

Case Study: GlaxoSmithKline & Corporate Leadership



GlaxoSmithKline is a company that supports children and public education on several fronts. Internally, the company works with employees and the community to ensure that after school programs and child care are available, and it encourages employees to volunteer with schools and after school programs. Externally, the company has been a leader on K-12 education issues for 20 years, through mergers, changes in leadership and various political climates. Two key projects include the company's involvement with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Business Education Network and with the nonprofit organization Communities in Schools. These efforts have been led for the past 18 years by Director of Community Relations, Bill Shore, and are prime examples of what business leadership can do on behalf of comprehensive reform, whether it's focused on improving the school day or the hours after school.

LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES

Concern for education issues is not the purview of only the Community Relations Department. GlaxoSmithKline makes a point to encourage volunteering and make it part of the office culture. In fact, most departments use volunteer projects as team-building exercises, instead of bringing in a consultant or hitting a ropes course. Most departments turn to Community Relations for ideas, such as building handicap ramps to install in people's homes or tutoring and mentoring with Communities in Schools. 1 "We always have employees who like to work with kids, and morale goes way up when people can do these kinds of projects," Mr. Shore said.

The company also has a Contributions Committee that considers funding requests of more than \$25,000 for programs. The committee is currently chaired by the president of global manufacturing and is composed of senior executives from all parts of the company. "The committee is always very supportive of our efforts, and we also use them as a sounding board for ideas," said Mr. Shore. "However, we don't think of what we do in terms of writing checks. We're more interested in leveraging the company's influence, rather than its assets, when it comes to affecting these issues."

To that end, GlaxoSmithKline works with all levels of government (focusing locally on towns with significant GSK corporate centers, including Raleigh/Durham and Philadelphia), with other companies and with nonprofits such as Communities in Schools to take the lead on

improving K-12 education in the United States. "Our goal in everything we do is to create a movement within a partnership environment to move the U.S. up from 19th in math and science," Mr. Shore said. "It's all about leadership and bringing various organizations to the table to make a difference."

Some of the company's partners include the Durham Public Education Network and the Philadelphia Education Fund. Bill Shore is also the chairman of the board for the North Carolina Communities in Schools, and he's been involved with the organization for the past 18 years. Mr. Shore also maintains a close relationship with the North Carolina governor's office, beginning with former Governor Jim Hunt and continuing with current Governor Mike Easley. "Working with Governor Hunt was very important," Mr. Shore said. "He created the vision of North Carolina improving its school system, and we became, along with Texas, the number-one improving school system in the country." Governor Hunt invited GlaxoSmithKline's CEO, along with Mr. Shore, to attend two national education summits coordinated by the National Governors Association. When Mr. Shore and his counterpart at IBM arranged a North Carolina Business Education Summit, Governor Hunt was one of the honorary co-chairs.

Mr. Shore also touts GlaxoSmithKline's work with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in creating the Business Education Network, which is "a business coalition dedicated to harnessing the power of the business community to address issues facing the U.S. education system." (For more information, go to www.businesseducationnetwork.net) The network is now two years old and held its first Business Education Summit in 2005, which brought together more than 400 business and education leaders from around the country to make connections and share best practices. Another thing that has grown out of this effort is SchoolMatters.com, a Web-based national education data service that provides in-depth information and analysis about public schools, districts and state education systems. This information-sharing tool was truly the result of business leadership, having been designed by Booz Allen Hamilton with software donated by Microsoft, and being run by Standard & Poor's.

"This is something I'm really proud of," Mr. Shore said. "This demonstrates the importance of company leadership

because we were able to influence the Chamber to get them to see that they needed to get involved in K-12 education as a competitiveness issue. I think the business community has to be the backbone on this issue and keep it going because political leaders and CEOs change, along with their priorities. It falls on people in my position to keep these things going.”

LESSONS LEARNED

Mr. Shore noted the differences among the worlds of business, government, education and nonprofits. One particular problem is the slow-moving nature of government bureaucracy, including the school system. “Classrooms are still run much the way they were 100 years ago, but things are changing,” he said. “You need to have true partnerships to effect change. We have to build bridges between businesses, schools and nonprofits to keep the momentum going and stay focused on the common goal of academic excellence. And as people and leaders change, you have to keep them on board to keep things moving, or you might go backwards.”

Something the business community needs to do to facilitate these partnerships is to create an environment in which school leaders and administrators feel comfortable calling businesses to ask for help. “It’s a rare school superintendent who makes that first call to us to talk about goals and obstacles they’re facing when they’re trying to improve their schools. However, I know that if they called, they’d get help. On the business side, we need to encourage them to do that, and education leaders need to encourage each other to reach out to business.”

GOING FORWARD

After 20 years of leadership, Mr. Shore said the company plans to put its energies into the following areas:

- * Literacy: “Literacy is really the backbone of education,” he said. “If students can’t read, they won’t do well in science and math.”
- * Teacher Performance: GlaxoSmithKline believes in rewarding teachers for good work and helping them to improve. The company has worked with the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and provided \$300,000 in scholarships to teachers in North Carolina and Pennsylvania to help them get their certifications. Also, former CEO Bob Ingram, at the request of Governor Hunt, testified before the North Carolina Legislature on the need to improve teacher pay and benefits.

- * Learning Disabilities: GlaxoSmithKline in North Carolina is working with a local school called the Hill Center, which works with youth who have learning disabilities. The goal of this project is to train public school teachers on how to work and identify kids with learning disabilities.
- * Home Life Issues: “A lot of kids bring baggage from home to school, making it harder for them to do well academically,” Mr. Shore said. “We are working on supporting programs aimed at helping kids overcome home life and social issues that affect their ability to succeed.”

WHY EDUCATION MATTERS

GlaxoSmithKline has been a leader in K-12 education and will continue to be so because when you get down to it, it makes good business and economic sense, Mr. Shore said. “To begin with, we have a lot of employees with children in public schools, and the vitality of a community depends a lot on the quality of its schools. Unfortunately, there are a lot of kids who are missing the boat on education. We spend \$40-60,000 a year to keep one person in prison. If we can cover more cost at the beginning, after school programs for example, we can use the money we save to send them to college, instead of jail.

“Also, as a company, we want to be able to hire the best and brightest. We have a lot of talented people, but we’re going to need more. It takes 14 years to get a drug on the market, which is the amount of time it takes a kid to get through grade school. But right now, we are in a crisis with the K-12 education system. We need our Sputnik moment, a call to arms to improve science and math.”

END NOTES

- 1 According to their website, Communities In Schools National is anchor to the nation’s leading community-based organization helping young people stay in school and prepare for life. For more than 25 years, Communities In Schools has helped students choose success by ensuring their access to the “Five Basics”:
 - * A one-on-one relationship with a caring adult adult,
 - * A safe place to learn and grow,
 - * A healthy start and a healthy future,
 - * A marketable skill to use upon graduation,
 - * A chance to give back to peers and community.