

# AmCham-U.S. Consulate Seminar on How **CSR** Improves Branding and Reputation for Business

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*Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a business approach that contributes to sustainable development by delivering economic, social and environmental benefits for all stakeholders.*  
- Definition from Financial Times

Building a smart and impactful corporate social responsibility program is key in enhancing a company's brand and reputation. Ensuring an effective CSR program comes in as a must as consumers continue to vote with their wallets and employees expect their employers to demonstrate their concern for communities. The U.S. Consulate General in Guangzhou arrived at the AmCham office on Oct 23 to discuss how to build a successful platform with sustainable growth that does more than just reflects the business's ability to give back but truly integrates with company's core mission. During the seminar, a presentation was made by Cheryl Green, Director of Corporate Social Responsibility & Philanthropy, Wyndham Worldwide. Now let's listen what she had to share:

On Monday, October 23rd, I had the opportunity to speak to local business leaders at the American Chamber of Commerce in South China. Having worked in the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) field for over 15 years, and the NGO field for over 12, I was thrilled to share with the participants how CSR improves branding and reputation.

Companies are realizing more and more the value of having a strong CSR program. From more engaged employees, the desire to deliver on the UN's sustainable development goals, strengthening the public's trust and customers wanting to feel more connected and empowered, the data shows a strong CSR program can

deliver significant economic and social benefits which results in a stronger brand.

Much of my presentation focused on the importance of telling a story with your program. Creating a story that uplifts communities while also supporting key areas of the business can be extremely impactful. It is important to engage strong partners, find opportunities for collaborations, engage internal and external stakeholders and make sure your story is one that you can build upon.

I'm proud to work for a Company that has a very compelling story. Wyndham Worldwide has created a culture of strong values and has provided their signature Count on Me! Service and a spirit of giving throughout their businesses as well as their CSR programs for many years. Wyndham improves the world by leveraging its core mission – hospitality. They engage their businesses and people to be positive agents of change throughout the hospitality industry.

From charitable contributions to clothing and food donations to their carbon and water reduction, Wyndham Worldwide works with their associates, customers, shareholders and local communities to minimize their environmental impact and improve communities and customers' lives.



Cheryl Green, Director of Corporate Social Responsibility & Philanthropy, Wyndham Worldwide

Another area that Wyndham and many other companies across the globe are focused on is the engagement of their employees. As more employees are volunteering in their communities, they are feeling more engaged and connected to their employer, resulting in more positive public perception.

In fact Millennials (the generation born from 1982-2004) are very much focused on engagement. According to the 2014 Millennial Impact Report, one-third of Millennials surveyed said that their company's volunteer policies affected their decision to apply for a job. And 55% said it played a decision on whether to accept an offer.

Companies that see employee engagement as a top priority are improving their reputation and are able to attract top talent.

In addition to the one-off volunteer opportunities that provide much needed help at schools, food banks and gardens, companies are also looking for ways to give their associates a more immersive experience.

I recently spent three days with several of my colleagues seeing our global CSR partner Save the Children's work first hand in the US. It not only gave my colleagues an opportunity to bond as Wyndham employees but it also created a deeper connection to our global partner.

While one-off volunteer opportunities are still important and should still be done, employees want to go beyond painting a mural, organizing a book drive or cleaning up a garden, they want a deeper more impactful experience that connects them to the mission of an organization, thereby having a stronger connection to their place of employment.

Diversity & Inclusion also enhances a Company's reputation. It is an opportunity to emphasize personal connections and draw from the wisdom of employees and other stakeholders to better meet the needs of the business. At Wyndham, Diversity is at the heart of what we do. Whether recruiting talent, ensuring we have diverse suppliers or our employees feeling included and empowered, we are celebrating our collective understanding and appreciation for each other around the world.

I truly believe that if you create the right culture, stay true to your core values, ensure your employees know and understand what you stand for and are engaged and you create opportunities for many different voices to be heard your brand and reputation will organically enhance. Be authentic and genuine and remember to tell a story. I can assure you people are listening. ■