

The CEO Force for Good

An Interview with
Daryl Brewster, Chief Executive Officer, CECP

EDITORS' NOTE *Daryl Brewster has served as the turnaround CEO of Krispy Kreme Doughnuts, Inc.; President of Kraft's \$6-billion North American Snacks, Confections, Cereal, and Pet portfolio; President of the \$2-billion Planters Specialty Products Company; and Managing Director of Campbell Soup's U.K./European operations. In addition, Brewster founded a boutique leadership consulting firm and has served on several public and private boards.*



Daryl Brewster

ORGANIZATION BRIEF *CECP (cecp.co), a global nonprofit organization, is a coalition of 150 CEOs of the world's largest companies across a wide range of industries who are united in the belief that societal improvement is an essential measure of business performance. CECP fosters executive leadership, collaboration, innovation, and measurement among more than 200 affiliated leading global companies striving to solve some of the world's most pressing problems through their skills and resources.*

What is the vision for CECP today and what does it need to keep moving forward?

Our DNA as the CEO Force for Good is the essence of what CECP is all about: making the world a better place through business. We're seeing a great evolution in the ways in which we can do that, building on the great base that Charlie (Moore, Executive Director) created, which is a year-round engagement model. We help companies through our events and resources, moving them from being part of a membership to where they view us as a retained consultancy. In this role, we are the go-to organization for companies as they demonstrate how enhancing societal investments and business performance goes hand-in-hand.

We have the largest proprietary database in the field, which we have built upon over the past 10 years. More than 100 companies every quarter engage with us strategically through fast-track consulting. We hold an annual summit for leading corporate societal engagement professionals, which is the go-to resource in the space. In addition, we're holding roundtables with companies and strategic investors where we address a variety of topics.

Our communications team helps organizations tell their social impact story, spotlights leading companies, and identifies key trends among

forward-thinking companies. We're connecting with additional CEOs in more meaningful ways throughout the year. CECP's Board of Boards, a *Forbes*-named "power player" event, brings together 50 CEOs annually to discuss the business imperative for societal engagement.

Is much of the target the CEO or corporate societal engagement professional?

We have a dual mandate. One is supporting companies in achieving their specific goals and the second is advancing companies as a whole so they are seen as a force for good in society. We do so through two key audiences.

First, the CEO leads strategic direction; he or she has a bully pulpit – the worldview and the purse strings to lead the way in how these efforts can be integrated into the business.

Second, we work with societal engagement professionals who go beyond the concept of "giving." They really help companies engage and invest in society more deeply and effectively. That is the group that drives the "why" and the "how."

Would you touch on the key trends that CECP anticipates for 2016?

We're seeing five trends among leading companies: The first is the importance of purpose in business today, which means going beyond quarterly earnings to long-term sustainable value creation.

The second area is the rising power of the employee. More than half of CEOs say that strengthening their human capital is the number-one benefit they're seeing to expanding their societal investment.

The third area is investment in good well beyond traditional giving. Being a good player in society is not just about investing cash but about employee engagement, leveraging skills, and tapping intellectual power.

The fourth area is the demand for transparency. If companies are in the Fortune 500, they are in the spotlight and the demand for disclosure continues unabated. They need to realize that not saying anything is saying something.

The fifth trend is the rising accountability of corporate societal engagement executives. These positions within a company are elevating in stature and are increasingly viewed as an investment rather than a cost center. Increasingly, CSR is now one of the last areas companies cut in tough times, when it used to be the first.

Do companies understand today that corporate societal engagement can help them make money and affect the bottom line?

Companies are seeing that by aligning with society and understanding its challenges, they can attract, retain, and develop employees. Focusing on the community's needs, and therefore the underserved parts of the population, can help a company build its brand reputation. If companies make a mistake, if they excel in transparency and are authentic, they will get the benefit of the doubt. Companies can enter new markets in business once they have created relationships through a community commitment first. Additionally, we see that companies can attract longer-term shareholders if they adopt a longer-term view of their business.

Does purpose lead to rising power of employees and then to transparency? Do you need all of these elements to come together?

Leading companies are engaged in many of these areas and it creates a virtuous cycle. Today's world expects business to lead society towards new solutions to address today's problems.

Those external trends are leading employees to look for more from employers, which might be the first factor that leads to profits with a purpose. Professional service firms, whose average employee is 28 years old, are leading the charge on this. It's not just about writing a check at year's end – this has to be integrated into business day in and day out, and shared publicly. This mentality leads employees to be motivated, engaged, and productive.

Is it hard for companies to get on board with this purpose-driven mentality and apply metrics to drive transparency?

It's easier if a company is established that way from the beginning. But even companies that are more than a century old are reinventing themselves in exciting ways – look at GE, for example.

How important is it for you to appreciate the wins along the way?

Very important. Change within large corporations takes time and resources, and wins along the way show progress. Aetna and Walmart, for example, recently increased wages for their lowest paid workers, which undoubtedly took months if not years to implement. Over the long run, the companies benefit from more engaged employees and increased retention. It's a win-win. In the words of our founder Paul Newman, it's a "nice start," with a long way to go. ●