



POINTS OF LIGHT
CORPORATE SERVICE COUNCIL

Navigating CSR through an Evolving Political & Social Environment Idea Exchange Key Insights & Takeaways

1. Navigating Political and Economic Uncertainty

- Companies are reassessing and evolving their philanthropic focus areas, messaging, and partnerships due to political polarization and macroeconomic pressures.
- Many face internal and external tensions around language and compliance, especially in politically sensitive regions.

2. Adapting Language and Strategy

- Several companies are shifting the language of DEI and CSR to avoid political triggers while maintaining their core commitments to causes and nonprofit partners.
- Some are undergoing full strategic reevaluations or "reframing" their existing CSR focus areas to maintain alignment with shifting societal expectations.

3. Supporting Nonprofits Amid Funding Cuts

- Nonprofits are increasingly concerned about potential or actual loss of government funding.
- Companies are responding in new ways, including with skills-based support, particularly with financial forecasting and scenario planning.

4. The Value of Showing Up and Listening

- Volunteerism remains a strong signal of partnership. Being physically present and offering capacity-building support helps maintain trust with nonprofit partners.
- During challenging and uncertain times, there's a renewed emphasis on being a "trusted partner" through sustained engagement and understanding their evolving needs.

5. Employee and ERG Dynamics

- Internal dynamics are shifting as employees and ERGs express concerns about the future of DEI and CSR programs.
- Leaders are emphasizing core values (e.g., anti-discrimination policies) and using this moment to reinforce foundational principles.

6. Risk Mitigation and Compliance

- CSR leaders are being asked to reassess risk related to language, partnerships, and even volunteer activities (e.g., excluding protests and rallies from VTO eligibility).
- Some companies are considering policy updates or reinforcing existing guidelines.

7. Evolution and Innovation of CSR

- With the increasing disruption and uncertainty, CSR leaders think there may be a fundamental shift and evolution of the sector.
- Companies should embrace the disruption to reevaluate and innovate how they fund and deliver social impact.

8. Strengthening the Business Case

- With political and economic pressures mounting, companies are being asked to justify CSR efforts and investments. The conversation is shifting to:
 - How it supports employee morale and retention
 - How it improves brand reputation and customer engagement
 - How it reflects company values during tough times