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Outside-In CSR: Start with Consumer Wants

by [Kate_NFG](#) on 04-09-2012 6:00 AM, EDT

The following is a guest post from Network for Good's Chief Strategy Officer, *Katya Andresen*. The article also appeared on [Katya's Nonprofit Marketing Blog](#).

If you are promoting a cause (or even a product), it needs to resonate with what people already seek. Remember: Don't tell someone to value your cause. Show how it relates to their values.

I just finished reviewing a very interesting study, [Brands: The New Social Reformers](#), which provides some useful insights into those values. The research by [Onesixtyfourth](#) focused on early technology adopters and news-engaged Millennials and Baby Boomers in the US and UK. A good summary of the prevailing sentiment is this quote: "My hope is that society will become more family oriented than government oriented." People are in a mood to belong to a group and help others - but not if it means compromising individual needs.

Here are key wants the study identified:

- **Security:** food, shelter, keep my house, increase my savings, bolster my retirement plan, a corporate job, being part of a movement but not a sole anarchist
- **Control:** frugality, effective money management, black and white answers that come from scientific pursuits, own business/entrepreneurship, self reliance (especially younger Millennials)
- **Consistency:** stable employment, stay at college, complete college
- **Proving self-worth:** value through charity work, striving to get promoted, finding a way to leave a legacy (baby Boomers), training/learning something new rather than leisure time, constant resume buffering (especially Millennials), aggressive pursuit of success (older Millennial males in the US)
- **Honoring my needs first:** protecting my health, making healthier friendship and relationship choices, spending more time with people who have my genuine interests at heart, valuing private information more (Millennials)
- **Respect for others** (but only if they show respect for me first): rejection of greed and self serving society as demonstrated by governments and corporations, helping others through volunteer pursuits
- **Liberty:** personal independence, time for me (Baby Boomers), take control of my investments (Baby Boomers), not oppressed/restricted by others schedules or technology
- **Progress:** pursuit of scientific invention and learning, further education, choice of foundations, supportive of organizations who take society forward in some way

In this environment, says the report, consumers are looking for leadership and brands that have the following attributes: visionary, courageous, sincere, empathic, transparent, efficient and practical. One way corporate brands have sought to create that image is through CSR (corporate social responsibility) programs, but those can be viewed with skepticism unless the programs are believed to be very genuine and personally relevant. Most leaders - whether from governments, companies and nonprofits - are seen as falling short. So people are filling the leadership gap through connecting with others with similar interests and concerns.

The report recommends, "For corporate citizenship to be meaningful it can't be removed from people's day-to-day lives... progressive corporate citizenship begins with helping me, the individual consumer, making my life easier, more simple, helping me to make



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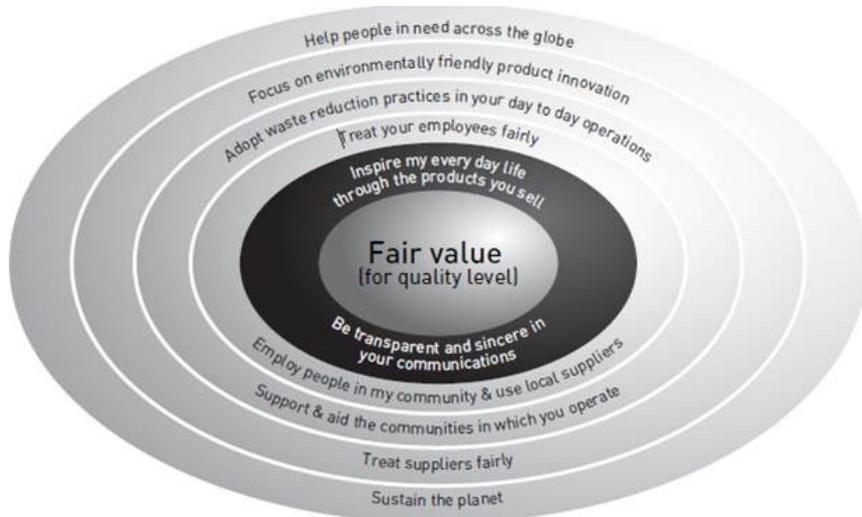
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better choices and manage my day to day life more effectively. It then spans out to be about the collective, the community, the country, the world... includes simple things like employing people in my community, being respectful of employees, and saving resources. Innovative research and development efforts around packaging, plastics and fuel, aiding people in need, and advancing developing world, etc. then follow."

Below is a chart from the study showing what consumers want. The more you can reinforce these values in your cause marketing programs, the more you strengthen your case that support of your cause isn't just good - it's good business. And that's an argument you really need in this economy.



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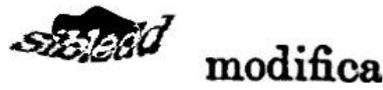
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