CSR COMMUNICATION

Getting Credit While Doing **Good**

Kelton

PREFACE

The technological revolution has granted brands the opportunity to cultivate consumer relationships that were once unattainable. Constant connection means that every move a brand makes is out there for the world to see. This is especially true when it comes to giving back. Consumer expectations are higher than ever before. They're pushing brands to move away from the well-intentioned but largely topical and disjointed actions of typical Corporate Social Responsibility programs, and towards a comprehensive social impact strategy that aligns with core brand values.

Yet despite consumers being more tuned in to social impact-related efforts, it's often difficult for brands to break through the noise and communicate the value of the good work they are doing. Equally as important as understanding how to play in the CSR space effectively, brands need an informed communication strategy that resonates with consumers and garners recognition for socially responsible work.

In CSR Communication: Getting Credit While Doing Good, we'll explore the new expectations around giving back, what these shifts mean for brands, and how companies can more effectively communicate with consumers. Use the following pages to think about your own social innovation programs and inspire new ways to connect with your customer.

Corporate social impact programs used to be a "nice to have." Some consumers appreciated them, but they weren't necessarily key drivers of brand love. No longer.

According to a recent Kelton survey, over four in five Americans think it's important that the largest US industries be socially responsible.

Far fewer actually believe that big industries like healthcare and pharmaceuticals (33%), tech (30%), retail (27%) and financial services (22%) are living up to the standards of what it means to be socially responsible today.

Standards and benchmarks that once measured a brand's social impact have shifted. Consumers have higher expectations than ever before.

Brands can no longer get away with simply attaching themselves to a cause or charity.

Publicizing the efforts employees are making to give back to society is viewed as nominal at best.

Labels like **"organic"** or **"fair trade,"** which once signified "good" have become a baseline expectation and many times are altogether mistrusted by consumers.

This leaves brands searching for new and better ways to communicate about CSR efforts to a more demanding consumer.

SO WHERE IS THE WORLD OF CSR GOING EXACTLY?

Americans have come to expect that brands and companies sit at the forefront of real societal change, and they want it done quickly and at scale.

Consumers expect that brands provide a constant stream of improvements and inventions that significantly change the very way in which we live our lives, while staying flexible and nimble along the way.

The mere act of innovation is seen as social good.

FACEBOOK
SAFETY CHECK

A branded service that allows people to communicate with their family and friends during disasters, subsequently redefining the role of the Internet – and Facebook – in times of need and crisis.

Values now trump just "doing good."

It's no longer enough to sponsor a few unrelated charity events and host a company volunteer day. Consumers want to see brands following through on a codified set of beliefs, rather than simply supporting a one-off cause.

SHINOLA

Watch manufacturer Shinola demonstrates their total commitment to local community while also positioning Detroit as a larger symbol of America's values and roots in industrial tradition.

Brands with character will rise to the top.

Consumers expect brands today to have character – to stand for something that ties back to the roots and DNA of the company itself. There's an expectation that CSR programs are personal in some way, even for multi-billion dollar corporations.

AMERICAN AIRLINES

MARRIAGE EQUALITY

From creating the first LGBT employee resource group in its category to providing health benefits to domestic partners, American Airlines makes sure that its actions reflect its brand promise of inclusion and diversity.

Brands are expected to have a point of view on the major social questions of the day.

Consumers are looking for more nuanced, story-driven "proof" behind a brand acting and behaving responsibly. In order to get noticed, brands need to speak to consumers through credible messaging that relates to their personal ideals and beliefs.

More than ever, brands need to engage in, and have a point of view on, the major social questions of the day. And consumers expect to be able to hold a dialogue with brands - on any given day and at anytime.

PATAGONIA

WHAT THE PLUCK

Patagonia doubled down on transparency with a campaign that exposes the realities of sourcing down feathers, and highlights their more humane standards. Their messaging defines a right way and a wrong way, while reiterating the brand's values.

SO

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO YOU AND YOUR BRAND?

These new consumer expectations have prompted a shift in the way you need to talk about your brand having impact.

While in some cases strategy overhauls are needed, communicating to consumers in a way that underscores your company's stance and commitment to doing enduring social impact work is critical regardless.

Not surprisingly, there is no one-size-fits-all approach. A myriad of factors, such as your brand's equity, the category landscape, and your target audience, all impact the way in which you'll communicate.

The Building Blocks of Effective CSR Communication

This foundational knowledge can help guide the right communications plan for your brand's social impact strategy.

START WITH YOUR OWN BRAND.

Identify and communicate the factors that make your social impact efforts feel authentic, true, and ownable for your particular business. It should always be immediately clear why your company is pursuing a given initiative.

UNDERSTAND THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE.

Stay attuned to evolving social values and priorities, to identify how to best describe your social impact programs in a manner that will resonate with your target consumer.

CONSIDER YOUR CATEGORY & INDUSTRY.

Explore the expectations, fears, and consumer desires that are unique to your industry. What are your competitors doing? How are consumers responding? How can you best differentiate yourself in a way that will set you apart from the competition and engender trust from your customers?

THINK LIKE YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE.

Identify which programs and initiatives are going to strike a chord with consumers and how your brand can best highlight these in your communications strategy. How can you build an emotional connection with your customers in a genuine and personal way?

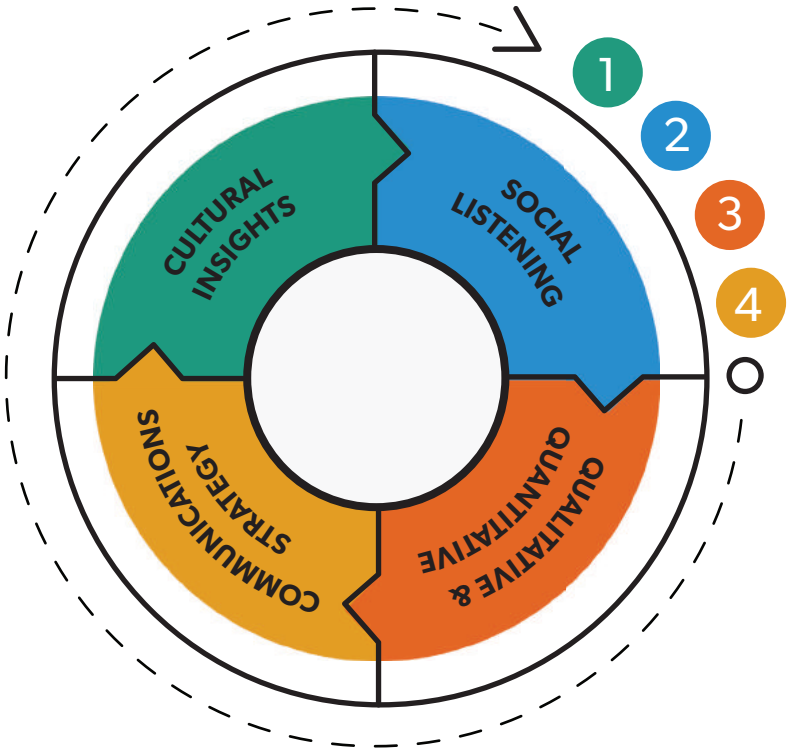
Your consumers are more empowered than ever.

They're your advertisers, your publishers, and your biggest advocates (or critics). A foundational knowledge of cultural change and consumer perception is the key to crafting the right social impact communications plan.

That's why human insight is tightly integrated into every facet of Kelton strategy creation. **Because we believe your communication should have as much impact as your CSR efforts.**

How We Get You There

A 4 Step process for informed, impactful messaging



1

We use **Cultural Insights** to survey the landscape, examining the conversations, messages, symbols, language, and imagery that influence consumers and align with company values.

2

Next, we leverage **Social Listening** to better understand the nature of the conversations around your brand, its competitors, and the key social impact topics that are top of mind for consumers.

3

Then we pull from our **Qualitative and Quantitative Research** toolkit to fully understand consumer perspectives on the themes uncovered through Cultural Insights and Social Listening.

4

Last, we'll blend these insights into an effective **CSR Communications Strategy -** a framework for talking about your efforts while leveraging today's cultural norms and tomorrow's emerging trends.

THE AUTHORS

DANIELLE SHERMAN

Vice President, Communications & Media Practice

As Vice President of Kelton's Communications and Media Practice, Danielle partners with communications clients to offer end-to-end content strategy consultation across every campaign touch-point. Since joining Kelton in 2007, Danielle has collaborated with some of the nation's leading PR agencies and marketing and communications specialists to develop messaging, insights and strategies that have launched and supported hundreds of B2C and B2B campaigns.

Prior to Kelton, Danielle led PR strategy for clients in the beauty, lifestyle, family, entertainment, and fashion industries. She played a key role in designing and implementing strategic and consumer campaigns and brings that expertise to every Kelton client initiative.

Danielle graduated summa cum laude from Wagner College, where she received a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration and Marketing and served as President of the National Leadership Honor Society.

JOHN WISE

Senior Director, Cultural Insights & Brand Strategy

John leads the Cultural Insights team at Kelton, bringing a fresh and exploratory dimension to any project he touches. A dynamic presenter and experienced strategist, John understands the blend of art and science that goes into building future-facing brands, and has expertise in bringing these two forces together. In a career spanning over ten years and two coasts, John brings a distinct strategic perspective to leading brands such as Target, Google, Coca-Cola, MillerCoors and others.

John was first introduced to the academic side of Cultural Insights at Cornell University, where he was an American Studies major and member of the distinguished Sphinx Head Senior Honor society.

In his spare time, John is part of the brain trust behind Brooklyn Theater Art's philanthropic 'Chrome to College' initiative and enjoys mastering the culinary arts.

ALISON SERVI

Vice President, Strategy & Learning

With a deep understanding of both organizational and marketing strategy, Alison connects the desire for actionable research insights with an understanding of what it takes to facilitate change at the organizational and team level. She is a champion of the connection between brand strategy and organizational strategy, driver of the creation and execution of customer centric strategy, and navigator of the (messy) intersection of external reinvention and internal change. Prior to her current role, Alison spent several years leading many of Kelton's largest global engagements, leveraging research, marketing strategy, and design consulting to uncover inspired business solutions.

Alison graduated with honors from the University of Chicago, and enthusiastically completed her Master's degree in Learning and Organizational Change at Northwestern University. She is active and engaged alumnus of both universities.

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