

Getting Other Departments to Embrace CSR: Your Pain Point Puts Me on the Path to My Gain Point

By Kori Reed, Senior Consultant to Changing Our World

As a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) professional and practitioner, I often get asked how I get communication, leadership, supply chain, marketing or human resources functions to work with me. I can relate; even with my experience as a trained communication professional, I have had my challenges convincing fellow communicators to include CSR messages in various channels. After I confess that I have had ups and downs in these areas, too, I always share the one piece of advice that has worked for me time and again: Find the person's pain points.

Let me clarify. Of course, I am referring to this in a business context. I don't condone the tactic of coaxing people by leveraging a weakness. I'll leave that for TV or movie characters looking to manipulate a target.

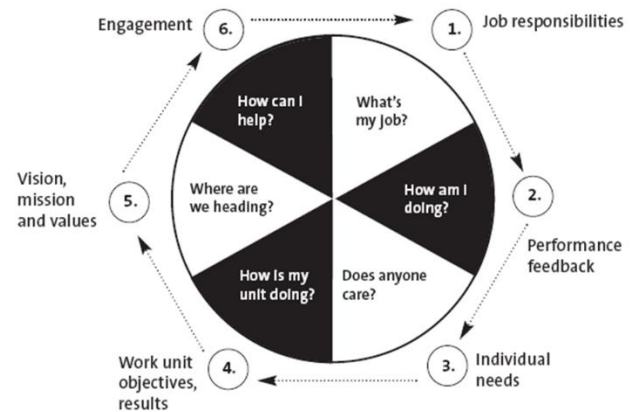
I probe to discover the biggest challenge or pain point the business colleague is facing, and then I see what I can do to apply the bandage, triage or fix the situation from where I sit. Me first, then we first is human nature; and aligns with the model of communication guru Roger D'Aprix. The key idea is this: Before a person will ask, "How can I help?" she needs to hear what is expected of her, feedback on her performance, and some type of recognition or acknowledgement to show that someone cares; then she will turn to external questions including, "Where are we heading?" and "What can I do to help?"

Specifically, here is what a situation may look like:

You want the marketing team to entertain the idea of including your CSR efforts in a consumer promotion. You've seen the research and you know that, all things being equal, consumers will pick a brand that supports a cause they favor. The marketer may look at what you are doing and think, "Why is she asking me to add to my already full agenda?"

You then find out that the biggest challenge for your business counterpart is driving sales on a particular product, and he is facing a lot of pressure to do so. You do some research and find out from the consumer insights team that the target consumer really cares about the cause your company supports, and you propose a way for the marketer to leverage the authentic activation of the CSR work you do around the cause to appeal to the consumer.

That was definitely easier to write than it was to execute internally, but identifying and removing pain is part of collaboration and successful partnership. I once had a boss spell this out for me. After trying multiple ways to get people to work with me on a project, and hitting dead ends, the boss asked me, "What are you doing to help them? You have an expertise they need and they are short-handed right now."



From Pain To Gain

Each business function plays a key part in the organization's overall success. Knowing what is important to the function will help with internal collaboration.

How can you help the function succeed?



Win-Win Solutions: How CSR assets can address a business need.

We all like to think we are altruistic, and I am not trying to shatter that belief. It is more of a barter system, and it is based in human nature. Even volunteering literally makes the volunteer feel good, and that is a substantial return.

As for me, I am intrigued when both parties come to the table with a need. It puts more skin in the game. It is also why, when people are skeptical of a company because they have something to gain from their CSR activities, I say that is okay. It leads to a potentially more sustainable partnership. A company wants sales and a nonprofit wants more awareness for the cause or brand. A brand wants to reach a specific target and the nonprofit that reaches that target wants more funds to do the good work it is doing. It's mutual interest.

The next time you are up against a challenge that requires cooperation and you aren't getting it, take the person to lunch, do some research, get a hold of the strategic plan for the other part of the business. Find out how the assets and deliverables that you have can help make someone's job easier AND accomplish what you need in the process.

This infographic includes some common core concerns to think about from other parts of the business you may want to collaborate with, and how CSR assets can fix pain points with win-win solutions.



This edition of the Social Strategist comes from Kori Reed, Senior Consultant to Changing Our World. Kori has more than 25 years of experience as a corporate citizenship and communications practitioner inside Fortune 500 companies. Most recently, she worked as Vice President, integrating a company cause-branding effort, and connecting consumer engagement and corporate responsibility.