

The 'Green' Path from Corporate Social Responsibility to a Brighter Earth Day for All of Us

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In case you haven't noticed, Earth Day is not only a chance to celebrate our planet, it's also a great platform for companies to broadcast their commitment to protecting the environment. The headlines are filled this week with popular brand-name corporations launching "green" Earth Day campaigns. Take, for instance, American Eagle Outfitters. The apparel company is teaming up with Brad Pitt's Make It Right organization to recycle denim jeans into insulation that can be used in affordable homes for communities in need.

And it was no coincidence that on Monday Apple, the maker of all things iCool, published its 2015 Environmental Responsibility Report detailing the company's commitment to "leave the world better than we found it." Last week, Apple announced that it would be buying 36,000 acres of forestland in order to responsibly and sustainably manage its paper supply chain for items such as packaging and marketing materials.

'Conscious and Active'

Both of these are examples of Corporate Social Responsibility — CSR in the alphabet of business acronyms. This is when companies place ethical concerns before making profits, and often help the community, humanity and, in this case, the environment as a result. While many businesses just pay lip service to their desires to give back and follow sustainable practices, others, like Apple, integrate CSR into the very fabric of their business strategy. It is a genuine business approach for some companies and not just a chance to look stunning beneath the public relations spotlight.

Alice Beittel, 17 and a senior at Bishop O' Dowd High School in Oakland, Calif., has explored the topic of corporate social responsibility as the chair of her school's Students for Sustainability Committee and as a member of the student advisory board for Turning Green, a student-led global movement devoted to education and advocacy around environmentally sustainable and socially responsible choices. She reflects often — and especially on Earth Day — about why she feels

["businesses "are morally responsible to replenish and sustain the sources that provide foundations for their economic success."?"](#)

Beittel believes that companies become socially responsible “when they establish commitments to reach past general environmental and social regulations in an effort to use their power and financial capability to make a cleaner and more equitable world.

[“Working for the people and the planet allows companies to take conscious and active responsibility for the impacts of their production process.””?](#)

In drawing the connection between business and the environment, Jessica Ainslie, 17, borrows a quote from Spider-Man: “With great power comes great responsibility.” Ainslie, a senior at Hawaii Preparatory Academy in Waimea, Hawaii, has long spent her free time “swimming in waterfalls,” and therefore, she has grown up with a sense of connection with and responsibility to the land. “

[“There’s all this debate over whether businesses have too much power and control, yet I believe this can be used to an environmental benefit””?](#)

,” notes Ainslie. “Businesses are the ultimate trendsetters, so I think they have the responsibility to get involved with sustainable practices.” She is considering attending Claremont McKenna College in Claremont, Calif., next year so she can pursue a “killer major” called “Environment, Economics and Politics.”

Both Beittel and Ainslie agree that other teenagers should become more acutely aware of the relationship between business, economics and the world in which we live. Why? Because if they care about the future of the planet, then they can find ways to influence the depth and scope of corporate social responsibility as it applies to environmental sustainability and other social-justice issues. Beittel, who is headed to the University of California, Davis this fall to study environmental science, urges other teens to vote with their dollars. “

[“From the food we eat to the clothing we buy, let us use our purchasing power to support companies who take action to reduce their \[carbon\] footprint””?](#)

, provide livable wages and institute sustainable practices,” says Beittel.

[““As the consumer demands just and conscious standards, more companies will adopt similar policies, reap the benefits and create a healthier world.””?](#)

The consumer vote, adds Ainslie, is indeed powerful. Companies that see their profits eroding may well choose to embrace more environmentally friendly practices. “

[“Teenagers need to constantly be reminded that their power is limitless””?](#)

,” she says. “There’s no age requirement for making a difference. If you don’t like something, change it. If you do like something, be passionate about it.”

Conversation Starters

What is CSR? Search online for other companies that have recently announced CSR initiatives. Who are they and what are they up to?

Explore links below about Apple’s commitment to the environment. Is it genuine? How deeply rooted is it in the company’s business approach?

Do you agree with Jessica Ainslie’s comment that “Teenagers need to constantly be reminded that their power is limitless”? Why or why not?

Related Links

- [American Eagle Outfitters and Make It Right Launch Partnership](#)
- [Make It Right](#)
- [Apple's 2015 Environmental Responsibility Report](#)
- [Why Is Apple the Only Huge Tech Company that Cares about the Environment?](#)
- [Turning Green](#)