



The Conference Board Research Working Group Project Summary

Communicating Your Social Impact

Research Question: *How do corporations authentically and effectively communicate the social impact, business value and successes of their social investments to their internal and external stakeholders?*

Research Proposal

Most corporations are committed to Social Responsibility and have embedded its principles into their daily operations. This commitment can incorporate a broad range of corporate social investments designed to support communities through contributions and volunteerism, shared value initiatives, good governance and global citizenship. Many of these efforts aim to achieve significant social impact for local and global communities through a sophisticated strategy.

Concurrently, customers, regulators and employees have increasingly high expectations for the behaviors of corporations, and want information about multinational corporations' social policies and impacts. This raises the importance of effective communication of corporate social programs. Yet, these important accomplishments and programs are often hard to convey. Done well, companies can benefit through higher employee engagement, stronger relationships with influencers and regulators, and the identification of organizations to partner in your programs. There is a fine line to strike- communications and corporate citizenship professionals are challenged with how best to publicize positive aspects and serious social engagements to a skeptical audience, while being authentic and long term driven.

The Conference Board is launching a new Working Group to focus on Communicating Social Impact. This project will bring together CSR and philanthropy professionals with their corporate communications counterparts to examine effective, multi-stakeholder outreach campaigns that can enrich a company's relationships with key stakeholders. The group will address the following questions:

- How do you uniquely engage with these critical audiences: customers, regulators, senior leadership, public influencers, employees and applicants? What metrics, message and channels are best for each group?
- How do you manage a tasteful balance of communicating successes of social investment programs without overselling them or being PR driven? Can your communications drive new partnerships that lead to greater social impact?
- What role is best for impact measurement and data? What risks need to be addressed?
- How do you empower internal stakeholders to all work together to create powerful content quickly? How can you create communication partnerships with your CEO, frontline managers and those in between?

The Conference Board has been leading a series of Research Working Groups with leading Fortune 500 companies to study the impact of their corporate social investments. This group will build on the findings of the previous two groups, [Corporate Philanthropy with a Global Footprint](#) and [Measuring the Impact of Corporate Social Investments](#). This group is open to Conference Board member companies only, and will provide access to a team of researchers and subject-matter experts convened to improve each company's ability to communicate the value and impact of their social ventures.

What is a Research Working Group?

A Research Working Group (RWG) is a collaborative project that convenes peer companies and researchers in a rapid deep dive and targeted focus on a compelling business issue. When firms across industries with similar concerns come together and are guided by subject matter experts, there is a rich transfer of ideas and knowledge. The results include actionable insights and benchmarking throughout the duration of the project, and conclude with a comprehensive report designed to shape a platform for enterprise-wide action and impact.

Format & Takeaways

Timing: Launching **June 18 & 19, 2014 in New York**, this Working Group will work together over 6 months to develop actionable solutions. The group will meet 3 times in-person to share their own practices and challenges in a confidential, hands-on environment. These two day meetings are planned for June, October and December 2014. The participants typically commit 2-3 hours a month for the duration of the project, outside of the in-person meetings.

Format and Participants: Each company sends two or three participants. There will be 3 in-person meetings, virtual meetings and small group teleconferences throughout to continue the group's collaboration. Together with top specialists, thought leaders and researchers, the members will develop tools and frameworks to effect change throughout their organizations. The meetings are held in a confidential setting to allow the free exchange and examination of ideas, and self-evaluation with peers across industries. We encourage inter-departmental participation and generally suggest that participants be senior manager and above.

Deliverables: This is a dynamic process focused on helping your team develop useful new strategies throughout the working group. RWGs provide actionable items throughout the process, as well as benchmarking and peer networking. This collaboration will result in a report comprising detailed findings, conclusions, and recommendations for action; this may include short, focused Executive Action reports, in-depth Research reports, case studies and surveys. Groups often prepare additional material such as webcasts, PowerPoint presentations and other media to share their findings with their colleagues to drive impact into their corporation.

Research Contribution: Membership is \$14,500 per company which enables up to 3 people per company to participate. The fee covers all materials, access to research and subject matter experts, and peer benchmarking. It includes meals during meetings, but does not include travel & hotel to in-person meetings. RWGs are only open to member companies of The Conference Board.

To join or for further information, please contact Irene Sobol, Senior Manager of Research Working Groups: Irene.Sobol@conference-board.org or 212-339-0408.