

Is doing good really so bad?

 By [Mike Barnwell](#)

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I recently took part in a discussion with our agency and clients where we unpacked some of the main themes at this year's Cannes Lion Awards. Towards the end of the Q&A, someone in the audience asked whether the plethora of cause-related work that won actually yielded any ROI, or were they just made for awards.



Hope Reef is part of a new project that pet food Sheba is embarking on, to help regrow coral reef and won many awards at the recent Cannes Lions 2022

Of course, it's easy to see how one could jump to that conclusion when almost no Grand Prix-winning campaigns spoke to a company's product or service at all. Instead, only two Grand Prixes were awarded for non-cause and purpose-led work.

Low-hanging fruit

Now, in years gone by, cause-related, or charity-based campaigns, were often seen as shiny low-hanging fruit by ad agencies. As a result, many of them took on pro-bono accounts to increase their chances of winning metal.

In fact, nearly 30 years ago, things got so out of hand, that a group of frustrated creatives ran an ad featuring a horrendous image with the headline, 'Here's my dead dog, where's my award?'.

Award shows quickly took note and changed the rules. But in an obvious show of irony, not before the 'dead dog' ad won a

host of accolades across the world.

As far as corporates were concerned though, not much attention was given to anything cause-related. CSR was only a small part of their annual marketing budget, and the cause closest to their hearts was solving their own business problems rather than the problems of the world.

The narrative has flipped on its head

Fast forward to the past few years, and that narrative has completely flipped on its head.

Corporations, big and small, are now weaving cause marketing and sustainability programs into the very fabric of their DNA.

More and more businesses have realised that doing good, is indeed good business. And there have been plenty of studies to back it up.

In one study, a large group of philanthropic companies averaged an 11% increase in revenue, while their non-philanthropic competitors fell by 3% during the same time period.

They also found that 6 out of 10 people were willing to spend more for a product or service from a philanthropic company with good values.

Another study found that 36% of customers had stopped their relationship with a company because of its unethical behaviour, while a company that was socially engaged, motivated them to become a customer.



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It can't be so bad, can it?

In short, companies that add value to the lives of their customers beyond the attributes of their products or services far outperform those that don't.

As far as creative award shows go, it's quite possible that purpose fatigue will eventually set in at some point. Who knows, we might even see the return of humour. Imagine that.

But, chances are, campaigns created for the good of the world will continue to win, as long as they're yielding good results for the brands that create them. And that can't be so bad, can it?

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