Case Study: AT&T Inc.

About AT&T Inc.

AT&T Inc. is a U.S.-based multinational holding company headquartered in Dallas, Texas. It is the world's largest telecommunications company, the second largest provider of mobile telephone services, and the largest provider of fixed telephone services in the U.S. through AT&T Communications. Since June 14, 2018, it is also the parent company of mass media company Warner Media, making it the world's largest media and entertainment company in terms of revenue. As of 2018, AT&T is ranked No. 9 on the Fortune 500 rankings of the largest U.S. corporations by total revenue.

AT&T employee engagement

Community engagement is a part of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) unit inside AT&T. Jason Leker, Associate Vice President of Community Engagement, leads these efforts and reports directly to AT&T Senior Vice President of Corporate Social Responsibility and Chief Sustainability Officer. Delivering business value through social impact programs and initiatives is the primary mission of community engagement efforts inside the company.

It begins with employee recruitment

AT&T has a three-step process to integrate community engagement into its culture inside the company. Beginning at the recruitment phase, AT&T has a CSR team member who works directly with the talent acquisition team so candidates learn about CSR during the recruitment process. Second, final candidates and other recent new hires are invited by the human resources team to a conference to learn more about the company. At this conference, company commitment to CSR is reinforced through a volunteerism event for all attendees. Third, new employees continue to learn about CSR initiatives through an online new hire orientation process. And finally, once employees have been with the company for four to six weeks, the AT&T Community Engagement team sends a personal note inviting them to participate in an upcoming volunteer event.

How community engagement works at AT&T

At its core, AT&T community engagement strategy centers around creating volunteer opportunities in the communities where their employees live and work. AT&T has a range of CSR initiatives that
include environmental and social sustainability, education, digital responsibility, volunteerism, and giving. Employees have an opportunity to participate in all of these various CSR initiatives, as there is always some type of employee activation component.

Last year, the team created “Community Champions,” a grassroots network of employees across the company who have expressed an interest in helping the company advance its various CSR efforts. To date, this program has grown to about 1,800 employees. There is a concerted effort to integrate this function throughout the company by positioning corporate volunteerism as the primary employee engagement opportunity supervisors can leverage for their employees.

Engaging employees on environmental issues

Recently, the company launched a zero waste program at 100 U.S. corporate locations. Jason Leiker and his team tapped the Community Champions network to help drive employee awareness and engagement in the initiative. Of the approximately 1,500 who participate in this program, nearly half (roughly 700 employees) identified the environment as a cause of choice. A team made up of these 700 employees was tasked to help develop and design the rollout of the initiative and an internal communications program designed to educate employees about this new effort.

When it was time to launch the initiative, these employees executed a peer-to-peer employee communications program inside the company. During a three-week time period, team members volunteered their time to greet employees in highly trafficked areas — like cafeterias or lobbies — to explain the program, how it works, and what steps employees could take to help achieve success with its zero waste program. The activation was a success. Nearly 3,500 employees attended a lobby kickoff event and since the zero waste launch, landfill diversion rates are increasing month over month.

Greatest challenges

Capturing employees attention is one of the greatest challenges. There is very limited time to focus on issues outside regular specific job duties. The company addresses this challenge by using the following:

• **Peer-to-peer communications** | employees talking to colleagues about these initiatives, such as the zero waste program
• **Internal communications** | leveraging all company communication channels to reach employees, including a dedicated website visited by 25% of the workforce each year

Jason Leiker and his community engagement staff are also exploring a new initiative, working with the company data analytics team to examine employee email habits. The idea is to determine if there is a certain time frame and/or day of the week when employees read emails at a higher rate than any other time or weekday. Assuming there is, the team will consider calibrating its efforts to communicate news about community engagement initiatives during these time frames. This is an example of the ways in which AT&T is using data to improve its effectiveness and leverage the tools that the business makes available companywide.

Measuring success

AT&T defines measuring progress by tracking two primary metrics:

• **Employee participation** | the percentage of employees participating in these initiatives
• **Business unit integration** | the number of company units and departments in which Jason Leiker and his team have initiated “co-creation” opportunities

In 2017, community engagement began working with the AT&T human resources department. They created a project to analyze company data on CSR initiatives such as employee giving programs, volunteering, and activation rates for other CSR programs. The human resources team assigned a data scientist to assess information from approximately 70,000 employee records. They found that employees who participate in community engagement programs score 8 to 10 points higher on a Net Promoter Score survey and are 3% to 5% less likely to voluntarily leave the company. Additionally, the team devised another measurement — “empowerment,” employees perceived ability to make decisions in their job. On this metric, employees in community engagement programs scored about 10 points higher than the general company population.

AT&T has developed criteria that they consider to be the “ideal employee profile” — criteria defining the most engaged and productive employees. Scoring high on the three community engagement metrics is part of the ideal employee profile, alongside traditional criteria, such as benefits and wages.