

Social Responsibility

Community Efforts Begin With the Power of One

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**The Principle of community
offers a wide range of
opportunities for organizations
to better understand their supply
chain partners in a setting that
is a win-win for everyone.**

BY JOHN YUVA

Whether it's a public, private or nonprofit firm, the importance of social responsibility policies and procedures is resonating throughout the business world. Recognizing the importance and value of social responsibility within the supply management profession, the Institute for Supply Management™ developed its own *Principles of Social Responsibility*. This initiative raises the awareness of seven key *Principles* that ISM is asking organizations to support, donate resources to and share best practices with to improve social responsibility among their internal businesses, with their suppliers and throughout their communities.

In the July issue, the *Principle* of diversity was discussed. As a universal issue in many organizations throughout the world, supply managers, organizations and suppliers are engaged in raising awareness and promoting compliance of the diversity *Principle*. Another universal *Principle* that can be applied to any organization is the *Principle* of community. Regardless of the time of year, number of employees, state of the economy or global location,

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Art by Jason Steed

organizations can add value to the communities in which they reside. It is also an opportunity for all employees (full-time and part-time) to support their communities or other areas of the country that are in need.

A baseline study conducted by ISM reveals that to some extent, 27 percent of respondents have volunteers supporting local charities, and 23 percent of respondents donate to community organizations. There is a plethora of opportunities for supply managers to organize and support activities in their communities. Whether it's a company-sponsored event or a joint venture with a nonprofit organization, the *Principle* of community can make a difference in the lives of employees and the citizens who benefit from their efforts. ➤

The “Orange Box” and Its Community Tools

With more than 1,700 stores operating throughout North America and Puerto Rico, millions of people visit a Home Depot store every week and recognize its orange box logo. While customers are familiar with its wide range of home improvement products and services, most are unfamiliar with Home Depot’s commitment to the communities it serves. Stephanie Martin, manager of communications and external affairs for the Atlanta-based home improvement retailer, says the company is celebrating its 25th anniversary of supporting communities across the nation through The Home Depot Foundation, which has invested over \$150 million in support of its initiatives. “Home Depot provides the materials and the retail product that consumers are looking for, and beyond that we know that our responsibility is to help those citizens and their community continue to grow and prosper,” she says.

As an employer of 300,000 associates globally, community support is an initiative ingrained in the corporate culture of Home Depot and is one of eight core values that the company was built upon. Martin says that from the first day of orientation onward, associates take pride in supporting the communities in which they live and work. “While associates provide a great deal of knowledge to consumers, many have special skills because they’re former contractors, plumbers and electricians, which adds to the enthusiasm and excitement when working with different nonprofit groups on various projects,” she says. “It always amazes nonprofits to see how passionate our people are about volunteerism, and that’s really what Home Depot is all about.”

Home Depot’s Activation Core

The thousands of projects Home Depot and its nonprofit partners undertake each year wouldn’t be possible without a structured community support team of associate volunteers known as Team Depot. Comprised of district captains, store captains and associate volunteers, Team Depot is the driving force behind the company’s associate volunteer program. Dow Riegler, external affairs representative and a district captain for Home Depot in Phoenix, says that he was not aware of the extent of Home Depot’s community programs until he became involved with a Habitat for Humanity project in 1998.

“I not only had the opportunity to experience how rewarding the program was by doing something good in the community and for a new homeowner, but also to see the positive effects on fellow associates,” he says.

Riegler became a district captain in 1999 and currently oversees Team Depot efforts in 30 stores in the Phoenix metropolitan area. One of his primary responsibilities is to be proactive by building relationships with nonprofit organizations in areas such as youth and recreation, and community revitalization. Another responsibility is mentoring the store captains in each store by providing training and coordinating volunteer opportunities that exist. Bulletin boards are placed throughout the stores to generate awareness and excitement about upcoming projects. Team Depot associates, dressed in signature orange shirts, dedicate their personal time to various volunteer efforts, and in some cases are activated on a moment’s notice. “We have a lot of responsibility in getting our fellow associates active in the community,” says Riegler.

Team Depot and Its Community Endeavors

With its structured social responsibility initiatives through The Home Depot Foundation, the company is passionate about making a difference in others’ lives. As stated in ISM’s *Principles of Social Responsibility*, “Social responsibility is defined as a framework of measurable corporate policies and procedures and resulting behavior designed to benefit the workplace and, by extension, the individual, the organization and the community.” Home Depot is a picture within that framework in how its Foundation has affected and benefited associates, consumers and surrounding communities. Team Depot organizes its efforts around several community focus areas within the Foundation:

- Affordable housing programs
- Youth-oriented programs
- Disaster relief programs
- In-store clinic programs

Building dreams one home at a time. As a home improvement retailer, it’s only natural that Home Depot would be involved with affordable housing programs. The company works closely with local neighborhood housing services and national partners that are focused on community revitalization. During one local project, Riegler says 50 associates spent one week working at an assisted-living complex where they replaced all of the leaking plumbing fixtures in 160 units to help save water. The following week at the same complex, 75 associates converted 10,000 square feet of sod into desert landscaping rock and a walking trail. This three-day project not only saved water but provided a wheelchair-accessible trail with colorful plants for the residents to enjoy.

On a national level, Home Depot works with Rebuilding Together™, which provides home repairs and installs items for seniors to help them continue to live independently. Martin says that a national Rebuilding Together Day is held in April where Home Depot gives grants to the organization to help it purchase the products to work on the homes. Team Depot has volunteers by the thousands and each person will work on 10 or 20 different homes for the day.

In a joint partnership with Rebuilding Together™ and the U.S.A. Freedom Core, Home Depot started Project Homefront to assist families whose parent or spouse is away serving our country. Product donations and Team Depot help build fences, install safety locks on doors and complete unfinished home projects. Martin says the program has helped 1,000 families across the United States. “We saw that there were families everywhere needing this help, so we opened the opportunity to all military families and received hundreds of requests,” she says.

On a global basis, Home Depot partners with Habitat for Humanity. The company will sponsor house builds and bring Team Depot to different sites. A recent project in Orange County, California, involved building a unit of four different townhouses.

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Martin explains that every Thursday for eight months, 15 volunteers worked on the unit until it was completed. She says that associates would drive two to three hours for an opportunity to work on it. Home Depot also partners with Habitat for Humanity in Canada and will be involved with the organization in China as stores begin opening in the Asian market.

Enlightening the lives of youth through play and mentorship. Few things bring more joy than seeing a smile on a child's face or feeling that you've made a difference in the life of a youth. Home Depot is involved in making this happen for thousands of associates and the children and youths who benefit from Team Depot. The company has unique partnerships with KaBOOM!, a program that brings playgrounds to communities, and YouthBuild, a mentoring program for high-schoolers to gain construction/job skills and to promote education.

Through Home Depot's partnership with KaBOOM!, more than 20,000 Team Depot associates will have built playgrounds for 250 communities throughout the United States and Canada by year's end. What starts as a large patch of dirt at the beginning of the day turns into a beautiful playground by day's end. Martin explains that a favorite part of the build is Design Day when the children have an opportunity to draw their dream playground and meet members of Team Depot. The drawings range from swimming pools atop monkey bars to a large donut to feast on after a trek up a ladder. "At the end of the day, you can look at these drawings and see what the kids want and select certain items to build into the playground," she says. "The children really feel like this is something that they designed — it's theirs and they feel a lot of pride."

The goal behind YouthBuild is to provide high-schoolers the opportunity to learn construction and job skills, while earning a high-school diploma or GED. Martin says that by working side-by-side with Team Depot, YouthBuild chapters assist on home

renovation projects. "It's a chance to see strong role models who may have grown up in their same community and hear how that person was able to move into a management position at Home Depot," she says. The program also includes a Groundhog Job Shadow Day every January where different YouthBuild chapters will spend an entire day with store managers and get a behind-the-scenes perspective about how a Home Depot store operates. "We've been able to hire some amazing young people to come work for our company who are already skilled and already possess a great amount of knowledge from their involvement with YouthBuild," says Martin.

Supporting the public in its time of need. Every year, natural disasters take an insurmountable toll on communities. It is because of this that Team Depot is heavily involved in disaster relief by providing products and services to the American Red Cross and local aid organizations throughout the United States, Canada and Mexico. Martin says that last year, Home Depot's central division had 400 tornadoes touch down. Each time, Team Depot was involved in the cleanup and rebuilding efforts. In Southern California, the company donated \$1 million to help restore 60,000 acres that were destroyed by wildfires. When hurricanes hit, Team Depot fills sandbags and the company ships lumber from distribution centers across the eastern seaboard to ensure that people have what they need. "When a disaster strikes, we know that Home Depot needs to be open because people are going to need items and materials from us, but at the same time we also need to help communities react and support them," says Martin. "And once the disaster is over, we're still there because we know that recovery takes a long time."

Completing a birdhouse is the highlight of the weekend. While the majority of The Home Depot Foundation's initiatives involve Team Depot assisting communities outside the store, the in-store clinics are an opportunity to bring the community inside

Social Responsibility Survey Results

The following responses about the *Principle* of community were obtained from ISM's social responsibility survey. ISM expects to collect data over time to help the supply profession measure its ongoing attention and dedication to this important area.

Currently, our purchasing and supply management function:

A. Has volunteers supporting local charities:

- To no extent whatsoever (17 percent)
- To almost no extent (9 percent)
- To a little extent (14 percent)
- To some extent (27 percent)
- To a good extent (17 percent)
- To a great extent (9 percent)
- To a very great extent (6 percent)

B. Donates to community organizations:

- To no extent whatsoever (16 percent)
- To almost no extent (8 percent)
- To a little extent (12 percent)
- To some extent (23 percent)
- To a good extent (21 percent)
- To a great extent (13 percent)
- To a very great extent (7 percent)

Community principle policies for which purchasing and supply management organizations have:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A written policy for your employees (35 percent) • A written policy for your purchasing and supply management employees only (14 percent) • A written policy for your suppliers (13 percent) • Specific goals and measurements for your employees (19 percent) • Specific goals and measurements for your purchasing and supply management employees only (13 percent) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific goals and measurements for your suppliers (12 percent) • A performance tracking mechanism for your employees (16 percent) • A performance tracking mechanism for your purchasing and supply management employees only (11 percent) • A performance tracking mechanism for your suppliers (11 percent) |
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As part of Home Depot's community initiatives, it partners with KaBOOM! to build playgrounds in underprivileged areas. Since 1996, more than 20,000 Team Depot associates have built playgrounds for 250 communities throughout the United States and Canada.

Home Depot for a day of learning and fun. The first Saturday of every month, more than 1,700 stores offer a Kids' Workshop for children aged six to 12. Martin explains that each month children work on a new project from pre-made kits and take them home once they're completed. With millions of children going through the program to build their first birdhouse or toolbox, it's not surprising that 60-150 children attend the clinics at each store every weekend.

For adults interested in a chance to learn how to do a project, there are how-to clinics four times per week. They provide a learning atmosphere that is comfortable and give participants a feeling of empowerment when they're done. "We've had great success with our women's-only clinics where women learn to use all types of power tools or lay pavers for an outdoor patio," says Martin. "We try to provide as many opportunities as we can for people to learn how to build a project because you always feel more pride when you make it yourself."

Positive Outcomes Outweigh the Challenges of Community Relations

That same feeling is true for Team Depot, especially for new associates who are just learning about Home Depot's community projects. Riegler says that when associates get involved and assist on projects, it's an opportunity to demonstrate leadership and organization skills. "It creates teamwork not only while they're doing the project but when they return to the store as well," he says. "Associates that may not have been involved in their community before working at Home Depot are soon introduced to the volunteer opportunities, and often start many projects on their own outside of Team Depot."

Just as Home Depot supports volunteerism among its associates, Team Depot helps support the efforts of nonprofit organizations in the community. Martin says that working with nonprofits is something she feels lucky for in the community affairs business because of the amazing people she has the chance to work with. "Community affairs is always challenging due to the lack of resources available to various nonprofits and cities," she says. "However, that's

where companies like Home Depot can step up and help find them a solution."

While few organizations have the resources of Home Depot, any organization can make a difference in its community. By partnering with a local or national nonprofit agency, organizations can coordinate a variety of projects. The *Principle* of community offers a wide range of opportunities for organizations to better understand their supply chain partners in a setting that is a win-win for everyone. The only thing standing in the way of making a difference in the lives of employees, suppliers and the public is the initiative to get involved. As supply management professionals with the skills to organize, negotiate and execute, community progress is just a phone call away. [ism](#)

ISM's SR Web Site: www.ism.ws/sr

ISM is committed to becoming the central repository of information in support of all matters related to social responsibility. The following resources can be accessed through the ISM Web site at www.ism.ws/sr.

- *Principles of Social Responsibility.*
- The accompanying supply management audit for the social responsibility *Principles*.
- Links to other social responsibility related Web sites. For example, the community Web sites include The Center for Corporate Citizenship at Boston College, The Corporate Citizenship Company and The Center for Corporate Citizenship.
- Social responsibility articles and research.
- ISM's Committee on Social Responsibility.
- Ways you can foster social responsibility and show your support for the ISM *Principles*.

For more information on how your company can support these Principles, visit www.ism.ws/SR