CSR AND POLITICAL ACTIVISM IN THE TRUMP ERA

What issues to speak out on, what to avoid, and what consumers expect from brands
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THE MORNING CONSULT BRAND TOOLBOX
This report is part of a series that seeks to give decision-makers a better set of tools for dealing with essential brand decisions - from managing a crisis to deepening consumer loyalty.

To make sure you receive these reports, sign up here (mncnslt.com/sub).
Here are four simple rules that can help your brand traverse difficult decisions regarding how and when to engage politically:

**RULE #1: Have a firm grasp on which issues are winners and losers**
Here are three issues that aren’t very controversial: civil rights, criminal justice reform, and LGBTQ rights. Here are three issues that are: abortion, anthem protesting, and immigration. Gun control is somewhere in the middle. There are, of course, important moral factors that go into deciding what political issues to speak on, but it’s always best to understand the stakes.

**RULE #2: Don’t overthink doing good**
The best way to make consumers happy with your brand is pretty simple: Develop a reputation for treating and paying employees well, and create more American jobs when possible. There are plenty of other ways to boost your image, like partnering with charities and being transparent about labor practices, but nothing beats the basics.

**RULE #3: Don’t talk about Trump**
One of the most striking findings in this survey is that speaking about Trump - either positively or negatively - is far more likely to generate backlash than win your brand any favor. For example, saying something negative about Trump leads 56% of Trump voters to have a much less favorable view of your brand, but just 32% of Clinton voters to have a much more favorable view. For every person you’re making happy, there are almost twice as many who are unhappy. That trend holds if you issue a positive statement.

**RULE #4: Most Americans would rather you butt out**
Media scrutiny and social media frenzies can skew the conversation. Most people (60%) prefer corporations stick to what they do best, and not get involved in politics. Furthermore, Americans think corporations already have more influence in politics and cultural conversations than they should.

There’s a lot more to dig into in this report. We hope you find value in the results. If you have any questions or comments, there’s contact information on the last page.
ABOUT MORNING CONSULT

INTELLIGENT DATA, INTELLIGENT DECISIONS

Morning Consult is a technology company revolutionizing ways to collect, organize, and share survey research data to transform how decisions are made. Our survey research technology produces results at unprecedented scale, speed, and accuracy.

OUR FLAGSHIP PRODUCT

Currently tracking over 1,800 brands and products, with 200 interviews per day per brand.

What Consumers THINK
Collecting over 3 million market research interviews

What Consumers SAY
Evaluating over 100 million social media posts

What Consumers SEE
Analyzing over 85,000 news media outlets

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USES CASES

DAILY MONITORING
Track brand perception in real-time with the Brand Intelligence dashboard in your inbox.

STRATEGIC PLANNING
Identify demographic targets and geographic trends to customize communications & marketing campaigns.

CRISIS RESPONSE
Evaluate the magnitude of a crisis and track the effectiveness of your response.
CSR & THE ROLE OF CORPORATIONS IN AMERICA

Where people want brands involved and views on corporate America
Corporations should stick to what they do and not get involved in cultural or political matters, says a majority (60%) of Americans.

Which of the following statements comes closest to your view, even if neither is exactly right?

- Corporations play an important role in this country, and they should use their influence to impact political and cultural issues. (22%)
- Corporations should stick to what they do, and generally not get involved in political or cultural matters. (22%)
- Don’t know / No opinion. (18%)

TREND TO WATCH:

Liberal, younger Americans more likely to want corporations involved.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Gen-Z (18-21)</th>
<th>Millennials (22-37)</th>
<th>Gen-X (38-53)</th>
<th>Boomers (54-72)</th>
<th>Liberal</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Conservative</th>
<th>Clinton voters</th>
<th>Trump voters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>27%</td>
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<td>23%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Across the board, Americans think corporations have more influence than they should.

Below are the percentages of Americans who say corporations have influence or should act to influence in each area.

- **Altering the economic realities for average Americans**: 72% have influence, 52% should act.
- **Altering the impacts of climate change**: 56% have influence, 51% should act.
- **Altering Americans attitudes about cultural or social issues**: 66% have influence, 42% should act.
- **Getting legislation passed**: 68% have influence, 35% should act.
- **Getting politicians elected**: 72% have influence, 28% should act.

**KEY NUMBERS:**

A 43% plurality of Republicans believe corporations should act on climate change. Among Democrats, 59% believe corporations should act. Thus, while there’s more support among Democrats, it’s a **winning issue across the political spectrum**.

53% of liberals think corporations should act to alter American cultural and social attitudes - a higher rate than conservatives (36%). There’s also a big age divide - 56% for Gen-Z, compared with 38% for Boomers.
Americans see corporations as more political, less ethical than they used to be.

In recent years, would you say corporations in America have become more or less:

- **Political**
  - Much more: 32%
  - Somewhat more: 32%
  - No Change: 9%
  - Don’t know / No opinion: 18%
  - Somewhat less: 18%
  - Much Less: 5%

- **Environmentally friendly**
  - Much more: 9%
  - Somewhat more: 34%
  - No Change: 11%
  - Don’t know / No opinion: 16%
  - Somewhat less: 14%
  - Much Less: 16%

- **Charitable**
  - Much more: 9%
  - Somewhat more: 24%
  - No Change: 15%
  - Don’t know / No opinion: 19%
  - Somewhat less: 18%
  - Much Less: 14%

- **Value-conscious**
  - Much more: 9%
  - Somewhat more: 24%
  - No Change: 12%
  - Don’t know / No opinion: 19%
  - Somewhat less: 18%
  - Much Less: 18%

- **Responsible**
  - Much more: 8%
  - Somewhat more: 23%
  - No Change: 12%
  - Don’t know / No opinion: 16%
  - Somewhat less: 21%
  - Much Less: 20%

- **Ethical**
  - Much more: 7%
  - Somewhat more: 18%
  - No Change: 13%
  - Don’t know / No opinion: 18%
  - Somewhat less: 19%
  - Much Less: 25%

Corporations seen as getting more culturally liberal, but also more friendly to congressional Republicans than Democrats.
Treating employees well and helping to boost American jobs are the best ways to make consumers happy.

Below are the percentages of people who say they would have a more favorable view of a company if they found out a company did each of the following.

- **Paid employees well**: 49% more favorable, 28% somewhat more favorable.
- **Produced their goods in America**: 47% more favorable, 27% somewhat more favorable.
- **Was known to be a place employees liked to work**: 43% more favorable, 31% somewhat more favorable.
- **Made an effort to be environmentally responsible**: 39% more favorable, 32% somewhat more favorable.
- **Gave away a small share of their profits to a good cause**: 29% more favorable, 41% somewhat more favorable.
- **Gave away a significant share of their profits to a good cause**: 33% more favorable, 36% somewhat more favorable.
- **Produced their goods in your state**: 34% more favorable, 32% somewhat more favorable.
- **Were transparent about the labor process to create their products**: 31% more favorable, 32% somewhat more favorable.
- **Made an effort to promote women to leadership roles**: 30% more favorable, 32% somewhat more favorable.
- **Made an effort to hire a diverse staff**: 31% more favorable, 29% somewhat more favorable.

**TREND TO WATCH**

**Younger Americans far less concerned than older Americans about whether a company creates new jobs domestically or abroad:**

When asked whether they would have a more favorable impression of a company if they built a new domestic office or plant that would create jobs:

- 83% of Americans 65+ say yes
- 61% of 18-29 year-olds say yes

When asked the same question, but about building an office or plant built abroad (that would NOT take away domestic jobs):

- 25% of Americans 65+ say yes
- 45% of 18-29 year-olds say yes
CSR & THE ROLE OF CORPORATIONS IN AMERICA

POSITIVE PUBLICITY OPPORTUNITIES

Disaster relief is a sure-fire way to help your company’s image.

Would the following scenarios give you a more favorable view of a company, a less favorable view of a company, or would it make no difference?

- In the wake of a natural disaster, a company sends resources to help in the recovery effort
  - Much more favorable: 53%
  - Somewhat more favorable: 26%

- A company announces it’s going to partner with a charity that helps local communities
  - Much more favorable: 44%
  - Somewhat more favorable: 31%

- For every product you buy from a company, it will send a similar product to people in need
  - Much more favorable: 45%
  - Somewhat more favorable: 29%

- A company begins paying all employees a minimum wage of $15 an hour, even though it is not required to by state law
  - Much more favorable: 44%
  - Somewhat more favorable: 24%

- A company announces that it is going to be carbon neutral within the next 10 years
  - Much more favorable: 31%
  - Somewhat more favorable: 26%

Most Americans believe generous corporations genuinely want to do good but also get publicity. Men are more skeptical than women.

If you heard a large corporation was giving away a share of its profits to a good cause, would you assume they primarily want to do good or it is primarily a way to get good publicity?

- Among all adults:
  - They primarily want to do good: 29%
  - It is primarily a way to get good publicity: 50%

- Among men:
  - They primarily want to do good: 33%
  - It is primarily a way to get good publicity: 47%

- Among women:
  - They primarily want to do good: 16%
  - It is primarily a way to get good publicity: 52%
A majority of Americans say a company’s ethics are very important when considering a job.

Below are the percentages who say each of the following are very important when considering working for a company:

- The pay is good
- It is environmentally responsible
- It has a good reputation in terms of ethical matters
- It has a mission as a company you support
- It has taken political positions you agree with

Few Americans think the company they work for does not have a positive mission.

Do you consider the company you work for to have a positive mission?

- Among all adults:
  - Yes: 41%
  - No: 5%
  - I don’t work for a company: 5%
  - Don’t know / No opinion: 43%

- Among adults earning $100K or more:
  - Yes: 56%
  - No: 4%
  - I don’t work for a company: 32%
  - Don’t know / No opinion: 8%
THE MOST ETHICAL BRANDS ACCORDING TO CONSUMERS
### WHAT COMPANIES DO AMERICANS VIEW AS ETHICAL?

6,600 Americans were asked to think of a company that they would consider to be ethically responsible, and name the first one that came to mind. Below are all of the companies that received at least 25 mentions, ordered by number of mentions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Mentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WALMART</td>
<td>699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMAZON</td>
<td>450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TARGET</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHICK-FIL-A</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STARBUCKS</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPLE</td>
<td>137</td>
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<tr>
<td>COSTCO</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOOGLE</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MICROSOFT</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCDONALD’S</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KROGER</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHOLE FOODS</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOBBY LOBBY</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOME DEPOT</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOWE’S</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Mentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOMS SHOES</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRADER JOE’S</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COCA-COLA</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUBLIX</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KOHL’S</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISNEY</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HONEST CO.</td>
<td>36</td>
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<tr>
<td>FORD</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MACY’S</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PANERA</td>
<td>34</td>
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<tr>
<td>NIKE</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TESLA</td>
<td>28</td>
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<tr>
<td>LUSH</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOHNSON &amp; JOHNSON</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WHERE TO TAKE A STAND

Evaluating hot-button issues, partisan passion, boycotting and more
WHERE TO TAKE A STAND

HOT-BUTTON POLITICAL ISSUES

The most and least controversial political stances a brand can take:

Below are the percentages of people who say they would have a more favorable view of a company if they found out a company advocated for or supported:

- **Much more**
- **Somewhat more**
- **No change**
- **Don't know / No opinion**
- **Somewhat less**
- **Much less**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Much more</th>
<th>Somewhat more</th>
<th>No change</th>
<th>Don't know / No opinion</th>
<th>Somewhat less</th>
<th>Much less</th>
<th>Net Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civil rights</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The rights of racial minorities in America</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reforming the criminal justice system</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affirmative action</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>+25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The rights of transgender people</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>+24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay rights</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>+22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stricter gun control</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>+16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stricter immigration policy</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>+11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The campaign of a Democratic lawmaker</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The right of protestors to kneel during the national anthem</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stricter policies preventing abortion</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The campaign of a Republican lawmaker</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>-12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What to do with Trump?

It's best not to mention him.

Just 30% of people will have a more favorable impression of your company if you issue a positive statement about Trump. Alternatively, just 32% will have a more favorable impression if you issue a negative statement. No matter what you say about Trump, roughly 70% of the country will be upset or won’t care.

As we detail in the following pages, saying something nice about Trump is the easiest way to anger Clinton voters, while saying something negative is the second easiest way to anger Trump voters. Read on...
WHERE TO TAKE A STAND

EVALUATING REPUBLICAN PASSION

Supporting anthem-kneelers will draw the most passionate response from Trump voters.

The chart below gauges enthusiasm. Each data point represents the percentage of Trump voters who are “much” more or less likely to have a favorable opinion about a company if they did the following. If the much more likely number was higher than the much less likely one, then that data point is displayed, and vice versa. This means that anthem kneeling is the issue where Trump voters are most likely to have a strong opinion, and advocating for racial minorities is the least.

- Advocated for the right of protestors to kneel during the national anthem: 58%
- Issued a negative statement about President Trump: 55%
- Advocated for stricter gun control: 39%
- Advocated for stricter immigration policy: 39%
- Supported the campaign of a Democratic lawmaker: 39%
- Issued a positive statement about President Trump: 38%
- Advocate for the rights of transgender people: 28%
- Advocated for gay rights: 28%
- Advocated for stricter policies preventing abortion: 22%
- Advocated for affirmative action: 21%
- Supported the campaign of a Republican lawmaker: 20%
- Advocated for civil rights: 19%
- Advocated for reforming the criminal justice system: 16%
- Advocated for the rights of racial minorities in America: 10%
WHERE TO TAKE A STAND
EVALUATING DEMOCRATIC PASSION

Supporting Trump will draw the most passionate response from Clinton voters.

The chart below gauges enthusiasm. Each data point represents the percentage of Clinton voters who are “much” more or less likely to have a favorable opinion about a company if they did the following. If the much more likely number was higher than the much less likely one, then we selected that data point to display, and vice versa. This means that saying something positive about Trump is the issue where Clinton voters are most likely to have a strong opinion, and supporting a Democratic lawmaker is the least.

- Issued a positive statement about President Trump: 56%
- Advocated for stricter gun control: 48%
- Advocated for stricter policies preventing abortion: 47%
- Advocated for civil rights: 46%
- Advocated for the rights of racial minorities in America: 46%
- Supported the campaign of a Republican lawmaker: 38%
- Advocated for reforming the criminal justice system: 36%
- Advocated for the rights of transgender people: 36%
- Advocated for gay rights: 34%
- Advocated for stricter immigration policy: 34%
- Issued a negative statement about President Trump: 32%
- Advocated for affirmative action: 30%
- Advocated for the right of protestors to kneel during the national anthem: 29%
- Supported the campaign of a Democratic lawmaker: 24%
WHERE TO TAKE A STAND

HOLDING BRANDS ACCOUNTABLE

Just 13% of Americans say they pay a lot of attention to the ethical and political concerns relating to brands.

How much attention do you pay to ethical and political matters relating to companies you purchase goods and services from?

- A lot: 13%
- Some: 35%
- Don’t know / No opinion: 9%
- Not too much: 32%
- None: 10%

A plurality (47%) of Americans are willing to overlook corporations acting unethically.

Which of the following statements comes closest to your view, even if neither is exactly right?

- I would prefer corporations acted responsibly and ethically, but ultimately if a company offers a product I like at the right price I am likely to overlook some issues: 47%
- If I know a company acts irresponsibly or unethically, I rarely, if ever, overlook those issues and will stop buying from them: 35%
- Don’t know / No opinion: 18%

Americans are more willing to overlook political issues than labor practice ones.

Have you purchased goods or services from companies that...

- You have an unfavorable view of: 29%
- Have labor practices you don’t support: 23%
- Hold different political positions than you: 43%
WHERE TO TAKE A STAND

BOYCOTTING AND BUYCOTTING

Who boycotts over politics?

Most people haven’t in the past year. But some groups, including wealthier Americans, are more likely than others.

Below are the percentages of people who say they’ve boycotted a company for political reasons in the past year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All adults</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen-Z (18-21)</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millennials (22-37)</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen-X (38-53)</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boomers (54-72)</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton voters</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trump voters</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income: Under 50k</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income: 50-100k</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income: 100k</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Have you spent money to support a company because of a political stance it has taken?

- Yes: 15%
- No: 74%
- Don’t know / No opinion: 11%
THE MOST POLARIZING BRANDS, ACCORDING TO CONSUMERS
BRAND TRACKING
THE 30 MOST POLARIZING BRANDS IN AMERICA

These are the brands with the greatest difference between Republicans and Democrats.

Democrats
Republicans
More favorable among Democrats

Spread: 78

-50 -40 -30 -20 -10 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80

1. Trump Hotels
2. CNN
3. Fox News
3. NBC News
5. New York Times
6. MSNBC
6. NFL
8. ABC News
9. CBS News
10. Washington Post
11. Fox Business
12. BET
13. HuffPost
14. Time Magazine
15. CBS
15. Chick-fil-A
15. MTV
18. Breitbart
19. Comedy Central
19. NBA
21. Bass Pro Shops
21. ExxonMobil
21. Koch Industries
21. Papa John’s
25. Starbucks
26. Cabela’s
26. Halliburton
28. HBO
29. NASCAR
29. NBC Universal

MORNING CONSULT BRAND TOOLBOX
WHERE DOES YOUR BRAND STAND?

FIND OUT HERE
METHODOLOGY

All polling besides the Most Polarizing Brands section was conducted from July 13-14, 2018, among a national sample of 2,200 Adults. The interviews were conducted online and the data were weighted to approximate a target sample of adults based on age, race/ethnicity, gender, educational attainment, and region. Results from the full survey have a margin of error of plus or minus 2 percentage points.

Most Polarizing Brands
Morning Consult's Most Polarizing Brands is based on 336,370 surveys conducted online from Oct. 3, 2017 to Jan. 2, 2018 among a national sample of U.S. adults. The top 30 brands were drawn from a list of over 1,900. Between 1,000 and 30,000 adults who identified as Republican, Democrat or independent rated each brand, and the results have a margin of error between 0.5 and 3.1 percentage points.

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