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The Increasing Importance of Corporate Social Responsibility



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Stacey Brodak is the Vice President for Institutional Advancement and University Relations at Waynesburg University, a private, Christian school located in Waynesburg, Pennsylvania. In this role, she leads the University's work in development, alumni relations, and marketing and communications, as well as the work of the Chevron Center for Corporate Social Responsibility, which she helped launch in 2018.

There was a time, and not that long ago, when companies that gave back to their communities stood out amongst the rest. Typically, those kind acts involved philanthropic giving, such as supporting a charity or volunteering to help serve a meal over the holidays. Today, the expectations are different.

Over the past decade or two, companies have evolved their philanthropic outreach to include many other strategic efforts that benefit local communities and the region. These efforts can be referred to as Environmental, Social and Governmental (ESG) or the more common reference of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). This work encompasses not only philanthropy, but also work in sustainability and compliance, such as the reduction of impacts, minimizing use of resources, responsible sourcing of materials, transparency in reporting, and ethical leadership and actions of the company.

The expectation of companies having a solid CSR strategy is driven by many factors. If you want to recruit and retain the best talent among the next generation of leaders – Millennials and Gen Z – you must earn their trust. They will be selective about whom they work for and will pass on employment if the company does not have a good CSR track

record. But that fact isn't limited to our next leaders; consumers of all ages find this work incredibly important as well.

Data from the 2019 Edelman Trust Barometer shows that 81 percent of consumers “must be able to trust the brand to do what is right” as a top buying consideration. The 81 percent was consistent, regardless of age, income, gender and market. If consumers trust you, they will buy your brand first, stay loyal, advocate and even defend your brand.

Another major factor in the growing interest in CSR is that every stakeholder is watching and measuring performance, including investors. Many member companies within our Chevron Center for Corporate Social Responsibility have noted being asked by the C-suite to provide detailed data and reports for inclusion on their investor relations calls.

A well-planned CSR strategy maximizes the value of the resources invested by the company. This work is far more involved than it used to be and requires alignment from the top down. It also requires knowledgeable leadership that understands the landscape of their region and the culture of their company. When done well, the ROI exceeds expectations: companies enhance their retention of talent, recruit the

Photo Caption 1 (Pictured L to R):
Matt Stultz, Waynesburg University;
Jeff Kotula, Washington County
Chamber of Commerce; Doug Lee,
President of Waynesburg University;
Karen Rawls, Chevron; Stacey
Brodak, Waynesburg University;
Trip Oliver, Chevron; Lee Ann
Wainwright, Chevron.





Photo Caption 2 Expert panelists speak during the public seminar "Crisis CSR: Doing Good When Bad Things Happen" to help companies better understand how they might help communities when disasters strike.



Photo Caption 3 Almost 70 employees from member companies volunteered in the Center's first event at McGuffey and West Greene High Schools making "little free pantry" boxes for community members.

best employees, have positive team-building experiences, build partnerships with other agencies, increase morale, give back to their community, enhance their reputation, increase the bottom line and earn trust from the public.

The Chevron Center for Corporate Social Responsibility at Waynesburg University – the only one of its kind in the tri-state area – explores this work by connecting professionals that engage in CSR work on behalf of their companies. Our Center brings together its members (including Bowles Rice LLP) to share their plans and strategies; host panel discussions with experts; create best practices from our collective discussions; host an all-company volunteer day with strategic projects; help with messaging and communications; and encourage companies to give their very best, in a strategic manner.

The Center is growing its offerings regularly. Together, we can build stronger businesses and stronger communities which will help to grow our region. Please check out our website www.waynesburg.edu/csr for more information. 