



Social Strategist - Taking Employee Engagement to the Next Level

Last month at the 2016 ACCP (Association of Corporate Contributions Professionals) Conference, Mandy Ryan and Maureen Flynn of Changing Our World's Corporate Practice connected with leading corporate contributions professionals.

With nearly 250 professionals in attendance from companies of various industries, it was a great opportunity to take the pulse of those in the field - to understand what challenges professionals are struggling with and what goals they have for the coming years.

Conversations we had, and an attendee survey we administered, confirmed that the role of corporate citizenship and the corporate contributions professional continues to rapidly expand and evolve within a changing business landscape. From aligning philanthropic strategy to core business objectives, to connecting employee engagement to philanthropic strategy, to measuring impact, building connections across the business, and telling a compelling story, we heard it all.

One topic came up most of all – employee engagement and how to advance it beyond one-off activities. How can companies build a culture where employee engagement is ingrained in their organizational DNA?

In a survey, we asked attendees to rate their top priorities over the coming 12-18 months; of the eight possible options, employee engagement ranked the highest. In fact, every single respondent selected it as “Important” or “Very Important.”

Clearly, employee engagement challenges were top of mind for attendees. As the field evolves and employee engagement programs become a prerequisite for best-in-class corporate community investment programs, companies are struggling not with *whether* to build employee engagement programs but instead *how* to integrate them into the business so that they truly thrive.

At Changing Our World, we help our clients address these common challenges and roadblocks. Here is a short list of the top five challenges to executing employee engagement strategies, as heard from attendees, and tips for addressing them:

1. **Securing Internal Buy-In:**

Engage with senior leaders and outline the specific benefits that an engaged workforce can have on your business. Provide them with talking points for why engagement is critical to the success of your company.

2. **Setting Goals and Tracking Progress:**

Identify realistic goals for your program and keep employees up-to-date on your progress. This will help build a culture of unity and allow employees to see the collective impact of their efforts.

3. **Cutting through the Communications Clutter:**

Determine the best communications vehicles to reach your diverse workforce. Survey employees to understand what motivates them to participate in engagement activities and tailor your messaging accordingly.

4. **Inspiring Internal Champions:**

Identify those individuals that are already actively engaged and give them tools and resources to recruit and engage their colleagues. Your own people are your best asset.

5. **Identifying the Right Volunteer Management Vendor:**

Consider your company's unique needs. Meet with a range of vendors to understand their products and reach out to colleagues in the field to understand the pros and cons of their volunteer management systems. Take the time to do your due diligence and find the right match.