

The positive effects of concerted CSI partnership

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The concept of "corporate social investment" (CSI) or "corporate social responsibility" (CSR), is often misinterpreted that only large "corporate" companies address "social" issues through large "investments", and that it is only their "responsibility". I would like to elaborate on the importance of good corporate citizenship, and why business, regardless of size, is not divorced from social issues.

In the modern business age, companies of all sizes are beginning to realise the tangible and sustainable value that dedicated involvement in Corporate Social investment (CSI) brings.

In the South African context, this involvement is even more important, owing to the delicate socio-economic situation that prevails in the country, with millions of people in urgent need of basic services that will uplift them and offer the opportunity of a better life.

Besides the value that will be provided to local communities and the legacy of South Africa, engaging in CSI projects has the capacity to engender a considerable difference to the short- and long-term prosperity of any organisation, whether it is a major banking institution, or a small-to-medium enterprise.

Business benefits

Companies that align themselves to an effective CSI programme will find that business benefits accrue in the form of brand recognition, increased sales, Return On Investment (ROI), tax benefits, and, most importantly, fostering trust with employees and the general public.

Businesses are already imminently aware of the importance of implementing public relations messages that are consistent with the organisation's core values and ethos. Supporting a CSI initiative is the most effective way for these companies to formulate a message that their concerns as businesses extend beyond their own prospects. Essentially, they will be able to communicate that they are cognisant of the wider societal benefits that can result from heightened involvement in worthy public causes.

Perhaps one of the best examples of an initiative that creates a lasting value for both society and companies is DeskBags, a school bag that provides a portable desk solution. This CSI initiative, which is the brainchild of PR Worx, is uplifting educational standards in Africa. DeskBags offers an innovative solution to the prevailing desk shortage problem being experienced in rural areas throughout Africa, with research showing that over 4 million scholars in South Africa require school desks.

DeskBags provides a definitive, but temporary, answer to this problem, by producing a product that not only serves a purpose as a functional and eco-friendly school bag, but when folded open, it also provides instant desk support. As the bags are made from recycled vinyl billboard materials and the flap is reinforced with ABS plastic sheeting, the product is so durable that if looked after well, can last an entire school career.

The bags are also waterproof, reflective and light enough that even pre-primary scholars can use them.

Schools in need of a temporary desk solution can apply to DeskBags to receive the product free of charge as corporate companies help sponsor the production costs.

Schools or areas in need of support

Once companies have placed an order for DeskBags, whether it is for 100 or 100 000 bags, they are provided with a list of schools or areas in need of support. All arrangements, including the hand over, media liaison and photography, are managed on their behalf, and they simply need to be present on the day of the hand over to represent their company, and witness the children's appreciation.

Companies that have participated in this CSI initiative have not only made a considerable difference to the lives of children, but have also significantly enhanced their own corporate image. These companies have been able to display their branding prominently on the DeskBag, thereby clearly demonstrating their support for a meaningful CSI and educational cause.

Considering the numerous benefits that accrue from heightened involvement in CSI causes, both large corporates and small and medium enterprises should seriously consider partnering an effective CSI partner such as DeskBags and, ultimately, create on-the-ground change in South Africa.

Committing wholeheartedly in this regard will also encourage a host of other companies to replicate these efforts and help achieve a positive legacy for our country.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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