

Corporate Social Opportunity

How will the next generation of leaders influence the sustainability agenda?

Plenary Session Summary

Thursday, November 5, 2009 – 4:00-5:15pm

Speakers

- >> **Andrew Souvaliotis**, Chief Impact Officer, LoyaltyOne (Moderator)
- >> **Gerald Butts**, President and CEO, WWF-Canada
- >> **Tom Heintzman**, CEO and Co-founder, Bullfrog Power
- >> **Dani Reiss**, President and CEO, Canada Goose
- >> **Justin Trudeau**, Member of Parliament, Papineau

Key Messages

- >> The future leaders of society are the youth. Thus, educating them to become bold and courageous will be vital to transformation.
- >> Environmental and social change are two trends that will grow dramatically.
- >> There is a need to shift from short-termism to vigorous, challenging and higher-level discourse about the real issues.
- >> We have reached the end of inauthentic branding and the beginning of higher value structures within organizations.

Worth Repeating

“There are two kinds of people in politics: People who want to be something and people who want to DO something.”
- Gerald Butts, President and CEO, WWF-Canada

“At the office, we don’t talk about CSR, we just do it.”
- Dani Reiss, President and CEO, Canada Goose

“Every company can be more than just profit. We can set a much higher value structure.”
- Tom Heintzman, CEO and Co-founder, Bullfrog Power

“Politics can be transformational...we are relevant when the world is a slightly better place than if we hadn’t been there.”
- Justin Trudeau, Member of Parliament, Papineau

Summary

We find ourselves in an era where business schools are scrambling to keep up with a changing world, and with that, the issue of corporate social responsibility. Panelists shared their insights on how future leaders will create paths to a sustainable world, and shed light on some of their own successes.

At Canada Goose, Dani Reiss was able to turn his cynicism into positive productivity to make an impact on Canada Goose as well as the Canadian economy. First, he resisted the urge to move their manufacturing facilities from Canada in order to maintain the authenticity of their products, standards of labour conditions and their relationships with northern communities. For example, their excess fabric waste goes to communities in northern Canada who use the “waste” fabric to sew together new jackets. This solves a waste problem and builds positive relationships with communities. Secondly, Canada Goose aligned themselves with Polar Bears International, a related NGO sharing similar environmental and social concerns. Ultimately, CSR at Canada Goose is unplanned and unspoken; it is simply what they do. It is integrated within the organization and in the belief that authenticity is the way of the future. Reiss noted that we are reaching the end of an era of fake and inauthentic branding. The Canada Goose pillars of authenticity, community and future are clearly exemplified within this organization.

Politics creates many building blocks for the road to full corporate social responsibility. As youth are the next generation of voters and shapers of policy, there is a need to increase youth engagement. In order to make issues relevant to the youth, Justin Trudeau suggests that we have to make politics about the real issues. He would like to see politics not just about buzz words and short-term thinking. Politicians in the future must be able and willing to challenge big issues to avoid apathy amongst the youth. There must be a vigorous and higher-level of discourse and transparency.

Change can also happen through organizations established to solve problems – problems such as that of non-renewable energy. Tom Heintzman was inspired by a school project on renewable energy, as he had always wondered why his local lake (Lake Erie) was dirty. The notion of social change was ingrained at a young age by his parents, who fought development projects and influenced his own student activism. All of these experiences inspired Tom to co-found Bullfrog Power.

The panelists pointed to the influential impact NGOs such as WWF can have on social and environmental changes. NGOs can also serve as great pools of talent - many leaders from NGOs have the skills necessary to run a business and have the potential to become the next generation of leaders in transformational CSR. They already have skills in engagement as their role in an NGO requires this of them and many other attributes that would make them great leaders in the private sector.

We are in an era where students entering the workforce must be bold and courageous. We are in an era where companies must sell consumers what they need and not what we think they want. We are in an era of necessary transformation, largely led by the next generation of leaders.