Corporate Advice

Caryn Walsh

Caryn Walsh is a Psychologist, Business Coach, International Leadership and Team Development Specialist, Executive Coach. Caryn and her team conduct regular training in Fiji. Email info@puremagicbusiness.com.au for more details

CLIMATE CHANGE

Looking after our World: Every Business Plays a Role

One of Fiji's largest retail groups, Vinod Patel who have taken the initiative to help clean-up areas that have been heavily littered with rubbish from passing transport in the Suva area.

Do you ever look around you and think to yourself 'how can people drop such rubbish in public?' Or 'how can people care so little for their environment that tinned cans, plastic bags and general rubbish are left on the side of the road, sometimes for years?

If you don't believe in climate change, just look at the world around you. Drastically changing temperatures and devastating negative effects on marine life and our environmental surroundings make us realise that every person on this planet has a role to play in looking after our world, including businesses of all sizes.

And Fiji, a small, powerful country, is at the forefront of dealing with climate change. Late last year Prime Minister Mr Frank Bainimarama said that:

'Fiji has entered a frightening new era of extreme weather that needs to be confronted and we need to get the message out loud and clear to the entire world about the absolute need to confront this crisis head on.'

What stand united against climate change and its perilous affects?

One of Fiji's largest retail groups takes their social responsibility seriously and has a firm strategy to clean-up where the help is most needed, including a senior citizens home (Father Law Home, Lami) and along Suva's sea-wall, often littered with rubbish from passing transport and sadly, people.

Vinod Patel's clean-up campaign is a sustained effort by the Organisation to raise awareness about littering and forms part of its deep commitment to creating a better, cleaner environment for all to enjoy.

Two of the Organisations Executive leaders, Nikita Patel (Group General Manager, Finance and IT) and Indula Weerasekera (General Manager Retail Finance) head these initiatives and believe all Organisations should contribute, no matter how small, to being socially responsible for others and the planet on which we live.

'Think Green' – Vinod Patel's Beach Clean-Up Campaign

In January, Nikita, together with her support office team, spent a day working on the Nasese Sea Wall, Suva Beach side, massing a huge 60 bags of plastic, bottles, metal, discarded electronic equipment and other pieces of rubbish.

Without this clean-up, potentially 60 bags of nondegradable pollutant would be unleashed into the sea, drastically affecting marine life and potentially killing vital ecosystems necessary for the survival of all living fish and organisms that call the ocean home.

'Cleaning Campaign - Helping our senior citizens'

The cleaning campaign at the Father Law Home (home for 19 senior citizens) was undertaken by Indula and his team in February. Indula explained:

'I am pleased that my team collectively thought of this initiative and that we as a team and Organisation could provide something to the community. We also hosted a lunch for the residents of the Home. It was a great day and we will be doing more of it. '

Sister Losalini Ralogaivau from the Father Law Home thanked Vinod Patel Finance team for their effort and encouraged others to do the same.

The concept of Social responsibility in Business

Social Responsibility is regarded as an ethical approach, by Organisations, to fulfil their civil duty to perform actions (like clean-ups) that benefit the whole of society. In this way, there is a balance between economic growth and the welfare of society and the environment.

If this equilibrium is maintained, social responsibility is accomplished.

Top 5 benefits of Corporate Social Responsibility

Most businesses are about making profit.

A hard focus on the bottom-line and return on the share-holders investment become the critical focus about why businesses exist in the first place. But it's more than that.

Corporate Social Responsibility is about an Organisation taking responsibility for the impacts of its decisions and activities on all aspects of society, the community and the environment. And it's not just about donating funds to welfare causes or saving the environment by having a paper-less policy.

It's about contributing to the health and welfare of society and others around you and operating transparently and ethically.

Benefit 1: Creates a positive impact in the community

Keeping social responsibility top of mind encourages businesses to act ethically and co nsider the social and environmental impacts of everything they are doing on everything and everyone around them. In doing so, they can avoid or mitigate detrimental impacts of their business on the community.

Benefit 2: It enhances how the public views a company

How the public views a Company is critical to its success.

If they see you as caring and looking after the environment and others, your road to success is partially confirmed.

But if seen as not caring about others but only profits, the business may not make it in the long run.

This key principle has been an alarming wake-up call to many international make-up manufacturers, for example, who in the past have tested their products on animals.

By doing so, they have lost billions of dollars in potential profits because a significant ground-swell of the public are animal lovers and won't purchase products that support animal cruelty.

Benefit 3: It makes businesses an employer of choice

By being an employer of choice, businesses attract and retain exemplary staff.

Benefit 4: It encourages both professional and personal development

By being involved in social responsibility initiatives, employees are taught the importance of looking after things in their care, at home and work, and are shown that by caring for our planet and others, together we create a positive and healthy world.

Benefit 5: It enhances relationships with clients

A strong corporate social responsibility framework is essential to building and maintaining trust between an Organisation and clients. Clients want to be attached to businesses that are regarded as ethical, who care for people and the world around it and who can be counted on to lead the charge in helping the community in which it operates.

Never under-estimate social responsibility as part of a key strategy for the Organisation to thrive, increase its profitability and ensure its sustainability over time.

In conclusion, if your Social Responsibility strategy is not as active as you would like it to be, it's time to focus on helping the community, the world in which you operate and your business overall.

The only impact of Social Responsibility is positive, so don't wait.

The time is now.

Feedback: maraia.vula@fijisun.com.fj