

# Corporates and Social Justice:

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# Social Justice: A contemporary working definition

“Social Justice implies efforts to redistribute wealth, income or economic opportunities from privileged groups toward underprivileged ones”

Lily Zheng, “We’re entering the age of Corporate Social Justice”, Harvard Business Review; June 2020

# Corporate Social Justice Versus Corporate Social Responsibility:

“Corporate Social Justice is a reframing of CSR that centers the focus of any initiative or program on the measurable, lived experiences of groups harmed and disadvantaged by society” Zheng

## CSR:

- a self-regulated framework no legal or social obligation to create positive impact

## CSJ:

- requires deep integration with every aspect of the way a company functions.
- a framework regulated by the trust between a company, employees, customers, shareholders, and the broader community with the goal of explicitly doing good by all o

Pre-CSJ,  
the trend  
was  
towards  
less not  
more

- From Corporate Social Responsibility
- to
- Citizenship
- to
- Philanthropy

# CSJ/CSR Corporate Interest/Perspective

## What drives it, (for how long and how deeply)

- Response to bad media?
- Core to business?
- Concern of clients/consumers?
- Concern of staff?
- Governmental push?
- Visibility of Impacted communities I
- PR opportunity

# Effective CSJ/CSR: Assessing Corporate Intention and Corporate Capacity

Addressing fundamental issues require long term and sustained engagement strategies....

- How serious is the intended corporate engagement (impact, investment, longevity)
- How well structured are particular corps to be effective “Institutional delivery mechanisms”

# Key potential success indicators

- Does the corporation have clear targets with an associated engagement strategy (i.e., inside the organization via policy decisions or a larger social justice issue)?
- Where does the delivery vehicle sit in the organization may tell you a lot about corporate commitment. PR, Marketing, Legal, HR, Separate Corporate Foundation
- What is the reporting structure to the top?
- Funding level. vs. corporate in-kind contribution?
- Right staffing
- Willingness to partner and not lead
- Results focused vs PR

# Building and Sustaining Partnerships: Can you walk the talk?

- These issues require a long term, sustained approach often in concert with public sector actors
- Public Sector actors do not work on the basis of quarterly or annual delivery and required long term commitments

## THUS

- Know your partners, what drives them and how they work
- Adapt your performance and delivery expectations in concert
- Public Sector actors don't work on the basis of quarterly or annual delivery and required long term commitments.

# A Few Guidance Points

- Assess the structure you work in and your actual power within it
- Know the track record of your organization within the parameters set and factors that may influence it
- Set realistic expectations
- Build out the relationship with like-minded internal and external actors.
- Don't overpromise.
- Do be sensitive to corporate expectations to help them land and be recognized for authentic wins.