

Employee and Customer Engagement on Steroids

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Date: **January 2012**

ACHIEVING MORE WITH A DOLLAR

→ Corporations are becoming more and more aware of the need to take a more active stand on their role as good citizens and the importance of balancing financial and social performance. Witness the ads of the Fortune 500 in recent years, for example.

In times of economic hardship this comes under pressure.

We propose linking corporate philanthropy with customer and employee engagement to achieve far more good per dollar spent than where such links are absent.

Let's consider an example. Goodcorp has an active, focused and philanthropic culture. It gives large sums to the charities of its choice, which in this case are educational programs that enhance the quality of life for youth in the communities in which the corporation operates. Goodcorp's CSR function also has an independently managed program that focuses on the environment. It produces a monthly document that helps their employees and customers "green" their homes. Both programs are difficult to argue against – they do good and are focused on things people care about. But, they do not leverage each other. A dollar spent on one has little or no impact on the other.

What if we were to change that scenario, enhancing the power of each of the programs, creating a more active engagement and achieve more without adding any cost?

LEVERAGING WASTE TO CREATE SOCIAL GOOD

→ Here's how this could be achieved.

Goodcorp keeps its budget and focus on education but instead of donating directly to the charities of its choice it offers a matching program. The program offers to match each dollar of energy saved and donated in its branch offices, its neighborhood schools and in its customers' homes with a dollar for education in the communities in which their offices are located. Naturally, these energy savings are measured and verified using software specially designated for this purpose so that the program is evidence-based and can be audited. It can also cap the amount of matching dollars so as to limit its exposure.

In this way, a "free" good, wasted energy, is mined and the customer or employee is offered a choice as to where to dedicate it within their community to improve life there, and one dollar of corporate giving becomes two or more dollars of social good.

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In addition, energy is saved, pollution is lowered and that single dollar has spawned a whole raft of social and environmental benefits. Moreover, everyone participates and “owns” the result.

This idea is quite general and can be applied in many diverse situations. At Zerofootprint we are interested in how it might be used to tackle environmental problems. But it does not have to be restricted in this way. Neither do the social benefits need to be restricted to education.

We can see it in hospitals where employees and patients are encouraged to save energy. Each dollar they measurably save gets matched by donor funds that target improvements to the health care services of the hospital in certain predetermined areas – enhanced after-patient care, better facilities, better equipment, and so on. The hospital benefits from a more energy-conscious staff. The funds it allocates come from funds that would otherwise have been spent on wasted energy. The staff and patients are more engaged and empowered to improve their own environment and the world is a better place.

Of course, we could dream up many more such examples. In fact, this is such a general idea that it applies almost anywhere. It relies on tapping into the “free funds” that are available to us by eliminating waste, and also on having the ability to measure the waste saved.

What interests me is the leverage and the linking that enhances both corporate philanthropy and CSR. It could potentially create a stronger bond with customers and employees as well, since they are now partners with the corporation. And, in a customer-driven world, that is clearly an asset.

ABOUT US → Zerofootprint is a cleantech software and services company that makes environmental impact measurable, visible and manageable for corporations, governments, institutions and individuals. Our solutions mitigate environmental risk and drive cost reductions through behavioural change.

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