**A Year in CSR: The Top 10 Trends of 2017**

**Presented by Cone Communications**

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* [Full CSR Study Here](http://www.conecomm.com/research-blog/2017-csr-study)
* [Infographic Here](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/56b4a7472b8dde3df5b7013f/t/5947dbcf4f14bc4eadcd025d/1497881572759/CSRInfographic+FINAL2.jpg)

**Key Trends and Trend Insights from 2017**

1. **Standing up for Social Injustices –** consumers and employees are looking at companies to take action across social and justice issues.
   * **Trend Insights –** staying silent is almost more damning than taking a stand, but you need to make sure your business tactics are aligned with your values.
2. **Bold Stunts to Take a Stand** – companies are going bold and provocative with their campaigns to stand out
   * **Trend Insights –** a picture can tell a thousand words, but make sure there is substance behind the stunt. Make sure you simplify the issue so it is understandable and relevant
3. **Opening Eyes and Sparking Conversations –** raising awareness for hard issues and sparking a conversation for sensitive issues. Best way to lean in is to help open people’s eyes and begin the dialogue
   * **Trend Insights –** align with an issue that is authentic to your brand. Understand how your company is uniquely positioned to solve or raise awareness for an issue. Understand your company’s level of risk – take a side or convene a conversation?
4. **Women’s Empowerment Evolves to Women’s Equality** – going beyond building self-esteem and confidence to fighting for true equality. Feminism is Merriam Webster’s 2017 Word of the Year. #MeToo movement
   * **Trend Insights** – look internally to ensure strong gender equality programs and policies are in place within your company. Determine how brands can tell an authentic story in a crowded landscape. Go beyond raising awareness; see how brand can innovate products, advertising, etc to be more inclusive and comprehensive
5. **Activism Spurs Results** – ensure that voices and campaigns are making a difference
   * **Trend Insights** – stay vigilant through issues monitoring. Proactively participate in stakeholder engagement with diverse parties. Ensure business practices are aligned, but especially before taking a stand. Remain transparent in communicating goal setting and the progress that has been made. Be ready with a crisis preparedness plan.
6. **Creating Value by Closing the Loop –** give consumers a unique look at how you’re leveraging the principles of sustainability to eliminate waste and become more efficient
   * **Trend Insights** – Find a problem and see how your waste product can tackle it. Take something that could be waste and turn it into something of value for your consumers. Enlist the right partners to bring your solutions to life. Make the visual/practical connection evident for the consumer.
7. **Cross-Company Collaboration** – some issues are just too big to solve alone, so look to diverse partners to achieve exponential progress together
   * **Trend Insights** – Identify if collaboration is the right approach. Determine if your organization could have greater impact with a partner. Look to other industries that have tackled this issue before your company for key learnings. Don’t recreate the wheel.
8. **Industries Leading on Key Issues** – builds upon the concept of issues being too big to solve alone. Work with your industry to create transformative change
   * **Trend Insights** – Determine the shared issue your industry must address. Understand you don’t need to be a leader, but can be a collaborator. Acknowledge sometimes you have to step outside “your lane” to tackle an issue. Explore how your company can collectively support while also having a unique point of differentiation and activation.
9. **Companies Leverage Unique Assets for Disaster Relief** – natural disasters continue to make international headlines and companies can pitch in. Companies gave $380B in support last year.
   * **Trend Insights** – Be prepared. Have a disaster relief plan set in place before disaster strikes. Consider your company’s roots when deciding scale of response. Understand the impact to your own employees who may be affected. Determine how your products and services can provide solutions or align with NGOs to be most effective. Rally employees and other stakeholders by creating a campaign effort
10. **Cause Shifts to Broader Purpose –** notable lack of movement in “moments in time” cause marketing campaigns – back to school / breast cancer awareness / Black Friday events were nonexistent
    * **Trend Insights -** Explore your company’s unique role in society. Embed purpose within the organization and the experience you deliver. Determine when and how your brand shows up during key moments in time.

**On the Horizon for 2018**

1. **Took a Stand, Now Take Action** – look to companies to walk the talk and track their progress
2. **Mobilizing and Dimensionalizing for Justice –** engaging and rallying other stakeholders to extend voice further
3. **Articulating Broader Role in Society –** going beyond focus on responsible business practices and understanding your company’s TRUE PURPOSE, then sharing that with the masses
4. **Building a Culture of Purpose –** what does your company stand UP for? Hugely critical for millennial employees and recruitment, not just consumers.
5. **Capturing Complex Issues in 30 Seconds or Less –** how can we deliver complex CSR messages in bite-sized and impactful ways that resonate with younger audiences. Gen Z has an 8 second attention span
6. **Issues and Industries to Watch…** 
   1. Food & beverage continuing focus on transparency and traceability
   2. Tech tackling privacy, fake news and freedom and speech
   3. Implications of global politics on companies (Olympics, etc)
   4. Every industry coming together on women’s equality and empowerment