

Corporate Social Purpose Continuum – a Transformational Tool for Business

Leading companies are retooling their community investment (CI) programs and corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategies to create more social value and greater impact. Once satisfied with giving money to charity and allocating a percent of profits to community projects, now these leaders realize that their biggest impact can be generated through their core business. So they undergo a strategic process to repurpose their business models for greater social and business value. They determine what they stand for, build it into everything they do, and enable external actors to participate. Therefore their positive impact multiplies exponentially as it ripples through suppliers, customers, staff and more.

The following is a tool to help companies in this exercise. It is designed to help company leaders quickly understand the steps necessary to make this paradigm shift in CSR, corporate affairs and community relations.

	1.0 Philanthropic	2.0 Strategic	3.0 Integrated	4.0 Social Purpose
Motivation	Give back or PR	Achieve results	Be more competitive	Be reciprocal
Activity	Ad hoc Donations	CI vision, goals & targets + Volunteering & in-kind	CSR vision Core competencies & assets	Business purpose Mission Whole of enterprise
Strategy	Side-lined	Siloed	Component of corporate strategy	Central to / inseparable from corporate strategy
Resources	Grants budget	+ Volunteering & staff skills	+ Other assets, functions, products & services	+ Leveraged collective resources
Investment Models	Profit allocation	Community investments	R&D innovation investments	Value creation
Issue Selection	Respond to community requests / where most PR value can be gained	Address community needs	Deliver strategic positioning	Address complex social challenges
Lead	Community relations manager	CSR manager	Chief strategy or sustainability officer	CEO
Employee Role	Donors via payroll	Skills-based volunteering	Performance plans & daily decision-making	At work, at home & in community
Customer Role	None	Volunteer & donate	Join & co-create	Customer movement
Brand Promise	Quality: aware company donates money	Trust: aware of how company contributes to community	Pride: aware of company's socially beneficial impacts	Meaning: believe society is better off if they do business with the company & that as customers they are part of a social movement
Marketing	Paid advertising tells story	Earned media / cause marketing tell story	Customers tell story	Everything you do tells story
Participation	Passive	Strategic partnerships	Multi-stakeholder collaborations	Innovation labs for system change
Timeline	< 1 year	Multi-year	Medium term	Long term
Measurement	Inputs	Activities	Outcomes	Impact
Business Value	Goodwill	Reputation	Profitability	Long-term viability