

# Advice for retailers: Be good, do good!

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Among many of the challenges retailers face today — such as higher consumer expectations of store associate knowledge, exceptional in store experiences and the ability to shop numerous channels seamlessly — is the fact that people are beginning to become more mindful of their purchases and shop more with their emotions instead of their wallets. It is becoming more evident that modern consumers are looking for retailers and brands that are environmentally and socially engaged.

Indeed, millennials' changing preferences and attitudes regarding corporate responsibility, social consciousness, and more, have already impacted how retail brands present and position themselves. Representing a healthy lifestyle or being environmentally friendly can and is influencing their buying decisions. As the conscious consumption trend continues to grow, retailers and brands must search for fresh ideas and make it a priority to be viewed as responsive to consumers' concerns.

## **The store associate becomes a socially conscious brand ambassador**

This new inclination is bringing about change to the overall role of the store associate. Retail associates need to understand and be able to communicate a retailer's overall strategies and goals when required. Communication from headquarters to stores therefore, must be clearer, simpler, efficient and more useful to be effective. Store associates are a retailer's brand ambassador. They shouldn't be treated as dispensable, but rather as a critical centerpiece to the store experience, not

to mention irreplaceable, and should be treated as such. They are a brand's representative and connection to customers. Moreover, they shape and guide the experience customers have in the store. In short, it's bonding, not just branding.

Some retailers and brands are also empowering store associates to speak to consumers about potentially controversial ads or company-wide decisions. Because of this, retailers need an industry specific, centralized communications tool to manage, track and communicate this kind of corporate messaging to stores. This allows store associates to more easily and conveniently have access to all relevant communications and information in one place, and see everything they're meant to read, understand and execute. This, in turn, gives store leaders and headquarters visibility into who has read the messages, and to receive employee feedback about how they are being trained on these topics. By engaging with the store associates, retailers can help ensure they are prepared to address customers' needs and be the very best brand ambassadors.

### **Communicating corporate responsibility**

Recent examples of the shift toward conscious consumption includes Nike's controversial ad campaign with NFL player Colin Kaepernick in September 2018, which boosted Nike's share price and social media numbers. Fossil Group created its sustainability initiative, which aspires to bring sustainable design elements to over half of their global product assortment by 2025. Fossil also has an 'Opportunity For Her' initiative that has them aspiring to become a leader in women's empowerment by 2020. Other examples include; the Polo Ralph Lauren Foundation's initiative dedicated to supporting cancer care and prevention, and GameStop's support of key non profit partners that passionately improve youth well being and create inclusive, responsible communities through fundraising, ongoing volunteerism and sustainability efforts.

These are all important initiatives that aren't only doing good but are helping to guide consumers and change purchasing behavior. Great communication of any corporate initiative from head office to associates must be a priority to prepare employees to be an advocate for the company's corporate responsibility. After all, consumer buying decisions are going to continue to trend towards retailers and brands whose associates truly respect and can communicate their company's values.



We invite you to take a closer look at the Opterus solution and see how it fits your needs and can help you become more efficient and effective with your communications. Click below to visit our website and schedule a customized demo and see for yourself.

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