WORK THAT Works

with Charlene Theodore

A LAW FIRM'S BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Episode 7 of the *Work that Works* episode considers the importance of corporate social responsibility and looks at how one workplace used a B Corp Certification to establish a business model that balances purpose with profit.

Clients are increasingly seeking out businesses that care – that are doing right by their people, their community, and their environment – when deciding where to spend their money. Corporate social responsibility can also help boost employee productivity and engagement and create meaningful connections to the workplace.

Many law firms already engage in some form of corporate social responsibility. Some examples may include pro bono work, volunteer initiatives, implementing green-friendly office space policies, or supporting scholarships and fellowships. However, if you are wondering how you might systematize and hold your organization accountable to the principles and standards of social responsibility, here is a short outline of how you might get started.

Step 1: Choose your cause(s)

Lawyers and law firms are uniquely positioned to use their skills and expertise to help others. When thinking about corporate social responsibility, consider supporting causes that align with your practice areas and expertise.

Step 2: Assess your goals

Think about what you hope to achieve through your corporate social responsibility strategy. Are you looking to increase employee satisfaction? Boost client loyalty? Enhance your public image?

It may also help to think about your clients – and potential clients – and develop corporate social responsibility initiatives that align with your clients' values too.

Step 3: Consult

Get your employees involved. Undertaking corporate social responsibility initiatives not only helps with employee engagement, it can also expand your network of contacts. Getting more involved with other organizations draws the attention of people who respect the same causes and can be the start of new business development relationships.

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Step 4: Consider the challenges

Developing and implementing a successful corporate social responsibility strategy can be challenging and complex. Some considerations you will want to think about as you develop your strategy may include:

- **How will you handle any controversy?** When supporting social issues, there may be individuals who disagree. It can be a good idea to think about how you will prepare for and manage negative feedback.

- **How will you stay the course?** Taking on corporate social responsibility should always be rooted in making a difference first with marketing and publicity benefits coming afterwards. Find ways to retain your focus and remain committed to your cause(s).

- **How will you measure impact?** While there may not always be a clear metric of proving the value of corporate social responsibility, it is worth giving some thought to what key performance indicators you can use to tie-back to the value of your efforts, such as employee engagement, brand awareness, client acquisition, etc.

Appendix A:

What Does Corporate Social Responsibility Mean to You? (check all that apply)

- ☐ Giving back to your community
- ☐ Reducing your carbon footprint
- ☐ Other environmental conservation efforts (energy conservation, water conservation, waste reduction)
- ☐ Being a leader to inspire positive change
- ☐ Providing free or accessible services to your community
- ☐ Moving to a completely digital/paperless office
- ☐ Making connections with outside partners on a neighborhood project (creates accountability)
- ☐ Supporting community charitable organizations
- ☐ Other initiatives: _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Appendix B:

Think Small! What are some smaller movements that can get started within your company right away?

- ☐ Implement no-waste lunches (reduce food waste)
- ☐ Motivate and reward employees for putting forward ideas and creating a pipeline of future initiatives
- ☐ Start an internal committee of employees for one of the "big" picture items set out in Appendix A
- ☐ Strengthen emotional bonds with team members and identify one project to start to give back to your community
- ☐ Create feedback channels for employees to provide feedback in real time

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