

Ripple Effect Leadership: How to inspire Global Change through CSR

When creating Pay It Forward Day, there are 5 things I learned about producing a global movement that will benefit the leader, the business and the community.



The best leaders inspire greatness in others. They understand that only a few people have an opportunity to lead and that leadership is a privilege. They also understand that leaders have power. Power to make a positive contribution, to change things for the better, and to enable individuals, teams and organisations to fulfil their potential. The difference leaders can make is phenomenal and not limited to the company or industry they work in. Many leaders are able to make a difference that goes far beyond their work environment.

“I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the water to create many ripples.” *Mother Teresa*

A study by Nielsen found that 66% of consumers are willing to spend more on a product if it comes from a socially responsible company. HBR reported that 77% of consumers are motivated to purchase from companies committed to making the world a better place. This translates into improved market share, with a 4.4% increase experienced by companies with strong Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives. A study by MSCI found that companies with strong social responsibility programs had lower volatility and higher returns on equity over the long term. Clearly getting CSR right is good for the community and good for business. One example of CSR in action is International Pay it Forward Day.

In 2007, a number of next generation leaders of Australia were discussing ways to change Australia and the world for the better. There was some great conversation that didn't seem to be going anywhere. So I focused my attention on what I could do. I had seen the movie, Pay it Forward, many years earlier and loved the concept of paying kindness forward to others without expecting to receive anything in return. I thought, 'Wouldn't it be great if there was an international Pay it Forward Day – something that inspires kind acts around the world and starts a massive ripple effect of giving in the community?'

The idea was born, but there was one very big problem – I had absolutely no idea how to execute it. Fast forward to Over 20 million acts of kindness, 88 countries, over 100 state and city proclamations. The growth has been phenomenal, especially considering that there has been no budget, no corporate sponsors and it has been run entirely by volunteers. I've been lucky to learn some valuable lessons along the way that I am happy to share with you.

5 lessons for creating a successful global movement that demonstrates corporate social responsibility.

1. A great idea

“There is nothing more powerful than an idea whose time has come.” *Victor Hugo*
Pay it Forward Day's vision is 'changing the world one good deed at a time'. It is a simple statement, but has proved to be very effective. What are you passionate about that aligns with your company's values? What is your vision for the way things could be? What could you, your team or organisation get behind that would benefit others?

2. Persistence

The will to keep going when the going gets tough is vital to achieve a game changing result. Things will go wrong. The best laid plans won't work the way you intend. Others might not rally to the cause, even though they 'should jump at the chance'.

3. A coalition of the willing

Strength comes through people aligned to a common vision. Who are the right people, with the right capabilities and time to help you achieve the vision? Just like in business, you need the right people in the right roles.

4. Media Attention

If people don't know about you, they can't follow and support you. The effective use of media (including game changing social media) can be a great platform to breathe life into an idea. The media has played a huge role in spreading the Pay it Forward Day message.

5. A good plan well executed

The world is full of great ideas that never see the light of day. A great plan that is actioned and reviewed regularly is critical for success.



If you follow these 5 principles, you will be in good shape to making a positive difference in your community. Besides being seen by customers as a 'company that cares' and the business benefits that go with it, there is another good reason to contribute. Simply, it is the right thing to do.

Happy difference making. www.payitforwardday.com

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