

COMMUNIQUÉ

Trends, Best Practices, and Opinions on Community Involvement

What Are Best Practices in Corporate Citizenship Today?

Part 1 of a Four-Part Series

How would you fill in the blank for this question: “What is the best practice for _____?” Chances are, there are lots of ways you would fill in the blank.

We are asked—and answer—this question all the time. The question is getting harder to answer, though, because the practice of corporate citizenship has changed so much since we last formally researched best practices.

In 2007, LBG Associates published the report “Trends and Best Practices in Corporate Community Involvement.” Since then, corporations have experienced national and global economic changes, including a punishing recession. The world is simply not the same as it was a decade ago.

We began our quest to identify best practices in all aspects of corporate citizenship by holding brainstorming meetings with a number of company CSR representatives. These conversations, plus our experience with clients over many years and recent publications by others, formed the basis for our best practices.

However, before we could delve into the subject matter, it was critical to define what we meant by a best practice. According to the experts in the room it is: *an effective way to achieve a desired result that has been proven valid in multiple companies and sectors. It should be scalable, repeatable, efficient, measurable and able to be used as a benchmark.* According to the dictionary, it is: *a method or technique that has consistently shown results superior to those achieved with other means, and that is used as a benchmark.*

Using these as our standard, we looked at best practices in the following areas:

- Strategy
- Corporate and foundation giving
- Employee engagement
- Communications
- Evaluation

Let's start at the top with **Strategy**.

The key requirement for any impactful corporate citizenship (CC) program is that it is strategic. This strategy will serve as a guide for both the giving and employee engagement initiatives. Such programs share the following best practices:

- Are aligned with the core competencies of the business, its values and imperatives
- Are authentic to the culture of the company
- View citizenship as a social investment (ROI) and business imperative as opposed to “nice to do”
- Have cross-collaboration within company departments, businesses and brands
- Have internal and external buy-in
- Have leadership support
- Are flexible enough to remain relevant as company and social issues change
- Have clearly defined goals and measurable outcomes

Without senior management buy-in, cross-company collaboration and support, and a strong alignment with the company’s business goals and values, it will be very difficult for a corporate citizenship program to be considered best-in-class.

Coming next: Best Practices in Corporate and Foundation Giving

About LBG Associates

LBG Associates is a woman-owned consulting firm focused on designing, implementing and managing corporate citizenship and employee engagement programs and initiatives. Founded in 1993 by Dr. Linda Gornitsky, LBG Associates drives social change through advice, implementation, research and training. Find more information at: www.lbg-associates.com.

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