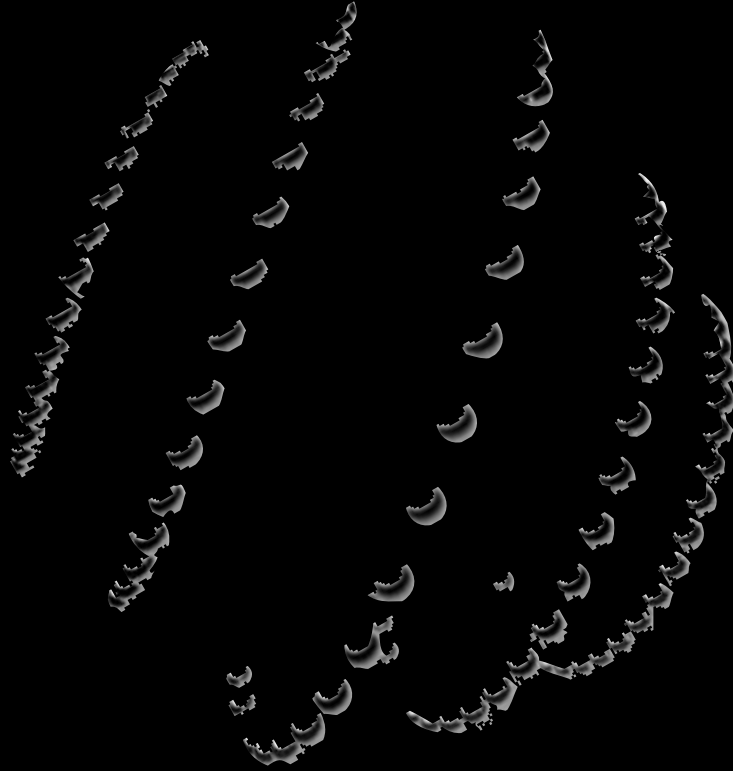


hr in focus

March 2007

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in this issue...

Networking: It's not what you know...

Uncovering the importance of strategic corporate and social responsibility

why network?

Sally Kincaid is Director, Head of HR, Citigroup Corporate and Investment Banking

“It’s not what you know but who you know...”

So my Dad used to tell me! But is this old adage really the foundation and reason for networking?

Networking is a skill that we either take for granted because we are surrounded by a network of people with whom we are comfortable and enjoy. Or it is something that we consciously work at to develop the skills to be more comfortable in networking situations.

A global multi-national like Citigroup means our networks are often in the international arena, crossing language and cultural differences. In researching successful international networkers, Trisha Carter from Trans Cultural Careers (2007) found one of the key aspects of “good international networkers” is confidence. Not the sort of confidence that says, “I know everything and I can solve your problems” but the sort of confidence that allows you to approach strangers believing you may have something in common and can enjoy an equal exchange.

Staying close to like-minded people or colleagues at networking events won’t extend you or your networks. But as reported in The Age on 12 February 2007, “not all networking events are created equal” with some ironically short on networking opportunities. These content driven events are over coming this with “speed networking”, modelled along the lines of speed dating, with lots of 30 second meet and greet slots.

Whilst this might facilitate the collection of a lot of business cards, it might not establish the level of reciprocity that will encourage the network to be maintained. It really does help to understand a little of the “WHAT” a person knows.

Clarifying the outcomes we want from each networking opportunity is the key to both answering “why networking” and to establishing networks that meet your needs. ”

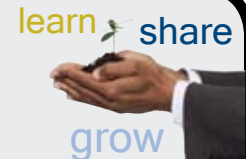


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why network?

Open the door to a new way of communicating and engaging with fellow HR professionals...



According to David Owens, Associate Director Staff & Exec/HR Partners, for HR Practitioners, networking can provide a wealth of professional support and information. Where ideas can be shared and sense of belonging to a wider HR Community can develop over time, indeed it is the ability to network which enables the HR Professional to accelerate their learning as they strive to be "the best they can be".

His colleague and specialist Permanent HR Recruiter, Rachael

Hainsworth says "Networking can assist you in improving your business performance, products, services, employee's skills and your value proposition within the industry... It provides you with opportunities to develop your knowledge and skills, boost your business's reputation and access information and support".

Rachael goes on to say, "the degree to which you benefit will depend on your commitment to attending events and how actively you become involved".

Benefits of Networking

- Affords you with the opportunity of meeting new people and build mutually beneficial relationships.
- Provides you the opportunity to participate in bench marking exercises, improved your business performance, raise your reputation and make important contacts within your industry.
- Increases both your professional and organisations profile by becoming an established presence in the market.
- Provides you contact to industry Professionals and the opportunity to discuss issues and areas of common interest &/or concern, such as recruitment, staff retention, diversity and mobility.
- Increase your organization's potential market share by meeting new business contacts with potential customers
- Developing and sharing ideas, innovation, and knowledge of best practice.
- As the nature of business networking evolves away from traditional board room style of meeting there has become a strong need for business networking to take place on a more social level. There are a range of social networking tools that exist to satisfy this need.

CSR: A Strategic Approach

There is much pressure for businesses to function in an environmentally, economically and socially sustainable way, this month we explore the case for strategic CSR ...



Corporate and Social Responsibility (CSR) is good for society as much as it is good for business. To define CSR in broad terms, it's really about knowing and managing the impact a business has on the economy, the environment and society. These days, stakeholders (clients, suppliers, shareholders, employees etc) expect the engagement of CSR, they also expect the company to be going beyond legislation requirements.

The CSR Australian Standard, published by Standards Australia, provides a framework for CSR programs and a guide to establishing and maintaining effective CSR initiatives that

fall within ethical and cultural guidelines.

Jacqueline Gaughan of boutique consultancy firm Diversity Dimensions says, it's not just about abiding by the law, "Human Resource practices definitely play a part in Corporate Social Responsibility, but it's also about good broader business practices. From a diversity perspective, we believe that CSR is not just about following employment or discrimination law or adopting EEO practices. It's about everyone's basic human right to be treated with respect and dignity."

Strategic CSR means having a clear, non-financial measure of CSR activities, involved understanding of how the business is positioned, and a vision with specific objectives to be achieved.

When it comes to engaging in CSR, successful companies consider how it will build on existing links within the community, the way the organisation mirrors and represents its employees, and the way the strategy contributes to a strong and balanced culture.

The aim then is to regard CSR as an investment, a calculated or strategic vision rather than a business expense or risk. By managing and assessing the contributions

and investments in CSR (beyond financial gains), a company is able to identify a strong competitive advantage. Gaughan continues, "...It (CSR initiatives) enhances the branding and makes you want to do business with, or work for that organisation".

A recent set of case studies commissioned by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) in the UK have shown that companies who embrace strategic CSR enjoy:

- Increased productivity;
- Competitive advantage when recruiting;
- Positive culture change;
- Protecting and building of business reputation;
- Improved brand awareness;
- And many other expansive benefits.

The study researched twelve corporate case studies of institutions that included HBIOS, Accenture, EDS, ARM Holdings and British Gas.

Yet, often the gap between what a company says and the reality of everyday life within the business means that the well-intended ambition of CSR is lost. Matching the rhetoric with reality is an obstacle a lot of businesses face.

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The solution?

Engaging in CSR by turning that same ambition, knowledge and goodwill into action. According to the CIPD, CSR policies and procedures are most successful when they are embedded across the business – and good HR practices make this happen.

Lend Lease's 'Community Day' is one instance of such HR practices. Now running globally, employees volunteer for diverse projects (from mowing lawns to painting schools) lead by a Project Coordinator who organises staff and the budget for the day. Community Day aims to fulfill Lend Lease's Foundation mission - to provide opportunities for the development and wellbeing of employees and the community – and for the past 10 years it has succeeded, with at least 60 per cent of staff participating on the day.

Such an initiative works on many levels, it raises Lend Lease's profile and brand, it unifies all business units of the company and promotes better communication and teamwork.

Similarly, IAG's community engagement directly aligns with/supports its core business strategy. Lynette Thorstensen, Head of Sustainable Business Practices explains, "IAG has always aligned its core business strategy to its sustainability positioning - in other words, IAG's stated

aim of reducing risk in society not only functions to the benefit of the community, but simultaneously reduces business risks to IAG, particularly in the form of fewer insurance claims".

An example of such sustainability in practice is the joint venture between NRMA Insurance (IAG's single largest retail brand) and Conservation Volunteers of Australia (CVA), in particular the aligning with CVA on climate change related initiatives.

"Every IAG employee is entitled to one day of paid community/charity leave per year so they can volunteer and contribute to their community, and a significant number choose to support the CVA. This is a creative and straightforward way of engaging employees in the issue of climate change, which in turn supports not only the community, but IAG's sustainability" Thorstensen continues.

In addition to this, IAG's partnership with CVA lends itself to broadening the company's reach into regional communities, Thorstensen says, "the partnership... has been used as a platform for broader community activities and engagement. In Dubbo, the local NRMA Insurance branch brought together the Council and Mission Australia to involve indigenous youth at risk in CVA projects. This is being replicated in other regional areas".

These cases of going beyond the CSR

Australian Standard are just two of many. Other companies have taken smaller initiatives, for instance a clever idea was to place a line in all e-mails sent by the organisation stating 'Do you really need to print this e-mail?'. Simple, yet extremely effective.

It must be said that a strategic approach to engaging in CSR can produce mutual benefits for the business. Managing and building on business reputation and culture, branding for recruitment & retention, business sustainability and harbouring healthy market competition.

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