

RESTAURANT CSR PROGRAMS: LIFTING COMMUNITIES THROUGH SOCIAL GOOD

THE IMPORTANCE OF CSR PROGRAMS

Restaurant owners and service industry professionals are uniquely positioned to help the communities where they do business, while also creating a positive brand image. Because restaurants aren't just places where consumers purchase goods, restaurants are places where customers gather for meals and break bread with their friends and families.

As this article will show, **Corporate Social Responsibility Programs (CSR)** aren't just a way to leverage the power of good for both the community, and your business, they provide a way to set yourself apart from your peers, gain the respect of your employees, and increase the quality of life in the community.

EMPLOYEE RETENTION & HAPPINESS

Promoting employee happiness in the workplace isn't just the right thing to do, it translates into a more efficient business. Satisfied employees stay longer in their jobs than dissatisfied employees, which results in less worker turnover. And, as every business owner knows, because time and money must be invested in the hiring and training of new employees, high employee churn increases the cost of doing business.

Restaurants whose CSR programs include reinvesting in their employees by offering tuition reimbursement programs, paid time off to volunteer, and promoting a culture of diversity and inclusion in the workplace, have traditionally increased employee retention, happiness, and productivity.

BUILDING COMMUNITY

Demonstrating your restaurant's social value to the community is at the heart of a successful CSR program. **Over half of those polled (51%), stated that whether or not a business gives back to local communities influences where they dine.** By that measure, creating

community grants, school scholarships, or employee volunteer programs shows that your business promotes social good, increases your company's standing in the community, and attracts new and repeat customers.

Food donation programs that assist a community's most vulnerable members like homebound seniors and those suffering from food insecurity, are a great way for restaurants to give back.

Getting out in the community and engaging in programs like these also helps you understand and get to know your customers, which in turn, allows you to better meet their needs.

Every restaurant owner knows that restaurants live and die by word-of-mouth. Successful CSR initiatives will raise your standing in the community, which may result in more catering orders, private events, or sales.

HEALTH & SUSTAINABILITY

Health and sustainability go hand-in-hand in the restaurant world.

In a recent survey, **50% of respondents stated that they would be likely or very likely to increase their purchases at a QSR/Fast Casual Restaurant that was committed to sustainability and environmental wellbeing.** To many customers, this means offering more plant-based and alternative meat options, sourcing food from local farmers and merchants, reducing single-use items, and switching to biodegradable or recyclable to-go containers.

Working with local farmers also has the added benefit of supporting other small business owners and reducing your carbon footprint, a win-win for the community!

THE BOTTOM LINE

Corporate Social Responsibility programs are no longer trendy, they're the norm. Customers have a number of choices when they dine out, and the hospitality industry is plagued by competition, tight margins, and high staff turnover. Set yourself apart from the competition by

creating a CSR program that demonstrates your commitment to the health and success of your community. Your business, and the community, will be better for it!