

compete. create. change.

Corporate Responsibility

Research shows that in many markets corporate responsibility (CR) has surpassed all other factors to become the most important criterion consumers and opinion-leaders use to form views about a company, according to APCO Insight®, the in-house opinion research team at APCO Worldwide.

CR today goes well beyond philanthropy, community investment and earning the “license to operate.” Now, the third generation of corporate responsibility – CR3GSM – is focused on sustainability and how companies earn the “license to grow,” especially in a world facing increasing natural resources constraints and major economic and societal challenges.

Triple bottom-line accountability is now the standard. Investors, customers and employees evaluate companies not only on profitability, but also on environmental and social impact. Information technology and interconnectivity make it possible for local problems to escalate quickly to become global stakeholder issues. Advocacy groups and NGOs monitor every action and demand increasingly greater transparency.

CR has made business more complex, yet potentially more rewarding. To maintain a healthy growth trajectory in a global marketplace, companies need to innovate in CR as much as in every other aspect. In communities around the world, corporations are increasingly expected to play a leadership role in addressing social issues and creating transformational change.

CR offers opportunities for companies to use their core strengths and competitive advantages to create new markets; gain new customers and allies; enhance employee satisfaction; and create greater value for themselves, their shareholders and society. Ultimately, CR can help corporations stay ahead of the competition. Corporate leaders are being challenged to think differently about the nature of their institutions and their relationships with key stakeholders. This is the lens through which CR3G is being shaped, implemented and judged.

Since its inception in 1984, APCO has worked in the field of CR. We integrate decades of experience in the worlds of business, government and civil society to help clients:

- Align CR activities with business goals.
- Engage and inspire employees on behalf of the company and the community.
- Develop results-oriented partnerships with public sector and nonprofit organizations.
- Increase investor and stakeholder confidence.
- Understand stakeholder expectations and build effective relationship models.
- Address issues strategically and responsibly.
- Communicate effectively and credibly to gain recognition and competitive advantage.
- Evaluate impact and design next-generation strategies across the triple bottom-line.

CAPABILITIES

Developing research-driven client strategies

Understanding the drivers and influencers behind a company's reputation is a complex challenge. Issues take different forms in different cultures. A CR strategy must be directed by specific goals – whether aspirational or practical. APCO employs a range of research tools, including custom opinion research, risk analysis, competitive benchmarking and issues monitoring, to ensure clients' strategies are driven by a sophisticated understanding of the CR field and the business environment.

Driving more effective communication

Communicating about CR requires a balance of candor, pride and humility. Many companies traditionally refrain from broadcasting their efforts to avoid appearing self-serving. However, communicating about good works helps stakeholders understand the value of corporate community investment. Effective communication also drives needed awareness of organizations and causes. APCO helps clients identify opportunities within their organizations to keep management and employees engaged, while building external visibility through

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creative story angles, thought-leadership platforms, communication tools and partnerships.

Identifying and building key partnerships

The rise of public-private partnerships reflects a growing understanding that cross-sector collaboration can create powerful results. APCO helps clients develop relationships that endure and withstand crises. Our global network of experts has extensive experience navigating the public policy arena, and APCO helps companies manage the complex and sometimes ambiguous expectations of national and regional governments, mission-driven advocacy groups and multilateral organizations. Clients engage APCO to build, manage and leverage effective partnerships by evaluating and identifying potential partners, designing the structure and objectives of the relationship, creating a framework for sustainability and monitoring the partnership's effectiveness.

Developing and managing effective community investments

The strategies that drive community investment decisions have become increasingly sophisticated and require an understanding of business and community environments. APCO works with its clients to ensure their citizenship programs develop and deliver action plans that meet critical social needs, while advancing business goals. We help determine the appropriate mix of resources to provide, assist in the grant-making process, identify opportunities for greater employee involvement and measure the impact of programs to help demonstrate a compelling business case.

Navigating the rapidly shifting civil society landscape in developing countries

The expectations of local stakeholders in many emerging economies are growing and changing along with economic opportunities and technological evolution. We combine our international expertise with local knowledge of complex stakeholder networks to assist clients in understanding local needs and interests, while building healthy, transparent and mutually beneficial relationships.

EXPERIENCE

APCO's CR team helps clients across the globe address a variety of issues. Our recent work includes:

- Providing counsel to a global technology leader on a next-generation CR strategy.
- Managing stakeholder engagement, strategy development and execution for an international business coalition in China.
- Designing and leading a workshop for the CEO of a major company in Ireland on a CR strategy for competitive advantage.
- Advising a major telecom company in Europe on an upgrade to and expansion of its CR reporting and strategy in accordance with global best practices.
- Advising a leading UK provider of waste management services on CR reporting, alignment of CR with business goals and the creation of a handbook on NGO relations.
- Supporting a major technology company with media relations and executive speeches on CR issues in Europe, the Middle East and Africa.
- Conducting stakeholder research on sustainability issues for a leading French retail chain.
- Providing communication support and strategic counsel to a global beverage company around its global water stewardship and environmental sustainability initiatives.
- Advising a multinational shipping company on the development of a global philanthropic strategy and connecting employee engagement to selected focus areas and CR initiatives.
- Aligning a major national retail chain's employee volunteerism strategy with the company's business goals to help better engage employees over the long term.

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