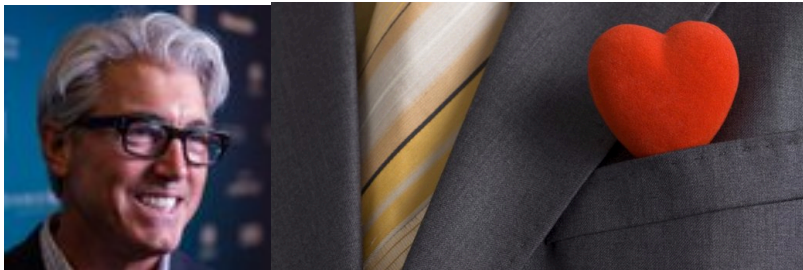


WHO LIVES CORPORATE



4 Ways Your Business Benefits by Aligning with a Cause

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January 19, 2016 4 min read

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You've created a rock-solid business plan and lined up your financing -- everything seems to be in order for a successful launch of your startup. But if you haven't developed a relevant and authentic Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program, you've missed a key ingredient for success. Incorporating a social mission into your business plan, from the start, is good for your company's bottom line.

As a social entrepreneur, I have a core belief that when you're launching an enterprise, you should integrate a social mission right from the beginning. It's not only immensely gratifying to see that your work is making a positive impact; it's what more and more customers, especially the highly sought-after millennial group, are demanding.

Here are the top reasons to affiliate your business with a good cause:

1. Connects with consumers

Research indicates that consumers, especially younger ones, are beginning to demand more from companies than just a quality product or service. A [new survey](#) by insurance company Aflac reported that 66 percent of millennials are likely to invest in a company known for its CSR program. And in a recent survey conducted by The Intelligence Group, 59 percent of millennial customers [said](#) a company's ethics and practices are important factors in their decision about which brand to buy. A strong CSR program is one of the most effective ways to distinguish your business from the competition and let potential customers know that you share their commitment to creating social good.

2. Creates social-media momentum

Charitable initiatives are easy to share on social media and can help you establish a positive, meaningful social-media presence. So when you are able to demonstrate that your startup's CSR campaign is having a tangible, measurable impact, don't be shy -- share that information! The key is to focus on the cause area your business is targeting, the nonprofits with which you're partnering and the positive results your efforts are creating. In this way, you'll raise awareness and support for the charity or issue your business is supporting and communicate your brand's authenticity to new audiences. The positive buzz for your business will take care of itself.

3. Builds a strong company culture

Just like consumers, employees want to be associated with a company that's in alignment with their values. But creating and communicating a strong company culture can be a challenge for businesses of all sizes, both new and established.

In the Aflac [survey](#), 75 percent of respondents said they would be happier to work for a company with a strong CSR program. And according to a [Nielsen](#) research report, millennials who participate in employer-sponsored volunteer work express more pride in their work and loyalty for their employers than those who don't. Thus, the key to a truly effective CSR campaign is to facilitate your employees' engagement and ensure they are involved in your CSR efforts.

4. Motivates yourself

Every entrepreneur faces what can feel like insurmountable challenges. But when it's part of your business plan to address homelessness, educational inequality or whatever cause a company feels strongly about, you are much more likely to stay in the game.

When you hit speed bumps -- and every entrepreneur does -- you'll find the motivation to tweak and refine your business model to succeed in the marketplace, because it's not just your employees and investors who are depending on you.

When selecting a charitable organization to support, there are a few key factors to keep in mind. Consider relevance: Which cause areas do your products and/or services impact? Also, be sure to verify your nonprofit partner has a proven track record of tangible, measurable accomplishments.

As a career social entrepreneur, I have seen the benefits of making CSR a priority for your business, from day one. By developing a business model that is about making a difference as well as a profit, you'll find a deep sense of satisfaction.