



EXPERT ADVICE



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CSR: Targeting the Right Project

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CSR is here to stay and it's stronger than ever! With the meetings industry under the microscope and local community services experiencing unprecedented budget cuts, now is the perfect time to add meaning into meetings by incorporating give-back CSR programming into conference, meeting and incentive programs.

Looking ahead, CSR events are on the upswing and the marriage of dynamic teambuilding events and community service is becoming increasingly popular. While teambuilding events promote camaraderie among team members and enhance business goals, adding community service into the mix takes the rewards and the results of participation to an exciting new level. Individual team members benefit, client organizations benefit, and the community benefits in a big way. Socially responsible teambuilding events create lasting impressions on participants, fostering loyalty toward the companies that are dedicated to giving back and making a positive impact through charitable undertakings.

The decision to incorporate CSR into a conference program is often easily arrived at; the more daunting task is selecting the right CSR event or components.

Targeting is critical and this is where a good DMC with connections to community leaders and resources can help. Building upon a corporation's established values can produce legacy-building events while matching the profiles of the participants to the type and format of CSR event is just as important. A group of engineers would likely identify with a "building" event more than a beach clean-up. Likewise, the excitement level of sales executives can be stepped up by adding challenge elements such as competing for project supplies. A good DMC can also provide added value by integrating the theme or flavor of the CSR event into the overall conference as we did this past year by supplementing a "military make-over" beautification project with a group dinner featuring a patriotic theme.

Budget is another key targeting factor and is influenced by type of event, scope of project, and group size. DMCs should take all targeting factors into account when making CSR recommendations. When budgets are limited, look to a DMC for "tie-in" projects with dovetail possibilities. When our team attended the FICP (Financial & Insurance Conference Planners) Annual Conference, the association was promoting a "Coats for Kids" CSR program in conjunction with the Salvation Army. Our team sponsored "Mittens for Kids" which supported the existing program and, at the same time, promoted booth traffic for our company. A DMC's local knowledge and community relationships can bring to light community service projects, already underway, that could use an auxiliary helping hand. CSR highlights can also be incorporated into conference activities by promoting random positive regard actions into existing tours or recreation or by offering "Fun Bucks" for a night on the town, where unused funds are donated to charity.

At the end of the day, after a successful conference, don't forget to bring it home. Many of our clients have shared with us how they have incorporated CSR at home and in their workplace. An office get-together or holiday event becomes even more meaningful when participants bring canned goods to be donated to a local food bank, clothing items for an area shelter or include time for a group project like "build-a-bear" for hospitalized children. At ACCESS Destination Services we have adopted several in-house community service projects including "Operation GIVE," an on-going CSR teambuilding program involving local hospitality partners that both gives back to the local community and demonstrates that CSR events serve to put meaning into meetings!

Chris Lee is the CEO of [ACCESS Destination Services](#). Since 1970, ACCESS Destination Services has provided the highest caliber of full-service, professional destination management and event production services in the West, including Anaheim/Orange County, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Palm Springs and San Diego.

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