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Trust. Integrity. Creativity.

## Six Pillars of a Top-Down Supported CSR Program

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is the essence of being a good corporate citizen. It is how a company interacts with its customers, the public and the world. More specifically, CSR is how a company meets or exceeds its ethical, legal, commercial and public expectations and obligations.

To be truly effective and sustainable over the long term, a CSR program must have top-down support and accountability safeguards. Whether a business or organization is large or small, having this support at the outset is essential. It is equally as important that this support is maintained and integrated into the overall operating model once the strategic planning process and program launch are complete. Without this continued leadership, it becomes nearly impossible for a business or organization to establish itself as a socially conscious force for change.

Below are OTM Partners' six pillars of top-down supported CSR programs:

### 1) **Develop an Authentic Initiative**

Effective and sustainable CSR is not a one-time event or a PR stunt; it is embedded into the DNA of the organization and is the guiding principle for overall strategic decision making. Before planning and implementing a CSR program, it is important to take stock of your current operations and activities to assess where you might have a gap and where a new or overarching CSR program might fit. After assessing the needs of your organization, take a close look at your company's mission, vision and values, at your employee demographics and at your customers. Any new CSR program you implement must "fit" with who you are and your workplace culture.

### 2) **Set S.M.A.R.T. Goals**

The development, implementation and articulation of performance criteria and goals are key to the continued success and stakeholder support of your CSR program. Integrating **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic and **T**imely goals and objectives with relevant measurements enables you

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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to track and report progress on your various initiatives, and in turn, to maintain stakeholder engagement and support.

**3) Leverage the Talents and Passions of Your Staff**

In order to achieve buy-in across your organization and to leverage that support by increasing employee engagement, you need to establish a personal connection between your CSR efforts and your staff. Survey your employees and gauge their CSR priorities so that the program your company implements capitalizes on their strengths and interests. If they can find intrinsic value in the work they do, they will be able to turn their job into a calling. To balance employees' interests, you can diversify your CSR portfolio and take on an array of different social responsibility issues. Or, you can pick one social issue and run with it, rallying your employees and igniting their passion for the initiative.

**4) Ensure that Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are Aligned with the Initiative**

Consider building CSR opportunities into the job descriptions and performance evaluations of employees at all levels. Start at the top – even senior leadership needs to have key performance indicators and objectives that hold them accountable for the organization's success. From there, create cross-organizational CSR accountability. By incorporating CSR into the company's performance metrics, staff will have a better understanding of the social issues in your CSR portfolio and a greater motivation to address them through your CSR program.

**5) Promote Employee Training and Professional Development**

Connect company and community success by educating your employees about social responsibility challenges that your organization has the potential to overcome. Consider designating a senior leader to organize regular employee education events, especially activities that encourage employees to take action and that have a tangible impact on their communities. With effective CSR programs, you will not only be able to engage your employees' creativity, but also change the way your employees perceive their work and commit to it on a daily basis.

**6) Communicate Your Progress**

It is imperative that you regularly measure and communicate your CSR performance to your stakeholders. Whether it is through newsletters, annual reports, meetings, departmental communications or internal trainings, they need to know that CSR is a company priority and that their efforts are having a positive impact on the campaign and the bottom line.

Successful and sustainable CSR programs, such as those designed and implemented by OTM Partners, create economic growth and social value that can be felt across a wide spectrum of internal and external stakeholders. By implementing OTM Partners' Six Pillars of a Top-Down Supported CSR Program and laying the proper groundwork in the development process, businesses and organizations can create a CSR program that is measurable and sustainable and that has a tangible impact for decades to come.