Corporate Peer Discussions Retail Industry Response During COVID-19
Summary of Best Practices on Corporate Response

Virtual convenings held on April 23, 2020
Convening Organizations: ACCP, CECP, COF, and POL
Association of Corporate Citizenship Professionals (ACCP), Council on Foundations (COF), Chief Executives for Corporate Purpose (CECP), and Points of Light (POL), which collectively represent more than 400 of the most socially and environmentally responsible global companies, are joining forces to support leaders of corporate purpose and to advocate for the field by convening dialogue on relevant solutions and to share best practices. While some companies are still assessing their response, we have already seen hundreds of corporations respond to the COVID-19 crisis with courage and determination. Their leadership sets an example for the sector to follow. In the sessions on the Retail Response During COVID-19, 3 member companies participated.

Key Themes and Best Practices

The retail industry has been affected tremendously by the health and economic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis. Many stores have closed and others, deemed essential, are adjusting the environment for safety. Even so, companies participating on the call are focusing on ways to support their employees, customers, and communities.

Business Sustainability & Safety

- Many retailers have had stores closed for almost two months, which impacts them financially.
- Managers who are still in stores are identifying merchandise that can be donated to charities at this time.
- Other retailers, considered essential, are updating Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and focusing on the safety of their employees and customers.

Philanthropic Response

- Despite the financial impact on companies, they are maintaining the commitments that were made prior to the COVID-19 crisis.
- Philanthropic campaigns that were underway when stores had to close have continued, but without as many point of sale consumer donations, their volume is not commensurate with past years.
- In line with the Council on Foundations Call to Action for funders, companies are reaching out to their partners to offer flexibility with funding to meet current needs (converting program funding to unrestricted general operating grants, accelerating payments, and loosening reporting requirements).
- Initial philanthropic support has focused on food insecurity and in-kind donations of PPE (masks, shields, etc.) available in their supply chains, but companies are now thinking about secondary issues.

Employee Response

- Typically at this time of year, companies organize large in-person volunteer opportunities; now, they have to pivot to find other ways to engage employees.
- Virtual volunteerism is on the rise, with companies sharing curated menus of opportunities with their employees. They are drawing from resources such as Points of Light's Virtual Volunteerism database to provide a range of activities to fit for the schedules and interests of all employees.

- Companies are reaching out to their existing partners to see if they offer virtual volunteer opportunities, while ensuring that they would be meaningful engagements for their associates. Privacy concerns, especially for youth-serving organizations, make it difficult for some partners to use virtual volunteers.
- Companies cited the use of volunteer software as helpful in tracking participation, but also mentioned that just starting on a google spreadsheet can be a way to help employees to start to self-report hours.

Communication

- Communication to employees is important during this time. To meet the many needs that arise, cross-company coordination between Government Affairs, Investor Relations, CSR, HR, etc. is crucial.
- Text-based messaging to employees is important given the industry's diversified workforce. One company is using text-based outreach to encourage participation in the Census.

Future

- As states begin to re-open in the United States, companies will have to determine employee volunteerism policies when there is inconsistency in regulations across regions.
- Several of the companies have philanthropic focus areas already aligned with communities impacted by the COVID-19 crisis (veterans, food insecurity) so they did not expect to shift their priorities in the future.
- However, many companies in the retail industry anticipated future philanthropic giving to be uncertain or flat until the economic situation becomes more clear.

COVID-19 Resources from each partnering organization:

- ACCP: COVID-19 Resources for Corporate Citizenship Professionals
- CECP: COVID-19 Resources Recap for CEOs and Recap for CR Leaders
- COF: COVID-19 Resource Hub
- POL: COVID-19 Action Plan