

Social Responsibility, Company Loyalty & Millennial Insights on Both

According to a study by Future Workplace, 91 percent of millennials don't intend to stick with their job for more than three years. In addition, 63 percent of millennials think it is important for their company to contribute to social or ethical causes, according to an additional study by Brookings.

I am a millennial, and a self-admitted non-committal when it comes to company loyalty. However, I recently found my place at a company that I feel differently about, and a big part of that has to do with my company's commitment to social responsibility and how it aligns with my own. Here's how I became involved and shifted my stance on company loyalty.

THE 'I DON'T HAVE TIME...' EXCUSE

When I started with Sakata Seed three years ago, I was re-entering an industry I left a while ago. Although I began my career in the seed industry, I shied away for nearly a decade, exploring industries like fresh produce sales, technology and influencer marketing. However, throughout my endeavors,

I found that I missed the bolstering traditionalism that the agricultural and horticulture industry offered — a true sense of family and a sense of pride and work ethic I've found difficult to match in other trades.

Upon joining Sakata, I felt immediately overwhelmed by the extensive product line and how much work must be done by a relatively conservative amount of team members. AKA: there are sooo many flowers, and I'm never going to learn them all. Needless to say, I had my hands full from the get-go.

A few months went by and an opportunity presented itself to me. An opportunity to lead a committee of my peers in company philanthropy and team-building activities, which was called TeamUP. Granted, I was very new and felt like my time should be solely spent on learning our extensive product line, which I'd already consciously admitted defeat in fully understanding, so I was hesitant to take on this role and responded with the classic "I just don't have time" excuse.

Immediately, I felt a sense of regret for not taking on the challenge and decided to go for it. Reasoning: I am passionate about helping people and admired the company for prioritizing these initiatives and allowing employees to spearhead these projects.

LEADING TEAMUP AND FINDING MY PLACE

In general, studies find that millennials are passionate about philanthropy and sustainability, and I'm no different. Upon taking the lead on the TeamUp committee, I was able to help push forward and engage employee participation in conjunction with Sakata's Corporate Giving Program — a program committed to supporting organizations in local communities throughout the United States, Canada, Mexico and Central America, dedicated to helping people live productive, healthy and enriched lives. Through

Sakata's Corporate Giving Program, we, as a company, seek to assist in building sustainable communities by focusing our human and financial resources in the nutritional & health and environment arena.

This year, we are pleased to announce that 1.5 percent of last year's pre-tax income will be committed to our corporate giving objective — including cash, product and employee engagement.

That's pretty incredible — a program that allows employees to work together to participate in ways that truly gives back to communities and people surrounding us; and something not every company is able to say they do. In fact, I have never known a company to place so much trust in their employees to hand pick charitable initiatives that they feel passionate about and allow them to utilize company funds to better the world based on what kind of change they want to see.

You may or may not have read that this year marks Sakata's 40th anniversary of business in NAFTA. To celebrate, we committed to 40 Acts of Kindness and have contributed through monetary and in-kind donations to 40 organizations that members of Sakata hand selected. Leading TeamUP meant leading fundraising and volunteerism for amazing organizations like the American Heart Association, American Floral Endowment and Cal Giant Foundation's "Let's Move Salad Bars to Schools" campaign, which promotes healthy eating for our youth.

But this goes beyond large non-profit organizations. I also helped to push forward contributions to smaller, local organizations that are meaningful to myself and my team members, like the support of local agriculture youth organizations, like 4-H and Future Farmers of America. Most recently, we banded together with a group of peers to participate in Petal It Forward Day, a Society of American Florists initiative, where we handed out free bouquets of flowers (two per person) in Salinas, California, encouraging strangers on the street to keep one bouquet for themselves, and "Petal it forward" by passing the other bouquet along to another stranger. This was an incredible experience, which really showed the passion, kindness and incredible spirit of our industry and humankind, as a whole.

A CAREER OF CONTRIBUTIONS AND COMMITMENT

TeamUp has allowed me to pursue my passion for altruism while being backed by an incredible team and a company that cares about supporting these efforts. Through this committee, I've developed an eagerness to get more involved, be a leader, stick with my commitments and contribute to the betterment of society as a whole. It has ignited a sense of employee satisfaction within me that has undoubtedly spawned a sense of company loyalty to Sakata. More importantly, I've found a home at a company I love, a company I can honestly respect and relate to through a shared passion for good-doing and teamwork. [gpn](#)



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