



# Creating *heart* and energy in your dental practice



**Mark Topley** on why Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is an important employee benefit.

**I**t's no secret – these days, team members want more than just a paycheck. It's not enough for most people to go to work, do their basic job and go home again. They want to feel a sense of meaning and a sense of purpose to go along with their jobs. In fact, 76% of millennials consider social and environmental factors when seeking employment and 83% of them will be more loyal to a company that helps them contribute to society through their work. Considering that millennials currently make up about 45% of the workforce, 75%

by 2025, it's important to figure out how to give team members more than just a good salary.

### **Corporate Social Responsibility and your team**

This is where Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) comes in. This concept is a strategy that is planned and measurable and will impact on so many areas of business:

- Investment in staff and your commitment to good leadership
- Responsibility to the environment and sustainable practices

- Commitment to good causes, your local community and the larger global community
- Reputation in the community as a business that provides excellent customer care and cares about the people and the issues within the community.

By investing in a structured approach to CSR, the evidence is that team members will be more engaged and loyal to the business because they will feel the power of the positive impact the business is having on the environment, the community, and the world.



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### But what is CSR - really?

CSR speaks to who your company is, what it believes, and how it does business. What you 'do' as part of your CSR flows from your values as a business and how you see your role, your influence, and your responsibility as part of your community and society. It flows into how you engage with your local and wider community, basically, how you play your role as a good corporate citizen. It flows into acting honestly and with integrity as a business, going beyond mere compliance. And it flows into how you treat your team. If CSR is done well, and with commitment, it creates heart and energy at the centre of your business.

### Your business needs CSR

CSR is increasingly important for two reasons.

Firstly, ignoring CSR is no longer an option in the opinions of both consumers

and staff. In recent years, society's values and expectations have shifted, and continue to move towards judging businesses of every level at a standard beyond profit. Nearly 9 out of 10 people now expect the businesses they buy from to create social and environmental benefits as an integral part of their business strategy. In people below the age of 30, this number is even higher. Consumers and staff will reject companies they perceive to be doing harm or acting in a socially irresponsible way.

Secondly, there are huge gains available for companies that have a strong CSR strategy in place. It has a strong impact on your team, your patients, and your reputation. It creates staff that are happier and more engaged. Consider that 76% of millennials weigh social and environmental factors when seeking employment and 83% will be more loyal to a company that helps them contribute to society through their work. Also consider that millennials will make up 46% of the workforce in just two years, and a full 75% by 2025. Having a strong CSR strategy in place will help your business find and retain strong staff which, in and of itself, is good for business.

**'BUSINESSES OF EVERY SIZE ARE BEING JUDGED ON FAR MORE THAN THEIR BUSINESS OPERATIONS. 90% OF CONSUMERS AND EMPLOYEES NOW EXPECT BUSINESSES TO DO GOOD AS PART OF THEIR NORMAL OPERATIONS.'**

### It's a win-win scenario.

The word 'strategy' is key though. It's not that people aren't doing CSR type activities, but good planning and intention are fundamental to having CSR make a difference for your business. I often see CSR fail to make an impact when businesses have one-off, or sporadic ideas with no over-arching purpose to tie everything together. Without a thought-out strategy, a bit of engagement here and there doesn't necessarily differentiate your business. It's the consistent, themed approach that garners attention and respect and signals that you are committed to the causes and the community that you serve.

Dentist Joe Watson and the team at Tiwari Watson Dental Care in Glasgow, have been

working with me on putting together their CSR strategy. Joe explains that beyond just giving to charity, part of why they've decided to focus on CSR is about their staff:

*'It's important to me to run a business that the staff like to be part of and enjoy their work. Staff morale/job satisfaction can help with retention, which in turn helps productivity and performance longer term.'*

### Where's the proof?

Employers in every industry have a huge amount of control over how engaged team members are – and investing in engagement, through a simple but strong CSR plan, pays off. Companies with good engagement are 12% more profitable and 18% more productive than competitors. And even more impressive, engaged

employees are 57% more effective and 87% less likely to leave.

### It's applicable to dentistry, too

Businesses of every size are being judged on far more than their business operations. 90% of consumers and employees now expect businesses to do good as part of their normal operations.

Within the dentistry realm, patients are looking for practices that are part of the fabric of the community. With the rise of corporatisation, patients are increasingly feeling disconnected from the traditional practice of old and are looking for reasons to be loyal to a dental practice in their community.

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There are huge gains available for dental practices that have a strong CSR strategy and set of activities in place. It will impact not only the team, patients and reputation, but ultimately, the bottom line.

**But don't just take it from me**

Two colleagues of mine were involved in fundraising activities for charities in the past few years and both share their thoughts on the positive impact that CSR has on building a strong team and increasing patient engagement.

Chris Barrow, a dental business coach, completed a 1,000 mile bike ride with four high profile dental consultants last year. During their trip, they called in on dental practices and businesses who had raised funds for their challenge.

In describing the visits, he says:

*'Each time, we were able to take part in photography and video that will form part of their Corporate Social Responsibility campaign. The effect this has on the team and on the patients is palpable and positive, identifying the practice as one whose care goes beyond oral health and beyond profit.'*

In 2011, Zaki Kanaan of K2 Dental in London joined a group of people who climbed Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania to raise money for the dental organisation, Bridge2Aid. He didn't necessarily join the fundraiser to strengthen his business, but that's what ended up happening. *'In the run up to doing Kili, it was a constant talking point between, not just myself, but also the rest of the team, even those that weren't doing it – patients too. In fact, it was much easier building a rapport with patients during this period. It also brought the whole team together.'*

**Structure within a CSR strategy is key**

CSR needs to be a structured strategy that addresses the practice's commitment to doing good – for their own team members, for their community, for the environment and for the world at large. It will, in turn, impact their reputation in the community and earn them a positive connection with patients and prospective clients. One-off good will gestures can generate short term positive impact, but having a structured approach will maintain the momentum that a one-off gesture catalyses.

When working with clients, I take them through five important steps:

1. Outlining their vision and values
2. Evaluating their current position and comparing this to their vision and values
3. Creating a plan that is reasonable, manageable and inspirational to the team

- without being overwhelming or unrealistic
4. Sharing their activities and those of their team as they relate to the plan in a humble manner that highlights the organisations and the team more than the practice
5. Executing the plan while inspiring the team to remain involved.

**Success stories to inspire**

I've been working with some great practices over the past year to create their CSR strategy and help them implement and maintain it.

**The Campbell Clinic** has had some elements of a CSR strategy in place for years, but recently, we worked together to create a strategic, planned and measurable policy that would maximise the impact their time and money was making on their community, on their chosen charities, and on the team.

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Colin Campbell, owner of the practice, highlights that they now have a charity committee to take the lead on their CSR. It's chaired by a member of their team, not by the owners. To maximise staff engagement, initially, everyone was invited to pitch charities they would like to support. He says, *'[the session] was really quite emotive and amazing and we genuinely couldn't decide.'*

In the end, they chose to support three local charities working in social justice and welfare, and an international dental organisation.

They've seen nearly immediate results within their team. Hayley Edwards, Marketing Coordinator at The Campbell Clinic, says:

*'Our team works a lot stronger as a group now. Being aware of what can be achieved has made a huge difference and the willingness from all participants is quite clearly visible.'*

**Moor Park Specialist Dental Referral Centre** has been active in supporting charities since the practice opened but they were lacking in a strategic approach to tie their various activities together in an impactful way. They've taken on the challenge of creating a structured plan to maximise impact.

Joe Bhat, owner of Moor Park, says, *'[creating a fully engaged CSR strategy] has been the best thing that we have done to incorporate all our ideas and structure them*

**Further help**

My '60 Minute CSR Plan' tool will help you get started – it's available from my website when you join the email update list. It's a step by step guide to help you look at the five stages in detail and apply them to the business you own or work for in order to maximise the impact that a strong CSR strategy will bring to the practice.

*in the most productive way to deliver the best. I think it's time for all of us to give back to society, and for us to give something back in such a structured fashion is incredible.'*

**Implement CSR for higher staff engagement**

With other businesses implementing their own CSR strategy, dental practices will no longer be able to sit on the sidelines if they want to retain a strong, engaged team. Following these steps, and creating a strong CSR strategy will strengthen staff engagement and benefit the community, good causes, and ultimately, the business.

When done well, good CSR can help increase turnover, keep staff happy (and less likely to leave) and improve your standing within the community around you.

**Author information**

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