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## The Business Case for Corporate Social Responsibility Programs: Four Ways CSR Programs Can Have a Positive Impact on Your Bottom Line

Over the past decade, our free market has evolved in both its structure and function. Today, customers, employees, investors, suppliers, communities, governments and the general public not only expect, but also demand increased social responsibility and self-regulation. They want to know that the corporations and organizations they do business with have brands and cultures that contribute to the world around them.

Corporate Social Responsibility is a long-term investment and a tool that can enhance the bottom line. It is rapidly becoming an essential business practice, and it needs to be a part of the strategic plan of every business and organization. More and more executives are recognizing this and are implementing CSR programs.

When analyzing your potential return on investment for a CSR program, it is important to evaluate your quadruple bottom line (people, planet, profit and purpose). An effective CSR program creates business value and a positive ROI by expanding the customer base, enhancing corporate reputation, boosting employee engagement and delivering results in long-term financial gain. When these benefits exceed the cost of engaging in the campaign or program, it makes the case for why CSR is a sound business practice.

Here are four ways that a deeply embedded CSR program can have a positive impact on your bottom line:

### 1) **Competitive Advantage**

The public now views companies as vehicles for social change. A well-planned and executed CSR program will help your business adapt to evolving expectations and will set your business apart from competitors. It will also differentiate your market offerings in a crowded space and build loyalty among your various stakeholders. Each of these returns underscores just how valuable a successful CSR program can be as part of an overall business plan.

At OTM Partners, we specialize in the development and management of nationally branded communications programs with a focus on corporate social responsibility campaigns.

Blending creativity with craft, we transform challenges into opportunities and objectives into outcomes.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is our business. Our award-winning team of CSR strategists has more than two decades of experience in the communications arena, and we understand that effective CSR programs are an essential element for succeeding in the business world today.

Whether you are looking to assess your current CSR efforts or to create a national program from the ground up, OTM Partners is the right team to help you achieve your goals.

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## 2) **Reputation and Legitimacy**

The businesses that are most successful in implementing sustainable CSR programs are those that have moved from a triple bottom line (people, planet and profit) to a quadruple bottom line (with the addition of purpose). In the fast-paced electronic age that we live in today, the risk of scandals, of bad publicity going viral and of long-term reputation damage is such that many of today's industries are re-evaluating their triple bottom line and reassessing the importance of incorporating purpose into their strategic plans. They are learning all too quickly that creating shared value and purpose for their stakeholders is key to delivering sustainable and effective solutions for society's benefit and for their own financial growth.

This approach to stakeholder relations is strategic in that its end goal is to maximize long-term shareholder value. By achieving customer, investor, employee and community satisfaction, businesses will enhance their reputation, legitimacy and overall brand image. Ultimately, this will help to drive sales and ensure that businesses will be evaluated more positively by investors in the long run.

## 3) **Employee Engagement**

When employees are engaged, they become more committed to the business. Their productivity increases; they are better advocates for your organization; and they are less likely to seek employment elsewhere. When designing your CSR program, it is important to ensure that it is aligned with your organization's mission, vision, values and culture, but it is equally as important to involve your employees in the development process. By finding out what issues your employees are passionate about and involving them at the outset, you are more likely to get them to rally around your CSR banner.

Likewise, you must provide an impetus for continued employee engagement once the program gets underway. Encourage employee involvement in CSR-related events and activities and communicate regularly with your various stakeholders about the program's progress and about the positive impact it is having. When this employee outreach is done well, increased engagement occurs.

## 4) **Decreased Operating Costs**

With increased employee engagement comes increased staff loyalty. This results in lower turnover rates and decreased costs associated with recruiting and training employees. Additionally, if you are in an industry that is highly regulated and your business has a robust and proactive CSR program, you may find yourself in a position of increased self-regulation, thus avoiding the additional costs that accompany regulatory compliance.

The tide is turning in how corporations are perceived in relation to the world around them. People no longer just want to know what businesses do; they want to know how businesses are making a difference and acting as a positive force for change. At OTM Partners, we understand that CSR is a critical part of business management and the ever-evolving marketplace. The CSR campaigns we design take this changing world view into account and are geared toward creating sustainable and successful programs that drive economic growth while also bettering our communities, and even our world, one initiative at a time.