

# The Human Dimension

An Interview with **Ivan G. Seidenberg**,  
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer,  
Verizon Communications Inc., New York



**EDITORS' NOTE** *Ivan Seidenberg's 40-year career has encompassed numerous operations and engineering assignments in the telecommunications industry, including leadership positions at AT&T, NYNEX, and Bell Atlantic. He was appointed sole CEO of Verizon in April 2002 and became Chairman of the Board in January 2004. The recipient of a bachelor's degree in mathematics from City University of New York and a master's degree in business administration and marketing from Pace University (New York), Seidenberg serves on the boards of directors of Honeywell, the Museum of Television and Radio, the New York Hall of Science, Pace University, the Verizon Foundation, and Wyeth.*



Ivan G. Seidenberg

**COMPANY BRIEF** *Based in New York, Verizon Communications Inc. (NYSE:VZ; [www.verizon.com](http://www.verizon.com)) is a leader in delivering broadband and other wireline and wireless communications services to mass market, business, government, and wholesale customers. Verizon Wireless serves 60.7 million customers across the United States, while Verizon Business delivers innovative business solutions to customers around the world, and Verizon Telecom provides converged communications, information, and entertainment services over an advanced fiber-optic network. Verizon was formed in 2000 with the merger of Bell Atlantic and GTE.*

## How important is social responsibility and community involvement to the culture of Verizon?

Although today Verizon is a high-tech broadband, communications, and entertainment company, the company's tradition of giving back to the community stretches back more than a century and a quarter to our telephone company roots. With more than 232,000 employees who live and work in the communities we serve, Verizon has a vested interest in good schools, safe neighborhoods, and strong local economies. Our commitment to social responsibility is also a direct result of what we call the "human dimension" of our business – customer service, ethics, values, and community investment – which is deeply embedded in our culture and profoundly important to our success.

From California to Hyderabad, Verizon

employees volunteer their time and talents to work with people of all ages in schools and community centers, to help unlock their potential. From building technological and basic literacy skills to working on math or science, Verizon employees are contributing in local communities across the globe, working to better prepare the next generation and connect people to economic opportunity. And we respond to a whole range of issues that affect our customers' lives, from education to Internet safety to global warming.

## What are the company's key focus areas for community involvement, and how do these efforts align with Verizon's business strategy?

We think about this in two ways. First, through the Verizon Foundation, the company provides financial support to the causes and charities that employees support – through generous matching gifts and a first-rate volunteerism program. Second, the Verizon Foundation is committed to improving education and literacy, and preventing domestic violence.

Supporting literacy and education today is a necessary investment in the nation's, and frankly, in Verizon's ability to remain competitive in a global marketplace. We work with nonprofit partners to help adults develop the literacy skills required to compete in today's job market. We are also using our special expertise in broadband technology to equip teachers with the tools they need to help their students learn and succeed. Earlier this year, we announced our ongoing commitment to a digital learning platform called Thinkfinity.org, which provides educators with free educational resources provided by a wide range of content partners. We're working with state and local education groups to provide professional development, so that teachers can use these resources effectively.

Verizon is also committed to the cause of preventing domestic violence, which affects 20 percent of employed Americans at some point during their lives, at an annual cost of \$5.8 billion in lost productivity. Verizon Wireless has led the corporate charge on this issue for many years through our HopeLine® phone recycling program, which has collected nearly four million no-longer-used wireless phones and accessories and more than 200,000 pounds of rechargeable

batteries, enabling almost \$3.5 million in donations to local domestic violence agencies since 2001.

## How do you evaluate and measure the success of your efforts?

It varies, depending on the nature of the initiative. For example, when it comes to our environmental programs, we know that Verizon generated 81 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> for every \$1 million in revenue, which is an improvement over 2005, and almost eight times better than the national average. That's a very precise measure.

In other areas, we use other methods for determining the impact of our investments. For example, when we make a sizable grant, our foundation forms a long-term relationship with the nonprofit organization to see how they're implementing the project, to help them build their institutional strength, and to develop benchmarks and measurements for determining how they are meeting their objectives.

We also listen to the people who are putting our dollars to work in the community. We pay close attention to the testimonials we receive from teachers across the country, who tell us about the efficiency and effect of Thinkfinity.org in the classroom. Those testimonials come from educators on the frontlines, so they carry a lot of weight.

## Do you tend to partner with other organizations in your social responsibility activities?

Verizon leverages our resources through a wide network of powerful partnerships and coalitions. A good example of this collaborative approach is Thinkfinity.org, our online education portal for teachers. The content is provided by 11 of the nation's leading organizations in the fields of education and literacy. The content partners include the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the International Reading Association, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the National Center for Family Literacy, the National Council on Economic Education, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Council of Teachers of English, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, the National Geographic Society, ProLiteracy

*Verizon's Supervisor of Fleet Operations explains hybrid electric components of a Verizon van to students of the Applications and Research Lab, a program for high school students.*





*Deborah Lansdowne and her company eKobs are part of the Verizon Business/Department of Defense Mentor-Protégé Program. Verizon sponsors training of eKobs's leadership staff.*

Worldwide, and the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History.

Another example of Verizon's collaborative approach is the steps we've taken with other businesses to lessen our environmental impact. For example, because no domestic motor vehicle manufacturer currently makes hybrid vehicles in the "van" category, Verizon worked closely with hybrid-electric pioneer Enova Systems Inc., located in Torrance, California, to custom design hybrid vehicles to Verizon's specifications. We now have 13 of these specially designed vans in service, with plans for more under way. We're also working with 11 other American companies on the U.S. "eTree" initiative, which plants a tree for every shareowner who agrees to receive material electronically, rather than via paper documents. We estimate the electronic shareholder communications program will save seven million tons of paper a year.

**How do you engage employees in Verizon's social responsibility and corporate citizenship efforts?**

Our first goal is to support our employees in all they do to serve their local communities. For every 50 hours of service a Verizon employee contributes to a nonprofit organization, the Verizon Foundation donates \$750. We also match up to \$1,000 a year in employee contributions to any eligible nonprofit, and teams of 10 or more employees can apply for

\$10,000 in matching funds for team fund-raising events, such as walkathons. Since Verizon was formed in 2000, our employees and retirees have contributed more than three million hours of community service. In 2006 alone, the Verizon Foundation matched employee contributions for a combined total of \$29 million that went to charitable agencies and nonprofit organizations.

We also sponsor a number of activities to engage employees in causes to which Verizon has committed its resources. One example is the Season's Readings campaign, through which employees donate books and other materials to nonprofits that serve children, most recently in the Gulf Coast area. Our people participate in HopeLine drives every year, donating thousands of old cell phones to benefit domestic violence victims.

More broadly, we developed a framework called "CR 360," to help employees incorporate social responsibility into their business decisions. CR 360 – shorthand for "Corporate Responsibility 360 degrees" – is a compass that helps employees look at an issue from an internal and external perspective. We have used this analytical tool to develop socially responsible policies in a number of areas, including incorporating accessible-design features into new products, diversity marketing, reducing energy usage and greenhouse-gas emissions, develop-

ing a code of conduct for Verizon suppliers, and reinforcing consistent, values-driven business practices throughout the world.

**What role does the company's leadership play in communicating Verizon's social responsibility efforts and programs to employees?**

Employees are pretty smart. They figure out what's important by watching what we do, not just what we say. So it's one thing for us to say all the right words about having strong values and caring about our communities. But the most important thing we can do is to show them what values look like in action. To do that, we have to be visible. We have to support each other. And we have to cast a shadow of leadership that motivates people to do the right thing.

**Is there an effective public understanding of the good work that business leaders and companies do, with regard to investing in society?**

In spite of the scandals of recent years, I believe there's a good understanding of the significant role that businesses, large or small, play in the community. In Verizon's case, we certainly believe so. We connect customers to one another and the world, and our employees see for themselves how that improves customers' lives. That creates an army of 232,000 brand ambassadors, and that's a great way to get your message out. ●