NIKE WE: DESIGN MEETS SOCIAL GOOD

NIKE had a long history of bringing the athletes it sponsored to its headquarters to inspire its employees. Over time, the company realized that the athletes alone would not continue to inspire NIKE's employees or enable the company to attract top talent—it needed to do more to engage its employees.

NIKE found that its employees were passionate about helping those less fortunate in their communities but that the company could do more to enable this activity. To this end, NIKE developed a portal, known as "WE," to connect employees to the communities they helped and to each other. WE provided the tools to enable them to give back to their own communities. This involved untangling existing company efforts to encourage volunteerism, connecting to relevant sites, and erasing confusion around responsibility for different efforts. This task was complicated by the fact that NIKE already had to contend with many company sites and geographies, types of employees (e.g., hourly vs. salaried), and differing attitudes towards volunteering.

To ensure WE's success, NIKE purposely designed an initial version of the portal that was incomplete. NIKE wanted the portal to evolve based on users' needs and wants. As Patrice Thramer, global director of employee marketplace, explained, "We had to ensure that the solution was a product of the employees' work, not something handed down by corporate."[1]

Based on employee feedback, NIKE designed WE to provide four main giving mechanisms: "Give Money," "Give Time," "Give Talent," "Give Voice." Accordingly, employees could do anything from donating money to an organization using matching NIKE funds, to volunteering at a community agency, to offering their expertise to a group in need, to supporting a cause by writing or speaking. While most past community service opportunities came to employees through broadcast messages, WE enabled NIKE to customize opportunities to employees' interests. According to Thramer, NIKE wanted to have an answer for an employee who asked,

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[1] All quotations are from the authors' interviews unless otherwise noted.

Sara Gaviser Leslie and Professor Jennifer Aaker prepared this case as the basis for class discussion rather than to illustrate either effective or ineffective handling of an administrative situation.

"I live in Memphis and I feel really passionate about HIV AIDS education. What can I do? Who else is interested?"

As WE recorded employees' community engagement activities, visitors to the portal could discover what their colleagues were doing and be inspired by their work. Employees earned points based on their participation and then could use this "currency for giving" to donate NIKE products to nonprofit organizations that they supported. WE enabled NIKE to connect people to the things they cared about without constraining them to specific activities or, as Thramer explained, "Enable employees to give back easily, in their own way, and then get out of their way."

NIKE Focus + GET

Focus: Provide a way for employees to donate NIKE products as well as tie all philanthropic efforts together under one umbrella.

1. Create a website to serve as a starting point for all philanthropic efforts,
2. Launch a digital community with an unbroken chain of connectivity, spanning cross-cultural boundaries, that is singularly focused on making a difference in as many ways as there are employees,
3. Leverage existing Employee Marketplace Leads and engage senior leadership,
4. Listen – to deliver what employees wanted and to cut through other activities and initiatives at NIKE; try and get mindshare. Put the employee in the driver's seat by enabling him/her to develop the site in cooperation with a corporate team.

Grab Attention: Publicize the site.

1. Send out weekly e-mails to employees to keep portal top-of-mind based on specified interest areas,
2. Offer four giving categories—color-coded and standing out right at the top of the page,
3. Use the "We Are Here to Help" tagline to create instant connection,
4. Show "Employee Activity"—similar to Facebook status updates to keep people in the loop,
5. Subtly place videos in each of the giving categories to inspire and explain,
6. Show "How Are We doing?/Feedback Survey" visibly on the page to show NIKE is listening.

Engage: Create a Connection Between Employees and the Efforts Promoted by the Site.

1. Set up a blog to highlight activity,
2. Offer four clear ways of giving—time, voice, money, talent—that are concrete calls to action,
3. Establish a WE Points System and display it prominently on employee's display page,
4. Ensure individuals drive the direction of the portal by referring orgs, blogs, comments,
5. Capture employees' competitive natures through WE Giving Points,
6. Set up capacity to add employees' own organizations that they feel passionately about.

Take Action: Enable others to take action.

1. Establish giving categories that provide the option for everyone to contribute in some way,
2. Offer users the opportunity to create teams and work towards a common goal,
3. Employee Twitter/Facebook and video to allow for a greater circle of influence,
4. Offer option to refer portal to friends—recruitment earns points; viral effect,
5. Give employees the ability to indicate attendance at events/opportunities and then post images/videos of event,
6. Display inspirational comments by employees about WE.