

## Corporate Social Responsibility

I'm sure it's a good thing. I believe it's a good thing. But, I believe it's a good thing for reasons *other* than perhaps the obvious reasons. We talk about branding. We talk about the importance of branding in a world where there are lots and lots of product. What *is* a brand? It's about *character*. It's about *values*. The essence of corporate responsibility is not a narrow set of policy measures, even though those policy measures might be important. It's about what kind of a member of the community are we? Corporations, big and small, departments, training departments, finance departments—these are growing, human organisms. That's the whole thing. It's why I'm doing what I'm doing. It's why I travel 200,000 miles a year, and half of the last 26 years. These are not organizations as represented by a sterile organization chart. They are growing human beings and service. Corporate social responsibility means allowing people to grow. It means the character. It means a commitment. Why do we have to have rules for transparency? Well, I guess we do because a lot of people violate the rules.

There's a magnificent guy who wrote a *magnificent* book. And the book was called *The [Manager's] Handbook of Decencies*. And oddly enough, he was writing it about compliance with Sarbanes-Oxley. He said, "If this is an institution that has character, that believes in integrity, it believes in transparency, then you don't need a million cops." And, to me, social responsibility begins with the individual employee. It's the employee's family. It's the community of which we're a part. It's the nations and communities in which we serve around the world. These things really aren't complicated topics. They're not about the Annual Social Responsibility Report. I think it's a great idea.

The role of any leader is to work on these *soft* topics, these *intangible* topics. We know what developing—we may not *do* it, we all have a difficult time—but we acknowledge instantly what development of character at least might *be*, relative to our children. Well, the same thing is true during those hours that we work. I kind of have difficulty when we keep applying these, "Well, are you in favor of corporate social responsibility or not?"

My answer is, “I’m in favor of my fellow human being.” And helping my fellow human being who I work with, who I work for, who is part of my supply chain, who’s in the community in which I live, become places that are more lovely, graceful.

On my 60<sup>th</sup> birthday a few years ago, I gave myself a present. I wrote a little book, to be honest, and it was called *This I Believe*. I was 60, and I wrote 60 things that I believe. By definition, one of them was first, and one of them was number 60. Number 60 on the list was one word, “Grace.” I love the word “grace.” Yes, it’s the age of the Internet. Yes, we have to hustle more than we’ve ever hustled before. But, is this an organization, an accounting department, or what have you, that is a place where people take a minute to say, “How are you? How’s it going? Thank you,” when the smallest of affairs takes place. Social responsibility begins with responsibility to one another as fellow human beings.