

Utilising CSR to create communities that thrive

 By Lauren Hartzenberg

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[Diageo SA](#) is the local arm of the global alcoholic beverages giant behind premium brands like Johnnie Walker, Smirnoff, J&B, Bell's and Captain Morgan. According to its acting corporate relations manager Zanele Njapha, the company sees itself as having a responsibility to ensure that its people, its suppliers, the communities around its operations, its customers and consumers, and society at large all thrive as a result of the business.

"The value of assisting and empowering citizens is one that is entrenched in the company's corporate culture as well as its employees," she says.

In support of this, it runs a 'Valuing Each Other' (VEO) Community Fund, an employee-led charitable initiative, funded by the staff themselves. They make personal contributions to the fund from their monthly salaries, and Diageo SA matches these contributions rand-for-rand.

"The money is used to support community-based projects and schemes nominated by the employees that they are involved in, and that assist in enriching those communities where we live and work, to improve their living standards. All the projects are focused on three strategic pillars: women and child abuse, eradicating poverty and inequality, and promoting quality of education."



As part of its [Mandela Day activities](#) this year, Diageo SA staff members assisted Habitat for Humanity with building houses for the Orange Farm community, located south of Johannesburg, while other employees joined the Meals on Wheels sandwich drive in Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town, which included preparing and distributing 1,000 food hampers to the Thabo Mbeki settlement near Randburg.

But the social responsibilities of an alcoholic drinks company extend beyond charitable contributions and isolated Mandela Day initiatives. Diageo acknowledges its role and responsibility in combating the social ill of alcohol misuse and promoting responsible drinking. As part of our [#CSIMonth focus](#), Njapha chats to us about Diageo SA's efforts in reducing harmful drinking, and how its CSR interests fit into the business's overall corporate strategy.

 ***In your opinion, where should social responsibility fit within a business's overall corporate strategy?***



Zanele Ntshona ©Mke Turner Photography

that our people, our suppliers, the communities around our operations, our customers and consumers, and society at large all thrive as a result of our business. We create value for millions of people as a buyer of goods and services, as an employer, as corporate citizens, and as producers of some of the world's best-loved brands.

But creating shared value in a lasting way extends beyond this. We want to empower our own people and the communities in which we work by:

- Increasing access to opportunities, addressing development challenges such as capability gaps or access to clean water
- Advocating high standards of governance
- Supporting farmers and other suppliers as they help us build a sustainable value chain

As an alcoholic beverage manufacturer, what steps has Diageo taken to ensure it's a sustainably run business environmentally and otherwise?

Alcohol has long been associated in many parts of the world with enjoyment and celebration. As South Africa's leading premium drinks company, Diageo is committed to promoting responsible drinking and combating alcohol misuse. Our premium portfolio lends itself to responsible drinking and appreciating quality; hence we are proud of the role our brands play in the lives of so many people. We also acknowledge that excessive or inappropriate patterns of alcohol consumption may result in health or social problems.

We are committed to working with industry players to drive positive changes in attitudes and behaviours towards alcohol and seek to be at the forefront of industry efforts to promote responsible drinking and combat misuse.

Diageo has partnered with leading global alcohol producers to help the World Health Organization (WHO) reduce harmful drinking in the following areas:

- Reducing underage drinking
- Strengthening and expanding marketing codes of practice
- Providing consumer information and responsible product innovation
- Reducing drinking and driving
- Enlisting the support of retailers to reduce harmful drinking



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■ ***How important is it to align one's CSR strategy with one's brand and what are the benefits of doing so?***

It is very important to align our CSR strategy with brand Diageo and all our sub-brands under it. Our communications strategy speaks to the below pillars:

- Creating a conducive and fertile environment that will positively support Diageo' corporate strategy and performance goals
- Building and maintaining strong partnerships with all our important stakeholders
- Improving our reputation through our communication efforts internally and externally
- Promoting Diageo as a caring, motivated and responsive employer of choice

■ ***Tell us about a Diageo CSR campaign that has stood out for you over the years as a truly impactful initiative.***

We put our resources and skills into programmes to prevent and reduce alcohol misuse by working with others to raise awareness and change people's attitudes and behaviour. To address this challenge, Diageo conducted extensive consumer research to gauge consumers' attitudes towards drinking and driving. The insight gained was that many 18-25-year-old consumers (18-25-year-olds who either have their own car or have access to a car, and who drink alcohol socially) believed that being involved in an accident or being arrested and getting a criminal record as a result of driving drunk "won't happen to me".

Our research also indicated that even if people drive when they are over the limit, they don't believe that anything bad will happen to them. In response to this, Diageo launched its Drive Dry campaign, adopting the tagline "It won't happen to me" to provoke thought around the issue and to discourage consumers in a hard hitting way that it can, in fact, happen to them and they shouldn't drink and drive. The overall message also speaks to all other South Africans, outside the primary target market.

Research showed that gory accident scenes have little effect, so this campaign confronted consumers with the kind of scary and dangerous people (such as hardened gangsters and dodgy tow truck drivers) that may be out on South Africa's roads at night, just waiting for them to drive drunk.

The aim was for consumers to realise that meeting these very real people could potentially be much worse than having an accident. This was an innovative and in some cases controversial angle on a personal issue, which was developed specifically to shift people's perception of the risks involved in driving drunk, and to target both male and female consumers.

Our strategy is not simply to raise awareness but to change consumer behaviour: to never drink and drive again. The research (*News24.com* online survey) we did showed that 88% of South Africans say the fear of being arrested and sent to jail for drunk driving encourages them not to drink and drive. It supported the rationale behind the campaign, which is premised on the fear factor and the belief that the prospect of arrest and incarceration is a powerful deterrent to drunk driving. Our mission is to stop drunk-driving, protect families from the trauma of losing loved ones and in doing so, to make a tangible difference to South Africans' lives.

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