

THE BUSINESS VIEW – *James Temple and Janet Gadeski*

Turn your business volunteers into “advoteers” today

Lately, there's been a lot of discussion concerning corporate social purpose. While the idea is not new, blogger Paul Klein reframes the concept as the balance future leaders hope to find between long-term economic value, widespread community benefit and the development of social capital.

Social purpose comprises three core concepts:

- bringing relevant leadership to fruition
- defining why businesses exist
- expanding corporate responsibility well beyond embedding good social, environmental and economic values into business operations.

We only need to look outside our windows to see the impact of worldwide “Occupy” protests. Whether reflecting upon the myriad of views and experiences that are shaping a complex conversation, or trying to grasp the depth of knowledge that's behind the movement itself, it's clear that a call for individual action is paramount.

The impact on your organization

When considering the role of corporations in this setting, it's evident that their employees can help transform the way not-for-profit organizations influence and enhance the impact of their work through volunteer initiatives. Charities can accomplish much in little time towards their social mission by making the most of these volunteers' passion, skills, networks, experiences and ideas.

A change in consciousness is helping people move away from wanting to “fix” the not-for-profit sector via an organized event or experience. The model for working with charities is finally being revamped (*which is a great thing I might add – James*). People are now taking personal accountability for their actions, as well as the collective actions of their organizations, within a framework of a long-term approach to sustainability.

All of this has an impact on businesses, not-for-profits and governments alike. It's critical to remember that every organization is made up of a unique group of individuals from its surrounding communities whose combined consciousness helps to shape its

values. Adapting to societal, economical and environmental changes helps organizations maintain their impact within the area of corporate social purpose.

The role of the “advoteer”

This is where an idea that we might call “advoteering” comes into play.

I like to think that advoteering is how an individual acts upon their personal responsibility to advocate for community engagement within the walls of their own organization. Using their personal experiences, networks, passions and processes, a person can volunteer their time on the job to advocate for an issue that matters to them.

Whether it's talking on the phone with a friend or promoting a cause at the water cooler, people can describe the context of complex issues in a way that helps others understand why a specific issue is a priority (or why it's not).

How and why to support your advoteers

By enabling your board members and volunteers to frame such discussions in their workplaces, you can spread awareness of your organization, its cause, and the non-profit sector in general beyond the person or two from company X who may be formally involved with you.

That's why it's important to make sure your volunteers understand your organization at the deepest level: its challenges, its impact, its strategy. Increasing national understanding of charities' work and impact was a top agenda item at **Imagine Canada's** National Summit this November. Well-informed advoteering can play a huge role in closing that gap.

It's a grassroots approach to grapevine communication that reshapes community consciousness and breaks barriers between communities and organizations. Ultimately, they are the same ideas guided by the same values. ☺

For examples of how advoteering is already occurring in organizations, tune into James' TED talks presented as part of TEDxCalgary.



About James Temple

James Temple is the director of corporate responsibility for **PricewaterhouseCoopers Canada** and director of the **PricewaterhouseCoopers Canada Foundation**. He oversees a team responsible for integrating good social, environmental and economic values into PwC's decision-making processes.

James is a featured presenter at international conferences, speaking on the value of developing strong corporate-community partnerships. He co-chairs the **Association of Corporate Grantmakers** and sits on the Advisory Board for the **Institute at Havergal College**.

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