

# Your Guide to Creating a Top-Notch CSR Event

Ready to get started on your own corporate socially responsible (CSR) event?

Here are a few tips to get you started:

## Identify Your Goals:

- Help your company (or client) address a challenge or meet an objective
- Creatively incorporate a CSR component
- Influence perceptions of your company (or client) in a positive way

## Define the CSR Component of Your Event Plan:

- Examine your event program and budget to identify the events at which a CSR element would be ideal – hint: if this is new to your company, consider starting with an internal event as a “proof of concept.”
- Discover what CSR initiatives your company already has in place – hint: if there’s no formal CSR role or department, meet with HR, Corporate Communications, the COO or someone similar. Ask what metrics they use to measure the program and see if there’s a way you can contribute. *(If there’s no program, you have a great opportunity to start one!)*
- Create an event theme to will map to a non-profit purpose, meaning demonstrate a clear link between the event and the non-profit. For example, Project Runway designers could provide styling tips and wardrobes to those in need – hint: involve your event partners in brainstorming inventive ways to bring the “giving” element to life.
- Determine the Shared Value of your event – who wins?
  - The company – better morale, a PR opportunity, positive perceptions
  - The participants – greater participation, a feel-good opportunity
  - The non-profit – broader awareness, fundraising, a PR opportunity
- Incorporate the above elements to your event proposal, taking care to highlight the shared value and added benefits of the CSR component.
- Present the plan and its shared value components to the broader audience who need to approve it – hint: you need buy-in *before* you walk in the room, so meet individually with your key stakeholders and incorporate their feedback.

## Execute Flawlessly:

- Communicate early and communicate often. In a CSR event, you have more moving parts and more people to keep informed, including many who don’t know what makes for a successful event – hint: even after you’ve gotten approval, you’re still “selling” the CSR event concept.
- Measure your results—and everyone else’s. You need to demonstrate how your event helped others achieve their goals, too – hint: be careful about agreeing to metrics you can’t actually influence. Your metrics should be SMART: Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Realistic, and Time-bound

## Things to Keep in Mind When Working With...

### Your Exhibit House:

- Save time and money by agreeing internally on your brand and marketing objectives before asking your exhibit house to develop a creative solution.
- Use every part of the tradeshow environment to your advantage – booth structure, exhibit hall, customer references, etc.
- Appeal to all the senses. You know how to use sight and sound, but adding smell, taste and touch can create lasting memories of a unique event.

### Your Entertainment Producer:

- Fund your programs with multiple internal budgets. A CSR event enhances companywide perceptions, so other groups may help pay the costs.
- Incorporate entertainment into “standard” activities, such as a welcome reception. It sets the stage for the CSR piece and can generate a greater response.
- Share your overall strategy. By sharing the big picture and providing room for interpretation, you’ll tap into a vast range of possibilities you wouldn’t have known existed otherwise.

## Aligning Your Event with Your Company's CSR Initiatives

If your company (or client) already has a CSR program, it's crucial to align your efforts to what's already in place—especially if one of your goals is to drive external perceptions. Following are some guidelines that will help you identify your approach and map your alignment.

### Preparation:

- Identify where the company focuses its CSR efforts. Is it an environmental issue (or issues) or social issues?
- Are employees involved in CSR through volunteering or other ways? If so, can they participate in the event?
- Where does the company keep its CSR information? Is it on the website? Can you get access to reports?
- How and where does the company communicate about its CSR work? Does it engage a wide group that includes your audience, or do they only target key influencers?
- Pinpoint who runs the company's CSR work. Is this person different from who is in charge of communications of CSR?
- Look at the "why." Is the company doing CSR because of pressure from customers or because of something else?
- What channels does the company currently use to communicate CSR and non-CSR? How are these aligned?

### Execution:

- Create a cause or underlying story for your event related to the company's CSR work. It's not what the conference/event is about, but instead, is a supporting point that adds value to the company.
- Create volunteering opportunities. If the company has strong volunteering for employees, make them part of your event.
- Bring in external partners. If you know who the company's existing external CSR partners are, bring them in as participants or have a donation drive/mini-event with them leading.
- Let others talk. Give your company's CSR people an opportunity to speak at the event or provide some other way for them to tell their story.
- Be a source of creative content. Use your event to create content others in your company can use – videos or photos they can post etc.
- Enable multi-channel communication for your event - Twitter, bloggers, etc. They all help tell the CSR story – make them part of it.

## Things to Keep in Mind When Working With...

### Your Internal Teams:

- Involve them early. You may be used to making event decisions on the fly and moving at warp speed to get things done. Not everyone works that way, and you need to provide plenty of time for others to execute.
- Get buy-in *before* you seek approval. It takes only one naysayer in a group to shoot down the proposal, but if everyone is nodding in agreement, it's harder for the decision-maker to say no.
- Be a friend to HR. HR directors usually have the budget and the responsibility for internal events, but they lack resources. Show them how you can help, and you'll have a strong advocate in your corner—especially for that first "proof of concept" event.
- Leverage the "creatives." You know whom we mean: the groups whose job it is to come up with interesting ways to tell the corporate story – PR, Marketing, etc. Involve them in your planning and you'll have more and better ideas.
- Understand their world. Take the time to learn what they need to help you be successful. For example, if you want media coverage, give PR time to review your plan, create a pitch and figure out media logistics.

### For more information:

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