



Leading Organisational Growth, Driving Community Development
And Building Business Sustainability Through CSR
10-13 June 2012 | JBR Mövenpick Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Dr. R. L. Bhatia, Founder, World CSR Day

Piers Schreiber, Vice President – Corporate Communications and Public Affairs, Jumeirah Group has responsibility for one of the largest areas within the Group. He recently presented on “Engaging Employees, Involving Customers: Sustainability as a Brand Differentiator” at the 9th CSR Summit 2012 at Dubai. Dr R L Bhatia, Founder, World CSR Day posted a few questions to him.

1. Are Great CSR Practices Sustainable? If so, why...?

The simple fact of the matter is that if an organization embarks on CSR activities it needs to ensure that its commitment is sustained over the long term. The ideal scenario is one where CSR is part of the fabric of an organization's culture, to the point where it does not need to be singled out as a commitment or an activity. When the company's values are aligned with those of its customers and its employees, engagement in what the rest of the world would see as CSR is inevitable and indelible because it is relevant to all the organisation's key audiences. In this scenario, CSR practices are fully sustainable.

2. Why do CSR efforts fail to make an impact at times? And what is it that organizations or individuals could do to make these efforts successful and sustainable?

The times when CSR efforts fail to make an impact are when there is a misalignment between the company's values and those of its constituents. The biggest mistake companies make is thinking that it is just about money – about donating a cheque to a good cause in order to tick the CSR box. The biggest asset any organization has is the goodwill, the energy and the expertise of its people and it has been shown that the alignment of values contributes enormously to the level of motivation and engagement of employees with a positive impact on retention and productivity.

3. What should be the constituents of a good CSR Practice?

The starting point should be a clear understanding and articulation of both the culture of the organization and its business objectives. This needs to be coupled with a commitment from the top of the company to building CSR into the corporate agenda, led from the top. The development of a CSR strategy is best managed with people who understand the dynamics of the employee base and those who understand how to build a long-term sustainable programme. It is better to have a signature CSR commitment that aligns with the culture and the brand than a series of one-off projects. And if the commitment means working with a third party, be sure that you build a strong partnership with them, again based on a shared understanding of values, of desired outcomes and of the role that each party can play. At Jumeirah Group, CSR sits with the Executive Chairman and the long-term plan is to set up a Foundation through which the vision can be delivered, measured and evolved.

4. How according to you can the impact of a great CSR Practice be built on?

The first priority is to ensure that whatever initiative is embarked on is set up for success – by which I mean that there is full management support, there are adequate resources in terms of people, equipment and funds to see it through and a clear understanding of what success looks like. Success breeds success and a well delivered project that achieves its goals and engages employees in a meaningful and rewarding way is the strongest foundation for future high-impact projects.

5. Organizations with Conscience VS Organization for Profit - how will they impact the business strategy and vision?

If you are successful in developing your CSR strategy around your organisation's culture and business objectives, the Conscience vs Profit dynamic become two sides of the same coin. This is strong when business is going well – but the real test comes if the economy falters or business drops away and the management is forced to make difficult choices. It is ironically at those times that the need for CSR is greatest, especially those targeted at supporting social sustainability. And companies that maintain their commitment through the tough times find the long term benefits reflected in employee motivation and productivity – as well as the reputation of the brand in the outside world.

6. CSR is not a marketing tool, but yet organizations are using as a marketing tool - Your suggestion and comments.

CSR should always be about bringing material benefits to the end beneficiaries. It should never be positioned as a marketing tool, as that devalues the core purpose of the commitment. In some cases, it is important to bring marketing expertise as a contribution to the project – for example campaigns to raise awareness of a disadvantaged group or an environmental cause. But even in those cases the company should only be positioned as a facilitator and not the prime beneficiary of the attention. By doing the right thing and engaging meaningfully with the right audiences over time, the company will draw positive attention – and it is far more powerful for the beneficiary or a partner organization to talk about your contribution than for you to blow your own philanthropic trumpet.

7. How can organizations define the vision for CSR?

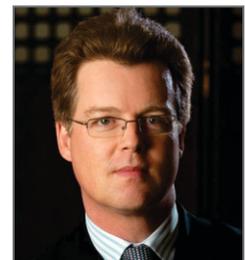
As mentioned before, the development of a CSR strategy should be carried out based on a clear understanding of the company's culture and business objectives. That strategy is effectively the means by which the CSR vision is delivered in a meaningful way on behalf of the employees and other key stakeholders of the company. And the person who defines and 'preaches' that vision is the CEO. The key point here is relevance – people will understand if an engineering company supports the distribution of water-pump technology to arid regions, or if a technology company supports the delivery of computers to schools in under-privileged areas, or if a retail chain supports local community initiatives in the areas they operate in.

8. What according to you are the factors which lead to success of cause marketing?

Cause marketing generally relates to the cooperative efforts of profit-driven companies and non-profit organizations to promote awareness and raise funds for charitable causes. The mutual interest of each party was captured in the phrase: “Do Well by Doing Good”. There are many examples of successful cause marketing campaigns, but I think the rule of thumb is always relevance and humility: relevance in understanding how your people's values are aligned with those of the donors and the beneficiaries; and humility in giving prominence to the cause, engaging in the programme because it is the right thing to do, not because you will gain an instant PR gain from being seen to do it.

9. Sustainability for the Future VS Sustainability Today? How would it impact the businesses to derive value?

One of the CSR programmes at Jumeirah Group is the Dubai Turtle Rehabilitation Project (DTRP), whose sole aim is to restore distressed hawksbill and green turtles to health, capture scientific data to increase global understanding of their behaviour and release them to their natural habitat in the Arabian Gulf. As these species of turtles are both on the endangered list, the role of the DTRP is critical for their future – and the more work that we do in raising public awareness of their plight and what to do if they find a turtle washed up on the shore, the better chance we have of ensuring the long-term viability of the species. We have found that the most successful CSR programmes are those that are long term, but deliver regular milestones against which participants can acknowledge that their efforts are having an impact.



Piers Schreiber

Vice President - Corporate
Communications & Public Affairs
Jumeirah Group