-part series, we address revenue enhancement through three performance areas: brand differentiation, new products and services, and new markets.

### **Brand Differentiation**

By demonstrating strong values and a commitment to the community, a company will strengthen its reputation, and differentiate its brand from competing brands. The result is increasing customer/client attraction and loyalty, which drive sales.

Effective CSR MarComm depends on how the organization’s internal and external messages align with each other and with its core values. Brooke Golden of Clif Bar shared in [Forbes](#): “Think of cause marketing as you would any other brand collaboration with for profit companies. Find a cause whose advocates share your consumer’s profile, understand their

networks and strengths, and identify where you can come together around a shared voice and message to amplify both your efforts.”

MarComm for in the social responsibility realm should fully commit to the nonprofit relationship. Strategies include:

- Develop relationships with the nonprofit’s other (non-competitive, but like-minded) partners to build your company’s brand reputation.
- Create content about the partnership and its cause that features your employees and/or products side-by-side with the nonprofit’s beneficiaries to tell the story.

### **New Products and Services**

Businesses that identify and satisfy a need – be it allergen-free snacks or expert accounting service – are inherently improving the world. This requires an active presence to learn and understand market demands and bring opportunities to the surface.

A Partners in Philanthropy [article](#) addresses marketing in the nonprofit sector: “The ability to express with clarity and passion a charity’s vision and mission lies at the heart of the fundraising process. We design and present our message to appeal to the hearts and minds of prospective donors, and the strength of our appeal determines our success.”

This perspective is important for MarComm teams to keep in mind as they build partnerships with nonprofits for the benefit of both organizations via two predominant strategies:

- Sponsorship – ongoing or event-driven alignment of the business with a nonprofit via the donation of funds, products, services, access to donors, and volunteers
- Co-branding – found often in consumer products, a nonprofit can endorse goods or services in exchange for money and/or exposure on products, signage, or ads

### **New Markets (Locations and Audiences)**

Volunteering alongside residents and activists, politicians and professionals, parents and teachers, creates awareness, goodwill and trust within the community or demographic. The MarComm team should participate actively in message development and deployment, since most nonprofit organizations function with lean teams.

It’s best to market involvement to new geographies and audiences with a light touch - coming across as self-congratulatory negates the good work the company does through the partnership. Enable nonprofit partners to advocate for the collaboration through marketing initiatives such as:

- Activate email marketing from the nonprofit to its supporters that profiles a case study of the results both entities are achieving together.
- Use pictures, testimonials, and data to tell the story in the traditional and social media channels of both organizations. Also disseminate via internal communications that connect with employees.

In closing, it is important to recognize that CSR is multi-faceted. Money matters, ergo people matter. Inform and engage employees and customers so they know why the company is investing in this cause, how to participate, and how their involvement changes the world.

In a follow-up piece, we explore the human resources side of CSR programs and the internal communications that enable their success. We will focus on attracting and engaging employees, developing and retaining people, and fostering teamwork and productivity.

### **About the authors**

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