



Case in Point: How Intel Engages Employees in Sustainability

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About BSR

A leader in corporate responsibility since 1992, BSR works with its global network of more than 250 member companies to develop sustainable business strategies and solutions through consulting, research, and cross-sector collaboration. With six offices in Asia, Europe, and North America, BSR uses its expertise in the environment, human rights, economic development, and governance and accountability to guide global companies toward creating a just and sustainable world. Visit www.bsr.org for more information.

At Intel, an innovative high-tech company, a key focus of the company's corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts is on environmental stewardship. While the company has had successful sustainability programs in place for many years, Intel decided that an effective way to expand the impact of its programs would be to increase the engagement of its employees in its CSR activities.

According to a recent post on the CSR@Intel blog, "In today's changing business climate, more people are working for personal fulfillment rather than for purely economic reasons." Intel believes that given the choices available to its employees, keeping its team committed to the company takes much more than a nice paycheck. It takes keeping the employees engaged, which can be accomplished through the company's sustainability initiatives. And keeping those employees around, Intel reports, has "a direct positive impact on a company's bottom line."

Intel describes its employees' interest in sustainability in terms of a bell curve: At one end is the group that isn't interested in CSR issues and will likely never be engaged, no matter what the company does. At the other end is the group of employees who are personally passionate about sustainability and will find a way to get involved with those issues even without support from the company.

In the middle of the curve is the largest group of employees, who will engage if the right programs and support from the company are in place.

This middle group of employees is the principal target audience for Intel's engagement programs. Earlier this year, Intel undertook a comprehensive review of its engagement programs to understand the company's strengths and opportunities to improve engagement. In addition to performing an internal scan of practices, Intel hired BSR to do a benchmarking of leading engagement practices. Based on this review, Intel has launched several new initiatives focused on the following three core strategies.

1. Raising Awareness

Building awareness of a company's CSR practices and strategies is an important part of increasing employees' pride and loyalty. However, because employees generally have limited bandwidth for information that doesn't directly impact their work, many at Intel were unaware of the company's existing initiatives. To remedy this, Intel decided to invest in a platform to support communications from the CSR and operations team to employees to inform them about the company's strategies and activities. Intel also wanted to create a communications tool to support interaction among employees for sharing best practices or getting guidance on implementing their ideas. Last spring, the company launched the new portal "Green.Intel" on its primary intranet to focus exclusively on Intel's environmental efforts, with updates from the CSR and operations team, videos

on different Intel programs, an internal blog, and a discussion forum open to all employees.

Since the Earth Day launch, the portal has attracted 17,000 viewers, and the internal blog has the most employee members of any Intel blog. So far, employees have posted a number of questions for the CSR and operations team to inquire about Intel practices and programs. Employees also used the portal to develop a community-supported agriculture program through which they can sign up to purchase locally grown food.

2. Expanding Opportunities for Involvement

Many employees who fall in the middle of the Intel bell curve want to become active participants in the company's CSR programs, but they aren't likely to create opportunities on their own—either because they are uncomfortable acting independently or because they need to feel that engagement is encouraged by the company. Active engagement has the dual benefits of giving employees an outlet for their personal interests and helping raise morale. It also can help the company identify new opportunities to improve its practices and achieve its sustainability goals.

Intel established several programs to engage employees in meeting the company's CSR goals. The company's Sustainability Action Teams—networks of employees interested in environmental sustainability who meet to develop projects and educate colleagues—have been expanded to include employees throughout the Americas, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. These teams give employees from all parts of the business a chance to learn about environmental issues, keep current on Intel's practices, and identify opportunities to support the company's goals.

Intel is also launching a new partnership with Carbonally, a web-based activism platform that challenges users to reduce their personal carbon footprints. Participating employees will be able to make individual pledges for reduction in their work and office environments, and these efforts will help Intel meet its greenhouse gas reduction goals. To add an aspect of friendly competition to the program, Intel plans to group participating employees into regional leagues.

Intel also realigned its existing employee volunteer programs to support employee engagement in the company's CSR priorities. Much of the company's support for employee volunteerism in the past had been focused on education. For example, Intel's matching grants program used to be available only to employees who volunteered in schools. Now this program is also open to employees who support environmental nonprofits. Intel has also revamped its community giving program to include Sustainability in Action projects that support environmental solutions in the communities where Intel operates.

3. Setting Goals and Aligning Incentives

For engagement programs to be most effective, employees need to understand not only how they can participate but also why they are participating and what kind of impact they're having. Setting goals for engagement and giving employees incentives for participation (and rewards for accomplishment) can provide the needed motivation for engagement—and can help the company reach its sustainability targets more easily.

In order to encourage companywide support for improved environmental performance, Intel has tied a component of every employee's variable

compensation to the company's environmental performance. Intel employees can also win nonfinancial awards for community volunteering and outstanding achievements in environmental, energy-conservation, and pollution-prevention programs and performance.

As Intel has developed new programs to encourage engagement, the company has integrated goal-setting and incentives for participation. For example, to encourage employees to engage with each other through the new environmental portal, contributors to the blog and discussion forum are rewarded with a reusable shopping bag. Through the Carbonrally program, employees will be setting their own goals for carbon footprint reduction. And Intel has set a new goal that 30 percent of total employee volunteer hours be focused on environmental sustainability by 2015.

Already, Intel has begun to see the payoff from its improved engagement efforts. In addition to the popular use of the Green.Intel intranet portal, applications for environmental excellence awards for employees has risen by 15 percent in the last year. Intel expects that its next organizational health survey will show increased levels of employee pride and satisfaction with their work, which are good indicators for employee retention. The company also believes that programs like Carbonrally will lead to increased energy efficiency and decreased costs.

It may seem like a distraction in these times of financial instability to focus on employees' passion for sustainability, but efforts toward employee engagement will strengthen a company's employee base—which will be a crucial element in recovering from the recession. And maintaining employee loyalty and high productivity will help companies position themselves for success as the economy revives.