

The Core Value of Corporate Social Responsibility

It's never by Chance, it's always by Purpose

Responding to corporates' social investments (be it free products, -food, houses, you name it); one of the reactions that I had to get 'accustomed' to is this: "What a waste, why don't they do ____ (fill in blanc) or just lower their price or invest in better service avenues". This response usually ties with companies in either a season or a general state of having a bad public reputation. Think of popular parastatals, either in a good or dire financial state, and the social investment choices they have made that you either agree or disagree with. I'm thinking about T-Shirts here.

If our investment choices are ad-hoc, poorly linked to the core of your business, and unsustainable (feeding fish but not training a fisherman), we will end up spending a lot of money to find out what we're doing wrong, and why it's wrong *for you*. Friday we learned more about living a good reputation, by being authentic. If corporate social responsibility concerns your values towards society, then how do you see these values reflected in the sponsorships that you're committed to? Answer with 'we're into _____'. You'll be surprized to learn that enormous companies are dedicated to sponsoring failing initiatives because they have created dependency, or because they feel obliged to and have no specific alternative or means to change direction (bureaucracy, or fake red tape).

Remember, there are four types of CSR that we can align strategy with; environmental sustainability, direct philanthropic giving, ethical business practise, and economic responsibility. Given Namibia's current economic circumstances, aligning CSR/I policy with the latter has become most popular throughout media. Are you being Harambee. Back to social; if it's social in nature it means that *you're working with other people to make the sponsorship work*. You're not Oprah Winfrey dishing out product or cash (even though it's a nice surprize). Therefore, failing relationships are many a time at the core of failing sponsorships.

Think about that.

It's an ethical theory, where individuals are held accountable for leading actions that are to the benefit of society. See it as a weigh scale, and the need to create equilibrium between economic growth, and the welfare of society and the environment. Are your sponsorship choices creating equilibrium, and is it contributing to the welfare of the society you're invested in? It's not supposed to be an easy question, but it's a valid question.

In essence, and when viewing our sponsorship choices as being socially fair or -unfair, we ask whether our employees and the environment are held equal to our company's economics. It takes us back to the drawing board (more than once, and ongoingly). Fact drop; *transparency is leading the moral consciousness that actualises social responsibility*. Do you read about, and know good things about good companies in Namibia? But you remember the times those brands were mentioned for discrimination, poor workplace ethics, (angry) labour union involvement, corruption, and scandals. True story.

Even Coca Cola has been 'on the dark side' (they pulled a Dark Wing Duck). Fun facts; Between 1989 and 2002, eight union leaders from bottling plants in Colombia were killed after they raised concerns about labour practices, and many members of the union and workforce there have been kidnapped and tortured to prevent them from supporting it (say whaaat!). And that bottled water you drink? You might think twice before taking a sip when you learn where it comes from. Coca-Cola's plant in Kerala, India (I was thinking about poop, but wait it gets worse), gets that water from deep wells in the area, which is great for them – but not so great for residents who are left with little to drink or use for agriculture. And even while Coca-Cola's worst infractions occurred overseas, they weren't saints at home either, with over 2,000 African-American employees suing and winning a case against the company for race discrimination. Think about chocolate; even Nestle comes under fire for their aggressive marketing campaigns for their baby formula in developing and poor nations. Why is this a big deal? Because the company markets its formula under false pretences (making mothers believe it is more healthy than their own [free] breast milk).

Ok; let's focus. Large or small enactments for positive change really is the good stuff. It's the stuff that give you Goosebumps or fabulous ideas. It's campaigns fuelled with high-level awareness and public support, that is trusted, and brings about social change. If leaders manage to steer social investment initiatives that change mindsets, and change circumstances – then they're in a winning loop, open to ongoing improvement, monitoring, and impact. It's significant to know that 92% of consumers have a more positive image of companies that support social issues and environmental efforts. It's more than the >70% on average, which is the degree to which the reputation of the CEO directly reflects on the reputation of the company. It's 1-3% of company-spend, but it's a marathon (enduring) investment into the company reputation.

Yes, of course I'm bringing in millennials into this piece. Millennials Want to See More Corporate Social Responsibility.

For millennials and Generation Z, socially responsible companies are LIT (if you're a mature wine; this means that something is 'legitimately cool'). They believe companies should be invested in improving society and look for solutions that will assist in those improvements. Is your sponsorship improving society in the form of sport, culture, living conditions (you name it)? We're into media monitoring and public communications, and I truly understand why it's crucial for companies to share how they are trying to make a positive impact on the country (world), so the public can see the pro-social initiatives they are winning at. Showcasing efforts will ultimately impact the choices millennials make as consumers. Remember, you guide how you're perceived, lest it be honest. Our pro-social and -environmental conscious efforts have an impact on consumer perceptions. Full stop. And it definitely bares impact on not only the bottom line, but on the chance that others will begin initiatives of their own. So bring it on; bring it to the media agenda, onto public platforms, and into the Potjiekos we serve Namibia.

Love Natasja

Some other highlights in the past few days;

10/05/2019

- *Stock Watch* reports that Africa Energy Corp has released their financial and operating results for the three months ended March 31, 2019. Africa Energy Corp. president, Garrett Soden said that, the large Brulpadda gas condensate and light oil discovery announced in the first quarter opens a new world - class oil and gas play offshore South Africa with substantial follow-on potential.
- *Engineering News* reports that Namibia no longer has any of the major global mining houses with a directive investment or meaningful exploration activity in the country, apart from Anglo American's indirect involvement through De Beers. The article reports that the partnership between The Chamber of Mines, government and capital markets is critically important for the discovery and development of new mines of scale.
- *New Era* reports that Prime Minister Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila has implored all regional governors not to let anyone die of hunger to due to the severe drought in the country. The article reports that Namibia has been experiencing a persist drought for the past six years, which has killed many livestock amounted to millions of dollars.
- *New Era* reports that the ruling party Swapo distanced itself from the independent candidate in the upcoming Ondangwa Urban Constituency by-election, after social media posts suggested she was a 'Swapo independent candidate'. Swapo candidate, Hilma Nicanor urged all Swapo Party members, supporters, sympathizers to turn out in their big numbers at the Swapo campaign rally for Ondangwa.

13/05/2019

- *Namibian Sun* reports that independent candidate, Angelina Immanuel held a cleaning campaign where she was joined by her supporters. Prime Minister, Saara Kuugongwelwa-Amadhila also urged Angelina Immanuel to refrain from using the Swapo party's colours on her campaign.
- The Namibian reports Oshana Governor, Elia Irimari said that his office will continue engaging all stakeholders, including the Namibia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NCCI), in order to address the numerous challenges hindering the youth from starting businesses. The Governor, Irimari also encouraged SMEs to approach the Namibia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NCCI) as well as the Ministry of Industrialisation, Trade and SME Development to obtain information that could assist them.

