

CSI not just a nice-to-have, but a business imperative

According to Regan Adams, CEO of RCS - a subsidiary of BNP Paribas, organisations can no longer afford to view corporate social investment (CSI) as a nice-to-have, but rather a business imperative.



Regan Adams, CEO of RCS - a subsidiary of BNP Paribas

Kevin Anderson as its ambassador.

“Only sustainable companies, underpinned by responsible business practices, will be in a position to use CSI to gain a competitive advantage in the future,” said Adams, speaking late last month after the launch of a nationwide grassroots tennis development initiative in Soweto.

He said that companies are under increasing scrutiny from both the public and consumers to demonstrate a shared value approach, that is identifying and addressing various social problems that intersect with their business, and create a win-win scenario for all stakeholders. “Corporate social investment can’t begin and end with a company announcing their involvement in a community project and writing out a cheque. Authenticity is important, and half-hearted initiatives that don’t have the support of the corporate mission will do more harm than good. Without a sense of purpose, no company can achieve its full potential,” said Adams.

The RCS Rising Star Tennis initiative – in partnership with global French bank BNP Paribas and Tennis SA - aims to drive inclusivity, youth empowerment and social cohesion using sport. The programme has been introduced in collaboration with Tennis SA (TSA) and has attracted South African tennis star

Adams said that heightened social awareness is also evident when potential recruits assess their employment options. “Robust and authentic CSI programmes are vitally important for attracting and retaining talent. Despite being awarded Top Employer in 2019, it is not uncommon for potential RCS employees to enquire about our programmes; assessing the sincerity of our CSI commitment to the communities in which we operate,” said Adams.

Promoting social cohesion

Speaking on the sponsorship of the Rising Stars initiative with Tennis SA, Adams said tennis was an obvious choice as sport at grass roots level had the most significant potential to unite people and promote social cohesion. “Stable economies are underpinned by stable communities. Rising social inequality, worldwide, is threatening economic growth, which is a problem for business. Despite the profound role of sport in encouraging social and fiscal stability, the economic disparity between premier league and community sports persists, which is a threat to shared goals,” said Adams.

Speaking at the tennis launch, Richard Glover, CEO of Tennis SA, said that RCS and their holding company BNP Paribas are exemplary corporate citizens. “One of the things that has impressed me the most about working with RCS and BNP Paribas is the fact that they are totally committed to this partnership. Some sponsors rather say ‘here is the money, put our brand on it and we’ll see you in three years’; with these two companies it’s completely different. They are totally committed; RCS and BNP Paribas are (100%) involved in this project, which is what makes this initiative very exciting,” said Glover.

“Sports, like tennis, enable young South Africans to rise above their circumstances and achieve their full potential,” concluded Adams. “By creating more playing opportunities for young South Africans where they are needed the most, and by taking tennis to the people through this partnership, the initiative exemplifies our philosophy to be positive agents of change. Our involvement in the Rising Stars initiative is about nailing our flag to the mast and demonstrating that we are

committed to building a better South Africa.”

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