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NIKE WE: DESIGN MEETS SOCIAL GOOD

“We wanted to enable employees to give back easily, in their own way, then get out of their way.”

—Patrice Thramer, Global Director Employee Marketplace, NIKE¹

INTRODUCTION

Lisa Johnson², a designer at NIKE, spent an afternoon each month at the Beaverton, Oregon Boys and Girls Club. Seeing the broken nets on the basketball hoops and the lack of baseball and softball equipment, she contacted the community relations department at NIKE to try to arrange for product donations. After being sent from one department to another, she finally was able to get donations of NIKE sports equipment. But, she realized that the process would have been a lot simpler if NIKE had a formal way for employees to donate such products to people in need. Through feedback from employees like Lisa, NIKE learned that it needed to facilitate employees’ efforts to donate products to worthy causes as well as to share their skills and access to resources with people less fortunate.

Community service had a long history of success at NIKE. Often, employees like Johnson did not even see their work as “volunteering”—they felt like they were doing what they loved and making a difference to the people around them. Despite this enthusiasm, corporate support for volunteerism was extremely fragmented; people who wanted to get involved did not always know who to contact for help. If a department wanted to do a community service project rather than a holiday party, it was difficult to find someone to support this effort. By connecting to employees and dedicating resources to their work, NIKE believed it could enable these individuals to increase their giving, both in terms of monetary and time contributions.

¹ All quotations are from the authors’ interviews unless otherwise noted.

² Name has been changed.

Sara Gavisier Leslie, Ravdeep Chawla, 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.

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NIKE, INC.³

Bill Bowerman and Phil Knight founded NIKE. The two men met when Bowerman was coaching track and field at the University of Oregon and Knight was a middle-distance runner on his team. After earning an MBA from Stanford (GSB 1962), Knight returned to Oregon and approached Bowerman with an idea to bring in low-priced, high-tech athletic shoes from Japan to compete in the U.S. athletic shoe market (which was dominated by German imports at the time).⁴ After importing shoes from other manufacturers, the two formed a new company in 1972 that would design, produce, and sell its own shoes.

By 2010, that company, called NIKE for the Greek goddess of victory, had grown into one of the world's most well-known brands and a dominant competitor in the global athletic footwear, apparel, and equipment market. NIKE's fiscal year 2009 sales reached \$19 billion and net income totaled \$1.4 billion. The Beaverton, Oregon company employed approximately 26,000 employees worldwide and had operations in 120 countries. Beyond Beaverton, NIKE had three additional centers of employee concentration, known as "backyards": Laakdal, Belgium; Memphis, Tennessee; and Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

NIKE's corporate mission was "to bring inspiration and innovation to every athlete in the world." The company's brand was built on inspiring (and even challenging) individuals to get out and realize their physical potential. Innovation was at the heart of the company's values, and innovative products were at the center of its competitive advantage.

THE ORIGIN OF NIKE WE

History of Employee Engagement

At NIKE, employee engagement had been historically viewed as a community investment activity and was driven by a tradition of philanthropic volunteering and traditional community grant programs. NIKE had four main priority areas for its community service—education, environment, inclusion, and health—and viewed each priority through the lens of sports (e.g. promoting girls' participation in organized athletics). Certain individuals, known as employee marketplace (EM) leads, managed all employee engagement and community investments strategies for NIKE's primary marketplaces of Beaverton, Memphis, Laakdal, Amsterdam, and the U.K. The employee marketplace was a virtual community where NIKE employees could give back and, in exchange, gain inspiring experiences. The EM enabled mutually beneficial value exchanges between NIKE employees and the communities where they lived.

Offering the Community "More Than Money"

To enable NIKE to pursue a more sustainable business model, in 2009, the company transformed its corporate responsibility function into a Sustainable Business and Innovation (SB&I) program. The vision for SB&I was to enable NIKE, Inc and its customers to thrive in a sustainable economy, one where people, planet and profit were in balance. One element of this strategy was

³ NIKE's Global Women's Fitness, SM-152 (2007) provided content for this section.

⁴ "Heritage," NIKEbiz.com, <http://www.NIKE.com/NIKEbiz/NIKEbiz.jhtml?page=5> (February 7, 2007).

to initiate a culture change that would “inspire employees across the organization to consider how they can contribute to building a more sustainable organization.”⁵

To support this effort, in 2009, NIKE moved from a community involvement approach that was mainly focused on grant making to a “more than money” approach. This shift redefined community investment to include not only grants but also employee talent and donations of NIKE products in order to have the highest impact on the primary geographies’ neighboring communities.

Finding Inspiration: Beyond the Pull of Star Athletes

Concurrently, Nike was looking for new ways to inspire its employees. NIKE had strong connections to the world’s top athletes due to the contracts it negotiated with these individuals. For years, as a benefit to its employees, it brought these athletes— LeBron James and Joan Benoit Samuelson⁶—to inspire NIKE employees and develop a connection between their work and the superstars that the company enabled. While the employees enjoyed these events, attendance was dwindling and the cost—\$40,000 to \$50,000 per appearance—was extremely high. Patrice Thrasher, global director employee marketplace, recalled:

We used to think that what makes somebody feel good is that we have all these really great athletes. For instance, Ken Griffy, Jr.⁷ came to speak to all employees recently. A good number of them came but I asked myself afterwards, “What did that create?” One benefit was that it made employees feel good. However, I wondered what the relative benefit was in comparison to the satisfaction and fulfillment that employees get when they give back to the community in a very relevant, meaningful way.

NIKE athletes alone would not continue to inspire employees or attract the best talent. The company needed also to demonstrate a commitment to good citizenship and support its employees’ community activities, passions, and commitments. Always an innovator, NIKE believed it could do more to make its employees feel good and enable them to give back to the community in a very relevant and meaningful way.

Vision: The WE Portal

NIKE wanted to harness the energy of its active volunteers to drive overall community involvement and investment. As such, one of the goals of the SB&I team in 2009, according to Thrasher, was to “pull the veil back on what employees were already doing so that these employees could tell their stories and other employees could get inspired by their work.” Thrasher explained that NIKE’s plan was to establish an intranet portal, later known as the “WE Portal” that would “connect NIKE’s global employee workforce to communities and each other

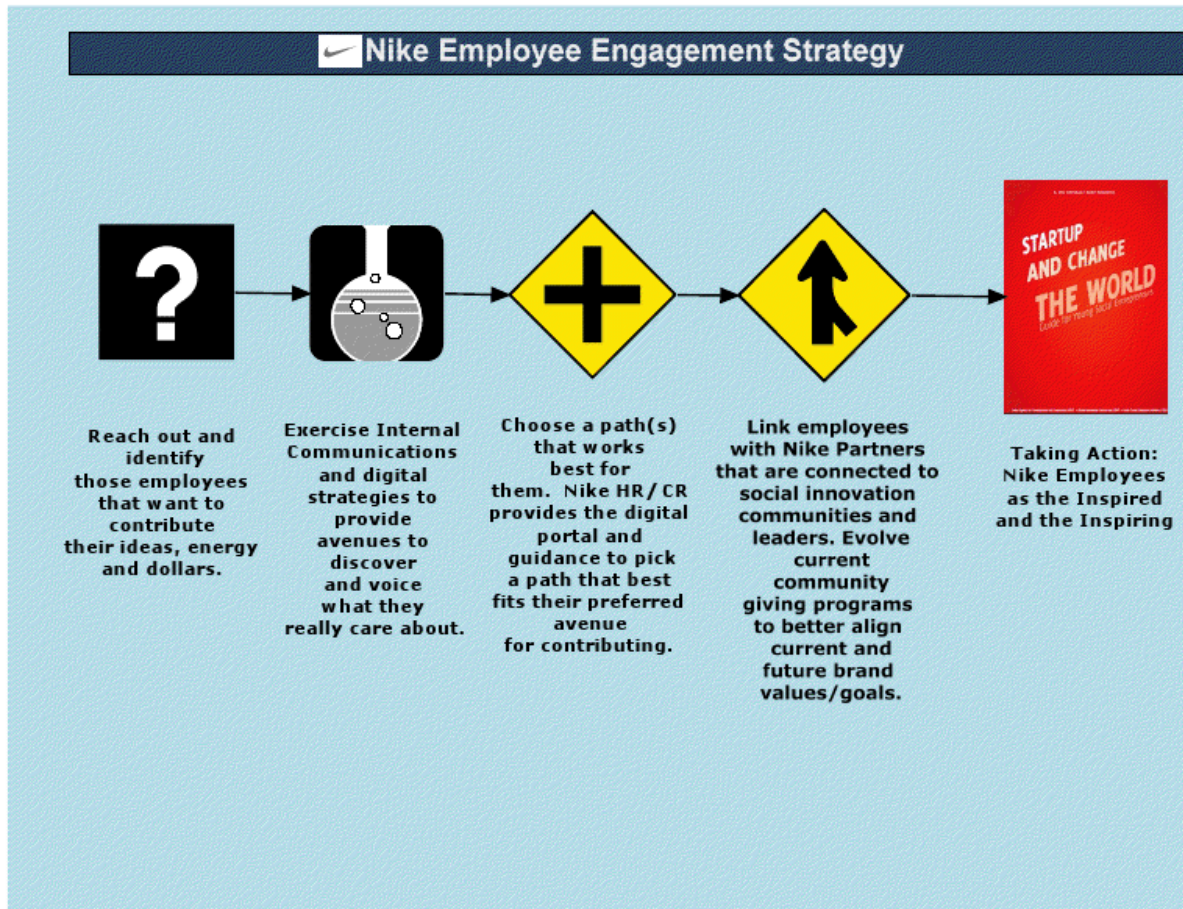
⁵“Strategy: A New Model and Shift to Sustainable Business and Innovation,” Nike Inc, Corporate Responsibility Report, <http://www.nikebiz.com/crreport/content/strategy/2-1-4-a-new-model-and-shift-to-sustainable-business-and-innovation.php?cat=cr-strategy>. (March 10, 2010).

⁶ James was one of the youngest stars in the in the National Basketball Association (NBA), and Samuelson was a marathon runner who won the gold medal in the first Olympic Women’s marathon.

⁷ Griffy was a Major League Baseball outfielder and designated hitter,

based on what they felt most passionate about and then give them the pathways and tools to give back.” Towards this end, NIKE organized a brainstorm session with NIKE and non-NIKE thought leaders to discuss building strong communities for social change.

The illustration of the vision that they presented at this meeting is shown below:



Their vision was a digital community with an unbroken chain of connectivity, spanning cross-cultural boundaries. It would be singularly focused on making a difference in as many ways as there were employees.

NIKE not only wanted to enable its employees to make a positive impact on the community but also to increase their “happiness quotient”. As Thrasher explained, “When employees are doing something they really care about, they feel more satisfied and better about life in general.” These outside activities, the company believed, would contribute to employees’ learning and development.

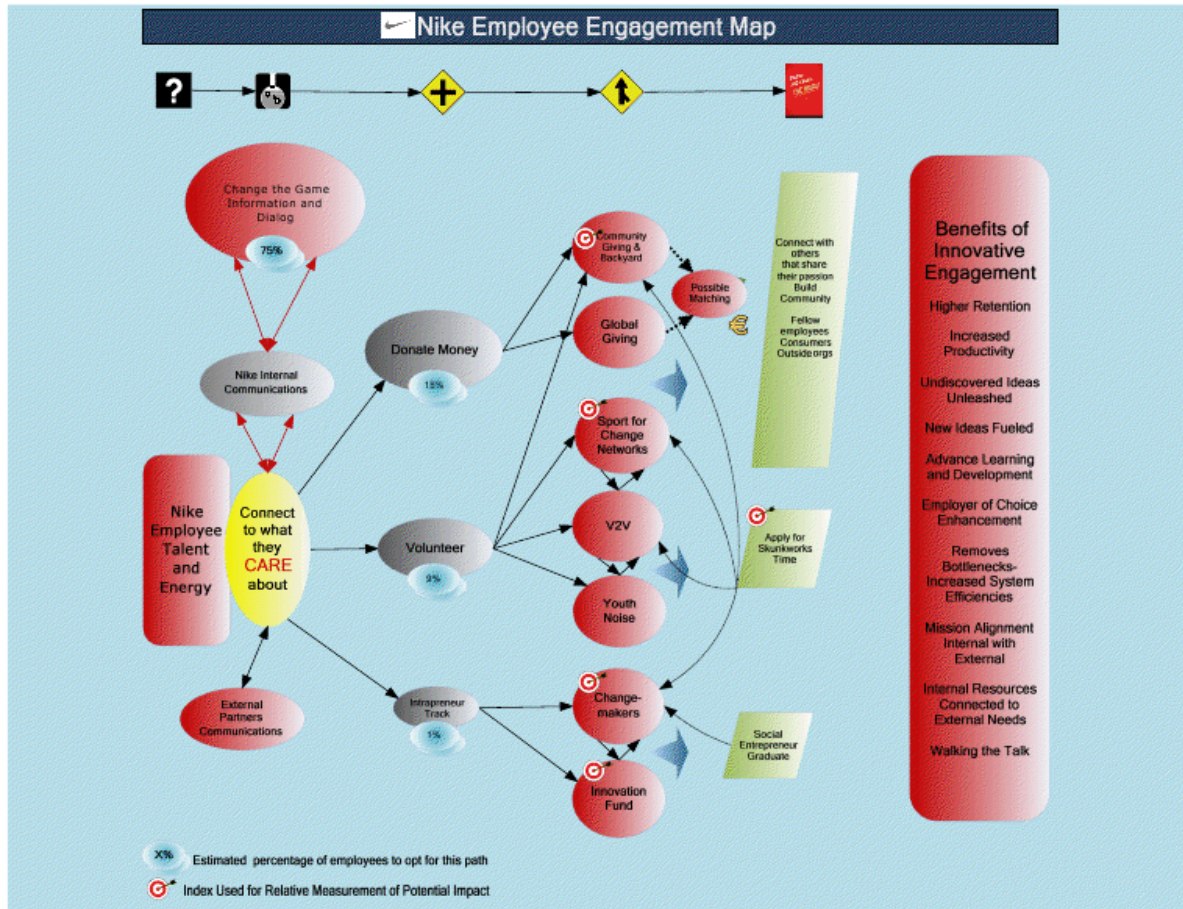
PLANNING THE PORTAL

In May of 2007, NIKE hosted a collaboration session with representatives from social networking companies, bloggers, community partner organizations and employees to talk about

innovative approaches to employee engagement. Participants included employees who had been successful at NIKE driving social change as entrepreneurs and volunteers who were dedicated to making a difference in their communities all around the world.

NIKE needed to address the limitations of its existing social good efforts, untangle the existing structures, and put them back together as a streamlined site. As George Huff, an independent web design consultant who led the design for WE, explained, “There were a lot of problems with the systems that were in place at NIKE. They had grown to a point where they were unmanageable.” NIKE managed community engagement through the intranet site, Zero, as well as various email lists. However, the community engagement team was unable to target messages to certain audiences and had no simple way to query and report on the great work that employees were doing in the community.

The company knew it wanted to harness NIKE’s talent and energy and reach out to community agencies in need through using digital strategies. NIKE wanted to figure out what employees cared about and then connect them to these causes and opportunities. While the team had an understanding of its needs, the mechanism for creating these connections and a structure to support them was unclear. Understanding this ambiguity, the facilitators began this discussion introducing the “Yellow Blob” which represented the solution that would connect employees to the causes that they cared about in the world:



NIKE stressed the idea that change was ignited by what employees felt passionate about and that, to bring about this change, employees would play a starring role. They would need to connect to organizations and other employees, get involved, and take action.

Accounting for Existing Efforts and Heterogeneity in the Corporation

Even before the WE discussions began, NIKE employees were leading social good initiatives within other parts of the company. These efforts varied depending on where they took place in the world. The internal complexity was high and the employee population diverse. The existing system for managing employee philanthropic and volunteer efforts did not provide an umbrella for all of these diverse activities.

Heterogeneity within Affiliate Brands

NIKE, Inc. included the companies of Hurley, Cole Haan, Converse and Umbro brands. Each of these companies had a different method of practicing corporate philanthropy. Cole Haan, the shoe company, for instance, had a traditional approach to corporate philanthropy. Its annual fundraising event was called "Penny Harvest". Employees volunteered and gave money towards this specific event.

Hurley, the skate brand, had a different approach entirely. Their main event was called “Living the Dream” and was an effort to create experiences for severe and terminally ill children. It was started by an employee within Hurley who was known as the “Feel Good Ambassador”. His job was to make sure employees felt Hurley was “a cool place” and that it made a positive impact on the community. Living the Dream was not an official non-profit but this status did not prevent it from gaining supporters.

Divergent Giving Patterns across Geographies

In building WE, NIKE also had to contend with geographic dispersion of its employees in the main NIKE business. WE needed to serve the employees in NIKE’s four primary marketplaces. As Laakdal and Memphis were both distribution centers, the employee populations, Thrasher explained, were different socioeconomically and culturally from those in Beaverton and Amsterdam.

These differences manifested themselves in divergent views on philanthropy. In Belgium, the idea of giving money was not nearly as common, especially when considering donations to a school. Further, American employees often viewed volunteering as the opportunity to help someone less fortunate whereas, in Laakdal, volunteering was often as simple as helping out one’s neighbor when they needed it. When asked about volunteer work, most Belgians answered something akin to, “Of course I’d help my neighbor if he needed some help building his garage.” The fact that Laakdal employees were paid hourly also contributed to the likeliness of these employees to contribute time.

It was important to the WE team that for the portal to have a long life, it needed to reflect the company’s diversity. The team also felt that this diversity would strengthen the site and the initiatives it supported. To reflect diversity, the most visible activities on the WE home page were volunteer opportunities posted by employees from all over the world. This emphasized the specific activities and causes that employees cared about while mixing opportunities from all employee geographies.

Unraveling and Then Bringing it All Together

To begin to untangle the core need from both a business and employee perspective, NIKE began a six month process of conducting key leadership meetings and employee roundtables around the world. The WE team formed a Stakeholder for Employee Engagement (SEE) group that met frequently to advise and guide the design and development of WE and connected programs. In addition, the team organized an executive advisory group to help build the new employee matching gift program, WE Giving. This program was an especially important since NIKE was now taking its matching gift program global and making it inclusive of the affiliate brands.

DEVELOPING A PLATFORM TO PROMOTE ENGAGEMENT

Marketing to the Marketers

Huff reiterated that the site needed to account for the fact that NIKE employees were fast-paced and busy—they wanted to be involved in their communities, but they didn’t know how. The methods NIKE used to interact with its employees were important; marketing was the company’s

core competency. Because employees were constantly being hit by different cool things to get involved in, the team had to make an extra effort to ensure that WE cut through all the other activities and initiatives that were happening. As Thrasher recalled, “The process was about listening and then making sure we delivered on the promise to the employees that we would act on what they told us was important.”

Creating a Product Using Human Centered Design

The site’s long-term strategy was to fulfill a variety of employee needs. Rather than directing employees about how they should engage in doing social good, however, Thrasher explained that NIKE wanted to “create an environment that keeps NIKE out of the way and puts the employee in the driver’s seat.” The team settled on a “40/60” philosophy meaning 40 percent of the platform would be driven by the corporate and team goals for WE. This included giving employees the opportunity to give money or give time. The other 60 percent of the site content and structure would be determined by the user requirements. The site would reflect which nonprofits and initiatives employees found appealing. Additionally, employees would be able to suggest nonprofits and areas of interest to include. These nonprofits would be reviewed by the WE team and, if appropriate, added to the portal. NIKE built the structure of WE but allowed its employees to make it complete.

Due to the fact that NIKE had four main geographical business centers, it needed to develop a global platform. The company set up informal employee qualitative focus groups in different parts of the world where employees could discuss what they wanted NIKE to provide. The biggest challenge in this process, Thrasher explained, was to keep the process in the hands of employees:

We had to ensure that the solution was a product of the employees’ work, not something handed down by corporate. We had to resist the urge to build a really shiny and cool site that people would like but, instead, give them something that had the elements that employees had requested. Specifically, this meant developing four giving mechanisms; time, money, talent, and voice.

Defining the Look and Feel of the Site: Capturing Innovation

NIKE wanted to build a closed loop system that would start and end with NIKE, including relevant partners where appropriate. The team felt that the application programming interface⁸ (API) would be the cornerstone of a sustainable platform. As Huff explained, “You have employees that are really innovative and creative and want to solve problems”. If the site/initiative was limited to one platform, the team felt it would not be able to grow in organic ways. For these reasons, the team chose to build its own API.

Rather than a clearinghouse, the portal was to be home base for employees who were interested in doing social good. They could visit the site, get revived and then go out and do more good work. As Huff said, “We are telling the users, ‘Here is your tool. Keep coming back and use it to get your initiative off the ground.’”

⁸ An API is a set of programming instructions and standards for accessing a Web-based software application or Web tool.

To enable this employee initiative, prior to the official launch, NIKE built a strong base of Super Users who served as beta testers and also began to bring the community to life. The Super Users were a group of approximately 250 employees who either self-identified as social entrepreneurs or community leaders or were chosen by the employee marketplace leads in each of the five primary employee geographic communities. Even after the launch, the Super Users continued to provide valuable insight and evangelize WE in important word of mouth ways.

THE EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE AND WE

WE acted as a meeting place for employees; employees chose what they were interested in and how they wanted to give back.

Choosing an Area of Interest

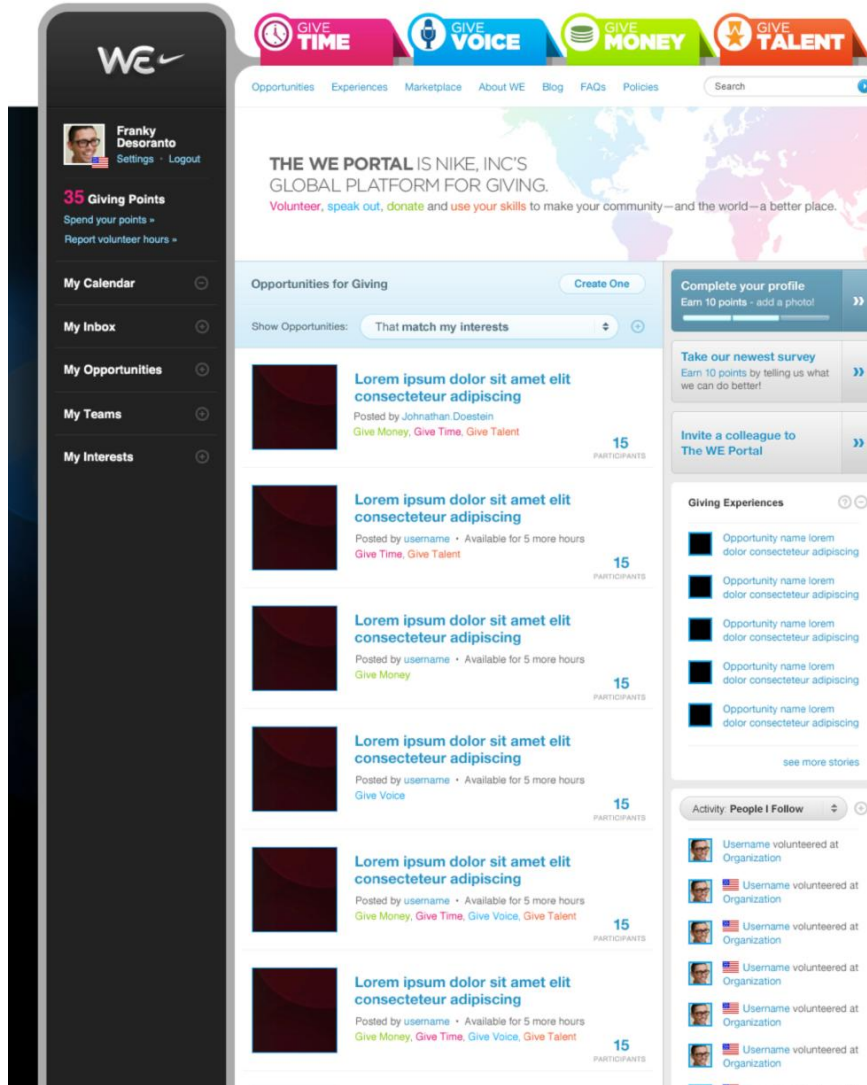
When employees logged on to WE, they defined their passions, selected sports they found interesting, and chose their location. This made it possible for the tool to suggest opportunities that would be most appealing to the user, Thrasher explained:

When people first get involved, they chose their preferences. In turn, we're able to say, 'Here is an opportunity that we think is really good for you.' It's really about giving somebody something that they could just go do that weekend.

Modules

WE had four main sections: Give Time, Give Voice, Give Money, and Give Talent. At the Giving module, employees could make monetary donations to be matched by company funds or, if they had already used their maximum matching funds, make a gift to any number of organizations on their own. The other modules were similar in structure in that they each listed the "Primary Community Organizations" (based on the employee's location) and then showed "Opportunities for Involvement" and "Employee Activity". The "Opportunities for Involvement" tab displayed the opportunities related to the employee's specific interests, "My Interests", and could be changed to show "All Opportunities.

A screen shot of the portal's home page highlighting customized opportunities is shown below:



Generating Volunteer Opportunities

The process for vetting non-profit partners involved both the WE team investigating opportunities and also fielding referrals from employees. Once employees started using the site, employees added organizations that they cared about or had worked with before. This process, Thrasher explained, was exactly what NIKE hoped to happen. She explained that NIKE wanted each employee to be able to say, “I live in Memphis and I feel really passionate about HIV AIDS education. What can I do? Who else is interested?”

Currency for Giving

The WE team tracked employees’ activities on the portal including the hours of community service, the activities they were pursuing, and the money they were contributing to organizations. This information was displayed in the “Employee Activity” stream of the “Give Time”, “Give Voice”, and “Give Talent” modules (see “Primary Social Networking Tools” for more information.) In addition to this reporting, however, the group wanted to stimulate use and

capture many employees' competitive natures. To accomplish this, NIKE set up a currency for giving whereby employees could earn "WE Giving Points" through doing various activities. If employees volunteered time, responded to an opportunity, posted an opportunity, or contributed at an API-connected partner (e.g. through blogging or volunteering), they earned points. These points were prominently displayed on their WE page. NIKE hoped that seeing a colleague earning points on the site would inspire an individual to get involved in activities as well.

Employees could spend their points in the Giving Marketplace, a subsection of WE. In the Giving Marketplace, employees could select a non-profit organization to receive free NIKE product. Once the employee redeemed his or her points, the NIKE products would be shipped directly to the recipient organization.

LAUNCHING AND GROWING WE

The official launch of WE in Beaverton in July 2009 was supported by a global e-mail to all employees from executive leadership, presence on the intranet home page, off-line "desk drops" and WE packages to all senior leadership and managers. The WE team also hosted Super User meetings that armed the seed community with WE videos and talking points to help them spread the word. The WE team supported all these grass roots and digital media efforts with video stories of employees who talked about their causes and how they had been able to make a difference in their communities. WE was to be a conduit for giving; the end goal, however, was creating a giving experience that made a difference to the community and the employee.

Building Momentum

To give employees the opportunity to talk about their experiences, the WE team built tools to allow users to indicate their attendance at events/opportunities and then, later, post video/images/thoughts about the event. To boost involvement and spur interest by WE users, the WE team began a blog where employees could tell their stories and others' stories and inspire their colleagues to become more active community members. People who read the blog could be inspired by what they learned and choose to get involved themselves. Through these activities, WE became viral. Employees would read about an event and think, "I could do that," or see a fellow employee doing something amazing and, as a result, be inspired to do something too.

Leveraging Corporate Leaders

To leverage the influence of the EM leads who championed philanthropic work and rallied NIKE employees, WE's API established a connection between the engagement strategy and the community websites. This enabled the EM Leads to post opportunities to WE, thereby increasing participation in their projects. As Jennifer Paulson, WE's manager of IT systems explained, "The employee marketplace leads had the same role as they had before but, with WE, they had another method and means to spread the word out about the projects they were participating in with the community." Technology enabled the EM leads to reach a wider audience with more targeted messages in even less time as their work moved to a global stage.

USING SOCIAL TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE RESULTS

Primary Social Networking Tools

Blog

The first users of WE recorded their individual contributions in their personal accounts but had no way to share these experiences. As a result, the WE team set up a blog that allowed participants to talk about an event and explain what went well and what did not. They also included personal comments such as, “I’m so proud to work for a company that cares about community” or “I can stand up and say that I work for NIKE and feel good about myself and where I go every day”. Employees’ comments demonstrated their pride in the company and inspired their colleagues to action. As Huff explained, “We’re really trying to provide a place where users can tell stories. If a user builds a house over the weekend, they can come back to WE and say, ‘Hey, I built a house for a homeless family and it was awesome. Here are some pictures I took,’ or ‘Here’s a little anecdote that I thought I’d share with everybody that looks at this in the future.’”

Leveraging Peer Pressure: Activity Stream, Inviting Friends, and WE Teams

In the “Employee Activity” stream, WE recognized employee contributions to inspire other employees and create a self-perpetuating engine. The activity stream showed what users did on different platforms of WE including participating in activities, giving money, or offering their professional skills. Huff and the WE team felt that showing employees’ philanthropic activity would have an effect on everyone who read it, inspiring others to think, “I can probably be doing something if they are doing it.” The activity stream was just one way to motivate employees, Huff clarified, but not the only one:

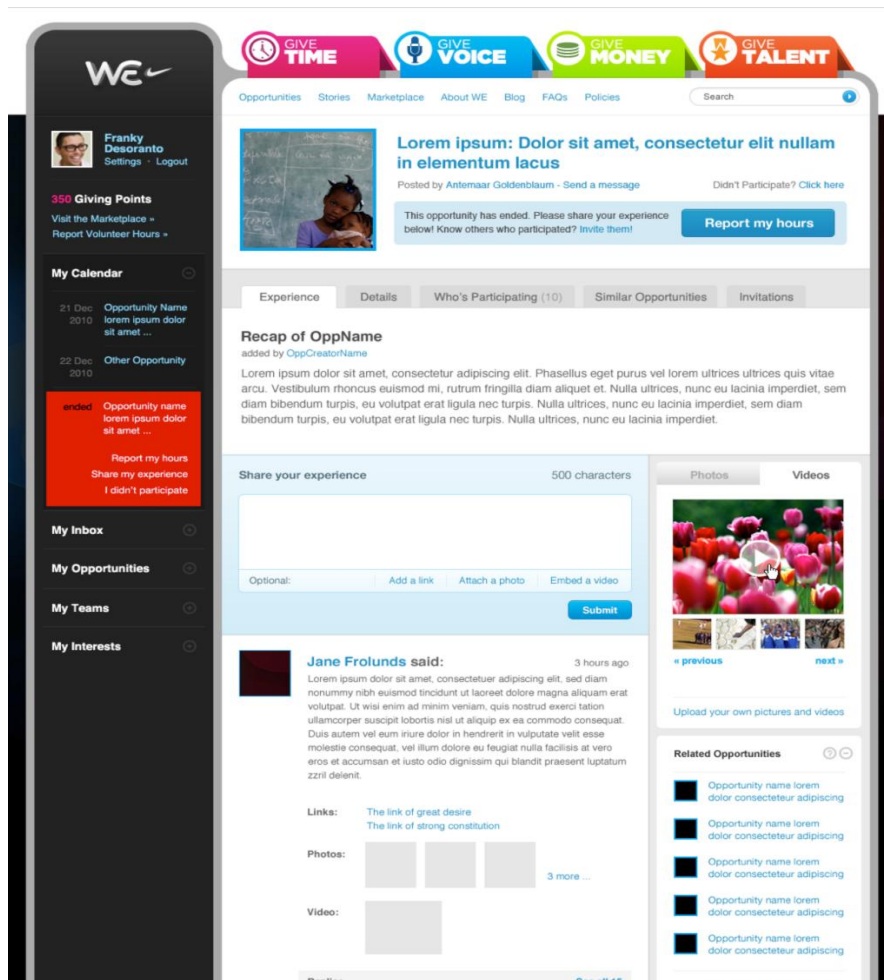
We wanted to ensure that the second that someone has that initial inspiration that they feel like they can do something—regardless of which feature gets them hooked—we will be right there and provide them with that opportunity that is exactly what they want. Telling stories inspires people. For instance, if you’re an employee that’s never volunteered or participated in any social work, you might get inspired by a story that you read or other participate. In turn, you participate and inspire other people.

While NIKE began by showing points earned on the “Employee Activity” stream, users could not go to an individual’s site and see how many points they had accumulated. This design was deliberate to avoid giving the process a competitive feel. Huff explained, “It sounds kind of funny that we didn’t want earning and tracking points to be competitive—we’re dealing with a lot of competitive employees at NIKE.” This viewpoint, however, changed as people started using the site. Huff explained, some users were saying, “I want to compete. I want to go head-to-head with another department and see who wins.”

NIKE also built in tools such as a simple send-to-coworker feature where users could recruit friends to participate in events or activities. Employees would then earn points for new sign-ups that resulted from these invitations. After only a month, the Giving Marketplace had nearly 40,000 accumulated points.

NIKE also introduced “WE Teams”. This functionality enabled employees to either mobilize an existing group, such as their internal work group, or gather a team of employees for a volunteer activity or other community service. The teams could include employees both on WE and people not yet affiliated with the site. NIKE hoped that enabling employees to organize as teams would drive more positive experiences and that, “Let’s meet at happy hour downtown” would turn into “Let’s meet next week at the Portland Community Food Bank.” Employees were more apt to volunteer when they knew they would be working with colleagues or friends. WE offered tremendous opportunities for both online and offline team building and ways to expose colleagues to the joy that came from doing social work.

A screen shot of a discussion about WE opportunities is shown below:



CREATING A CUSTOMER-CENTRIC EXPERIENCE

Community Management

Community management was an important aspect of WE, specifically to ensure that the site would reflect employees’ wants and needs and that employees would feel ownership. To

guarantee that the company would be able to respond to employee feedback, NIKE hired a community manager whose job was to run focus groups and user surveys. As Thrasher explained:

We need to be there to listen; to respond to what the community thinks is important. When users feel like they've been heard, they react positively to our endeavor. Whether the feedback we get is bad or good—knowing that we are on top of it gives employees reason to talk about it in a positive light.

Additionally, NIKE put into place “backyard leads” in each of the regions who would support these efforts in their specific geographies.

Finding a Fit: Narrowcasting WE’s Message to Improve Uptake

NIKE struggled with how to best put WE front and center in its employee’s minds. To help employees remember to use WE as a starting point, the team sent out weekly emails to people who signed up for WE based on the interests they selected. Once employees communicated their interests, NIKE could narrow-cast news and opportunities that were tailored specifically to their interests. As Huff explained, “Our continual challenge is to offer employees those experiences that are really relevant to them. We want to make the system as smart as possible so that we can give users what they want.” NIKE hoped this method would improve overall response and be the push necessary to get people active.

LEVERAGING WE IN DISASTER RELIEF

Marysville Elementary School

On November 10, 2009, a fire destroyed the Marysville Elementary School in Southeast Portland, near the Beaverton headquarters. While none of the 500 students or teachers died, the school was left without a home. Marysville was one of a group of primary education programs that NIKE’s School Innovation Fund (NSIF) supported; the \$9 million fund made a five-year commitment to help public education in Portland, Beaverton and Hillsboro school districts. NSIF's overall aim was to support the community's major school districts.

After hearing about the fire, Nike’s government and public affairs leads as well as Kathy Webb, employee marketplace manager for Beaverton/Portland Oregon, got together and asked, “What do we need to do to address this tragedy? How can we mobilize our employees?” Their first step was to organize both internal contacts and external contacts at other organizations. Webb highlighted the story in a blog post on WE and featured the story in the forefront of the WE Giving module of WE to ignite a conversation between employees. She then posted information about volunteering at Marysville. As Thrasher explained, “Posting information on WE showed employees that there was a place they could go to and find out about volunteering their time, giving money, and rally around an event.” (See **Exhibit 1** for the initial blog post on the Marysville fire and **Exhibit 2** for a report on the fire, Nike’s efforts, and photographs from activities.)

Because WE was in its infancy, only 3,000 of the 32,000 NIKE employees had signed up for the portal. Many of the 7,000 employees in Beaverton, main targets of the Marysville relief efforts, had not yet signed up for WE. To ensure that all employees knew about the fire and NIKE's activities, the team added information about the fire on its intranet site, Zero, and linked it to WE.

Spreading the Message and Supporting the Community

Rather than sharing the news through word-of-mouth or email, NIKE used new communications mechanism to mobilize large numbers of employees. Readers of the blog on WE or Zero could click on a links to volunteer or give money. If they clicked from Zero, they were taken to WE and saw list of volunteer opportunities. Employees could also choose to go directly to WE Giving, and give money to the school by way of a fund with matching gifts from NIKE.

Employees helped teachers set up their new classrooms, stuffed backpacks with school supplies, distributed coats and backpacks, and offered general support to teachers. NIKE also donated sports balls, team uniforms, and teachers' supplies. Employees provided breakfast for staff and students as well as mobilized other community support including donations of food and landscaping services, and established partnerships with other agencies.

Learning from Marysville

The WE team credited NIKE employees for making the disaster relief effort happen. Marysville demonstrated both employees' willingness to get involved in disaster relief as well as the potential of the WE site to support these activities. It became clear that getting in front of as many people as possible and getting the word out quickly would be the ultimate goal for crises/disaster relief efforts in the future.

Even if WE was not the first place where many employees learned about Marysville, Webb and her team sent everyone who had participated in the relief efforts back to WE after the efforts ended to read about what they had accomplished and publicly thank them for their participation. Routing all employees back to WE also drove them to sign up for the portal and stay abreast of what was happening in their community. The team recognized that the response would be more favorable the more relevant those messages were to the receiver. For instance, if NIKE could have tailored its Marysville message to people in Portland interested in children and youth, they may have gotten an even greater response. As such, the team was promoting the site and pushing for employees to fill out their interest profiles so that the company had the data it needed to provide relevant information to employees. Rather than imposing a process for NIKE's response to future disasters, though, the team observed how the response was formulated and talked to participants. It planned to use this series of actions as NIKE's blueprint for a global strategy about for disaster relief.

Reflecting on Marysville and NIKE's disaster relief efforts, Huff recognized that the company was not able to do everything it would have liked to if WE had been more widely adopted and a disaster relief strategy had been in place. Nevertheless, NIKE learned from the experience:

A case like Marysville allows us to really hone in and define what our tools are how they can be used for that particular situation. If we were ready, we would

have sent out an email blast that directed everyone to WE and their personal WE page. Every user who saw it would have been able to click on it, donate money to Marysville, buy a backpack for Marysville, or commit to volunteering. When this activity would show up on the activity stream, users who were at WE would start seeing this activity. They might send it to their friends and, all of a sudden, the activity feed would light up. You would see snowball effect as people realized what is happening. As they saw their colleagues get involved, they would choose to get involved too.

Putting WE to the Test: Haitian Earthquake Lets WE Shine

When the Haitian earthquake occurred in January 2010, Huff's hope for employee engagement became a reality. WE facilitated employees' desire to support a more "macro" global emergency, the Haitian relief effort. The employee population on WE had grown since Marysville to 5,000 and, due to this critical mass, NIKE was able to push that all donations be made through WE. The company ran a double match donation program immediately after the earthquake occurred and reached their match goal in only two days. As a result, NIKE added an additional \$75,000 to the pool of funds which was used met in five days. Over 1,500 employees joined as WE community members and made over 700 donations since the matching program was announced. These new members added to the Haitian relief effort and created a more powerful community for NIKE.

The "Give Haiti" effort was highlighted on the portal as shown below:



Employees were, once again, appreciative and in awe of the company's efforts. Posts on WE included the following: "Hello We NIKE. Wow. I'm so happy to be working for a company like this. Thanks for making this easy for me to help out in Haiti. Thanks for matching this gift." and "It's a fantastic giving activity by NIKE. It's great to work for such a company." Employees also appreciated how quickly the company could move to provide support saying, "Thank you for your decisive actions, my donation is on the way. 'Just do it' seems extremely appropriate in this instance."

Give Talent to Haiti

Beyond enabling donations, WE also made a call to action for employees with architecture skills to join Architecture for Humanity, a non-profit providing free professional design services, to help rebuild Haiti. After Architecture for Humanity approached the company, two global senior design executives, Tinker Hatfield and John Hoke sponsored this effort. Hatfield and Hoke garnered tremendous respect in the organization due to both their positions and roles as lead designers—Hatfield was the creative force behind the Air Jordan shoe line. (See **Exhibit 3** for

the announcement made by Hatfield and Hoke.) Even though Architecture for Humanity did not have an immediate project to staff, the response from NIKE was enormous with 34 employee architects joining the team from five different countries. As Webb recalled, “At the end of the day, everyone wants to feel like they've made a difference.”

Give Voice: Amplifying External Events

As an experiment in the realm of Give Voice and, the WE team sponsored a retail employee from Ireland to attend the One Young World Conference in London in February 2010. OYW was a global summit of 1,500 young people from 192 countries that met for three days to debate the biggest challenges facing the planet. They met with thought leaders such as Nelson Mandela and Kofi Annan in addition holding collaborative sessions that crossed geographic and cultural borders. The NIKE delegate streamed live video and tweeted with other employees in the Give Voice page of WE. He also uploaded pictures and blogs telling the story as it unfolded, offering his point of view and observations.

An example of a One World participant’s story is shown below:



The One Young World experiment was mined for clues about how to bring real-time events to a global community while testing the implementation and effectiveness of Twitter and USTREAM⁹ for the purpose of inspiring and engaging employees.

MEASURING IMPACT

Measuring the Value Exchange for Employees, Underserved Populations, and Customers

The WE team thought of its job as enabling a value exchange between employees and the community itself. As Thrasher explained,

We are enabling employees to use their hands or their brains to help a nonprofit solve an accounting issue or develop a business strategy. We also support an executive who serves on the board of directors and help them to solve a leadership issue. Whatever our employees are doing, they are giving what they have to give.

When employees come back into the company, for instance, after visiting refugee camps or even serving meals to the homeless, they cannot help but get impacted personally. They come back to NIKE and think about things differently. These actions constitute the value exchange between the employee and the community.

Azerbaijani Refugee Camps

Webb added that the exchange that occurs between employees and the people they help leaves employees with greater awareness of others. When a volunteer returns to work, they are more energized and have broader points of view or, as Thrasher believed, “These experiences increase the innovation quotient within the organization.” Employees who volunteered at an AIDS treatment facility came back to work saying that their experience made them “feel more passionate about my work” and “more creative”.

For instance, in 2005, NIKE sent a group of eight employees to Azerbaijan as part of a Mercy Corps¹⁰ project to help teach kids to play soccer. The volunteers visited three youth refugee camps that had approximately 10,000 people living in an area of about a square mile. They brought with them a NIKE ball that was made strictly out of recycled product—it was extremely durable and could be played with in their environment. Their job was to live with the children and teach soccer. The experience affected both the participants on the ground and those back at NIKE, as Webb explained:

They reported on it and blogged about it on our NIKE intranet site. Employees could read every day from these eight employees and learn about their

⁹ USTREAM is a website consisting of network of diverse channels that provides a platform for [lifecasting](#) and live [video streaming](#) of events online.

¹⁰ Mercy Corps is a non-profit organization dedicated to Mercy Corps alleviating suffering, poverty and oppression by helping people build secure, productive and just communities.

experiences. We also sent a photographer so we got to see videos and photos each evening. Every day, just seeing those reports, it brought you to tears.

When the volunteers returned to work, they were changed. As Webb explained,

The experience changed those eight people's lives and how they managed themselves, their families, and their work. They even have better work-life balance because they realized life is bigger than the office. You see it in how they contribute to NIKE and how they manage the amazing power we have here at NIKE to move the needle. It's made them more effective.

Customers' Views

NIKE also recognized, in the 1990s, that it needed to change how its customers viewed its business practices. It was accused of running factories that had sweatshop labor practices. While these factories were not owned by NIKE but, instead, contracted with the company, NIKE still had to deal with significant negative public relations. The company went to great lengths to establish codes of conduct for the factories it worked with as well as conducting audits with its manufacturers.¹¹ As a result of this experience, NIKE learned that customers made purchasing decisions based on NIKE doing the right thing.

MEASURING EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION AND SATISFACTION WITH WE

NIKE launched WE in the U.S. in July 2009. After seven months, over 5,000 employees were in the community. Eighty-three percent of the community members were from the U.S., with 71 percent of that group from the Portland backyard. The full launch for European countries was planned for early March 2010 and then secondary markets such as China, Brazil, South Africa, and Russia in the latter part of 2010. Even without a big push in non-US countries, WE had 34 countries represented in its community.

In terms of activities on the site, 617 opportunities had been posted and the site included 59 organizations for employees to connect to for community service. This number did not include the approximately 450 organizations on the employee matching gift sister site, WE Giving, over 250 of which were referred by employees themselves.

In the future, the WE team was planning on adding more basic metrics—volunteering participation and participation in terms of each one of the four areas (give voice, talent, time, and money). As Thrasher explained, “We’re not going for just eyeballs, we’re going for action. That’s the true measurement of viral on WE.” The team wanted to drive employee happiness and create meaning in lives of NIKE employees. According to Thrasher, “WE has given us instant visibility into a dynamic that has existed in our employee community for a long time.”

The WE team also wanted to make an impact on NIKE and the brand, both internally and externally, and create greater good that extended beyond NIKE. Thrasher admitted, “The team does not have the metrics worked out, especially in terms of adding value and making a

¹¹“Workers & Factories: Improving Conditions In Our Contract Factories,” NIKE, Inc. http://www.NIKEbiz.com/responsibility/workers_and_factories.html, (January 28, 2010).

community impact, the million dollar question even for established, traditional programs.” However, they had significant positive anecdotes from employees, such as the following:

This (NIKE’s response to the school fire) is absolutely fabulous and heartwarming. My thoughts and prayers go out to everyone involved in this unfortunate disaster. I am honored to work for a company who has such compassion and love for community. Thank you NIKE for making it possible to relocate these families to a new school!!! Thumbs UP!!!

I teared up reading the story (about the Haitian earthquake). I am really inspired and proud to even be associated with a company like ours. Let me just commend our leadership for taking such quick action and for making decisions every day which always include doing the right thing!

The WE team also was piloting a community impact measurement tool called “Making the Case”. The team hoped to get a global gauge on NIKE’s impact on communities by late 2010.

FUTURE

Forging Relationships Across NIKE Brands

WE’s first iteration was focused on NIKE employees in Portland. The site would have a hard launch in early March, 2010, for the employees in Laakdal, Amsterdam, and the U.K. While employees at affiliates, such as Cole Haan and Hurley, could access the WE giving site and find projects that were local to their particular city, WE still was far from a familiar environment for all brands. According to Thrasher, NIKE had not even scratched the surface in terms of what it could do with affiliates:

One challenge for NIKE is having a team of brands that are culturally and geographically separated. However, when it comes to what people care about and their passions, these things can automatically connect people. For instance, if you have an employee at Cole Haan who cares about HIV education or early learning programs, you can connect him or her with another employee at another brand based on that shared interest even if they have no every day business or culture in common. It creates a feeling of involvement for those employees as they feel they are connected to a larger community.

Thrasher realized that leveraging these connections was critical to both the success of the portal and employee engagement, “These connections could add the power of ten to the existing impact of the portal and create a feeling of involvement for employees.” It could enable them to feel that they were connected to a larger community which would in turn inspire them to take higher levels of action, continued engagement with the community. Taking advantage of these connections was something that the company would continue to focus on in the future and was the key to the success of WE.

Additionally, the team recognized that WE would need to be adapted to be user-friendly to shift workers in Memphis and Laakdal. One of the projects the team was working on was delivering a mobile version of the site for users.

Moving Towards Wider Employee Engagement

While excitement was high for those employees logged into WE, the company still had to engage the over 20,000 employees not yet on WE. NIKE planned to re-launch the site with a new home page based on user feedback and a more robust feature to create “opportunities” for employees. The team was considering adding a micro site for community partners that did not have a presence on WE. They also planned to add a disaster response turnkey mechanism for any market to mobilize for either local or global natural disasters.

Adding Social Networking Features

The team planned to expand the social networking aspects of the site by building out the specificity of the user profile options and develop the capability to send direct customized messages and opportunities to individual employees. WE would introduce two new features called “People Search” and “Following”. These tools would enable employees to see their colleagues’ activities on WE.

NIKE also planned to utilize Twitter/Facebook to allow for a greater circle of influence. This would enable employees to create opportunities on WE, then use Facebook and/or Twitter to leverage their network of friends/family. This would also bring up a broader question, however, of how a company intranet for giving could interface with the public world.

Beyond personal engagement, NIKE planned for WE to be the primary platform for employees to connect and learn more about how to engage in sustainability as part of a global campaign to elevate the transparency of NIKE’s sustainability efforts. The company planned to use WE and its global community to empower innovative thinking around sustainability “wicked problems” faced by the company and its stakeholders (e.g. consumers/employees and civil society). NIKE expected this would be an exercise in crowd sourcing ideas; employees would form teams and the; winning ideas would be rewarded and acknowledged and, in some cases, applied to the business or funded for further development.

An Evolving Project

Just as the WE had been created using a significant amount of user input, it would evolve in the same manner. As Thrasher explained, “This is a grand experiment that we can’t control the same way we control a marketing campaign. We can’t take the site to scale by dictating almost all parts of it. This is something that we, and most big companies, are not used to doing.”

Exhibit 1

Blog Post on Marysville Fire

[The NIKE Team Needs Your Help: Sign Up And Help Marysville Students Return to School by Monday](#)

November 12, 2009 - By Kathy Webb

As everyone must have heard by now, one of the local NIKE School Innovation Fund supported schools, burned down this week. Marysville K-8 in Southeast Portland suffered major damage however all kids and staff were safely evacuated. During the evacuation, students and staff lost all personal belongings including their backpacks, coats and school supplies.

HOW NIKE IS CONTRIBUTING

- - 500 coats for students and teachers
- - 500 backpacks, stuffed with school supplies (here is where you, the NIKE employee comes in!)
- - 100 NIKE sports balls and playground balls
- - Providing breakfast for staff this Thursday and Friday, along with breakfast and lunch on first day of school, Monday, for all staff and students
- - 3 welcome banners for students
- - Team uniforms for the basketball teams
- - Bags/spirals and materials for teachers
- - Mobilized other community support including Portland Parks for landscaping, Grand Central Bakery; partnering with KGW and Schoolhouse Supplies and HandsOn Portland.

On Monday 460 students will report to their temporary home, Rose City Park School about 5 miles away. This building was mothballed two years ago due to declining enrollment and in the next few days will be getting a quick facelift to be ready for Monday morning.

HOW NIKE EMPLOYEES CAN HELP

We need your help to make the students' and teachers' transition to the new school as easy as possible. Here are three volunteer opportunities for you to get involved in tomorrow and Monday morning. Join the NIKE team and respond to one of the opportunities today.

HELP TEACHERS SET UP THEIR CLASSROOMS

When: Friday, November 13th, 1:00 – 4:00pm

Where: Rose City Parks School, 2334 NE 57th, Portland

How to Register: e-mail Hands On Portland at sarah@handsonportland.org Sarah will give you final details of the work.

Note: Only the first 20 employees to respond to Sarah at HOP will be accepted

Opportunity link on WE Portal: [here](#)

HELP STUFF NIKE BACKPACKS WITH SCHOOL SUPPLIES

When: Friday, November 13th, 2:00 – 4:00pm

Where: Schoolhouse Supplies, 2735 NE 82nd Avenue, Portland 503-249-9933

How to Register: e-mail Kathy.Webb@NIKE.com

Note: Only first 15 employees to respond will be accepted

Opportunity link on the WE Portal: [here](#)

HELP DISTRIBUTE COATS, BACKPACKS AND GENERAL TEACHER SUPPORT

When: Monday morning, November 16th, 7:30am – Noon

Where: Rose City Parks School, 2334 NE 57th, Portland

How to Register: e-mail Kathy.Webb@NIKE.com

Note: Only first 15 employees to respond will be accepted

MAKE A CASH DONATION

As always, cash donations in times of crisis like this are always welcome and appreciated. You can simply go into the WE Portal (www.we.NIKE.com) and make a cash donation within the “Give Money” tab. Within WE Giving, you will find Marysville School listed on the Portland Public School District listing. The bonus is that your cash donation will be matched with NIKE WE Giving dollars!!

BACKGROUND STORY

On Tuesday, November 10th, fire erupted at SE Portland based Marysville Elementary. The 85 year old school is home to students from kindergarten to 8th grade and holds dear memories for students, teachers, parents and the neighborhood and is considered a historic landmark in the community. The old construction however likely did contribute to the fire as the building lacked a sprinkler system and the older timber the building was build out of made it that the building burned for a longer period of time. In the end, half of the building burned down with the other half damaged by smoke and water.

The good news from this sudden and unexpected event is that all the students were safely evacuated and even though a couple of staff members were sent to the hospital due to breathing problems from the smoke, no other injuries were reported. Even two school pets made it out safety having been carried out in the hands of firefighters.

All accounts note that the evacuation was fast and efficient. However, students had to leave their backpacks with their books and school supplies behind while they quickly lined up for evacuation. As students prepare to return to school on Monday at a temporary location 4 miles north – Rose City Parks School – teachers and students really need the community’s support to make this temporary transition a success! Watch a video of the event [here](#)

Exhibit 2 **Blog Report on Marysville and NIKE’s Involvement**

Marysville- NIKE Employees in Action
November 18, 2009 - By Kathy Webb

[Give Time](#)

Last week, we wrote about the three planned volunteer events for which NIKE employee volunteers were needed to help transition the Marysville students and teachers to their new temporary school – Rose City Park. Rose City Park has been closed for two years and volunteers had their work cut out for them. So how did volunteers help?

On Friday – Classroom Preparation

One of the most critical needs was to help teachers set up their classrooms at Rose City Park. NIKE employees and some family members helped teachers ready their new classrooms to make them cheery and inviting for the returning students. Each volunteer was assigned to a teacher. The volunteers helped teachers with anything and everything they needed: setting up the desks – even going as far as hand assembling them with tools – numbering books, setting up bulletin board, and so on. The volunteers and teachers were literally starting from scratch and every aspect of the classroom needed attention. NIKE volunteers worked hard for several hours.



The teachers said that they would not have been able to get everything done without help from NIKE volunteers. Having NIKE volunteers on hand also helped boost the teachers' morale. At the start, the work seemed a little overwhelming and knowing that back-up was on hand eased anxiety and contributed to a sense of resolve. Volunteers also freed up teachers' time, so they could focus on bigger issues they needed to tackle before opening up their classroom on Monday morning.



On Friday – Backpack Stuffing Assembly Line

In addition to the volunteer work that went into getting classrooms ready, eight NIKE volunteers attended the backpack stuffing event at School House Supplies.



The task was to fill the backpacks with all the supplies the kids would need when they returned back to school. Pencils, notebooks, erasers, folders, glue and more, lined up on each side of a long assembly table. NIKE employees jumped right in and with little prep time, sorted and packed the NIKE donated backpacks full of supplies. Employees formed an assembly line and coordinated to make sure each backpack had all the necessary supplies. As backpacks filled up, employees stacked backpacks in a giant mountain on the School House Supplies floor.



Right on time, the NIKE sponsored “Innovate for a Better World” bus pulled up and employees formed a human chain to move the backpacks into the back of the van. One employee even ran to the end of the long parking lot to flag down the bus when it seemed the driver was a bit turned around.



Seeing the smooth coordination between employees, you would have thought that they were professionals. At the end, employees got into their cars and drove down to the new school – Rose City Park – to unload the backpacks. Yet again, coordination was essential with cars trailing one after another behind the backpack filled bus.

On Monday – First Day Back to School

Several days after the fire NIKE presented the Marysville staff with NIKE t-shirts that read Marysville – We Will Rise Again. Teachers wore the teachers on their first day back at school.



As the 460 Marysville K-8th graders returned to school at Rose City Park, they were greeted with open arms and applause as their busses pulled up.



NIKE backpacks, filled to the brim with supplies, were hanging in their classrooms upon their arrival.



20 NIKE employees and some family members gave up their time and energy to sort and distribute 500 NIKE coats as each and every classroom came through the line to be sized properly for a brand new coat.



Many students left their one-and-only coat in the burning building last week as well as their backpacks and having to purchase these items again would have posed a burden for their families. Having new coats, backpacks and school supplies helped ease the transition to the new temporary school and though it can't change the past, it allows students to have a fresh start.



The work is not yet over however. Be on the lookout for future volunteer opportunities at Rose City Park School will be posted on the WE Portal in days to come.



Filed Under:

- [Portland Metro](#)
- [Emergency Relief](#)

Exhibit 3

NIKE Architects for Haiti - Give your Talent and Earn 25 Bonus Points

Email from John Hoke

Tinker Hatfield and I are reaching out to all global NIKE Inc. employees with a background in architecture, to answer the call to help and participate in Architecture for Humanity's earthquake rebuilding effort in Haiti. Due to NIKE's known commitment to excellence in design and innovation, Architecture for Humanity, a trusted NIKE nonprofit focusing on providing professional design services to those in need, contacted NIKE with a big ask. Can NIKE tap their innovative design talent across all brands to source architect volunteers and support rebuilding efforts in Haiti? Our answer was a big "Yes!" Tinker and I are both proud to be the co-captains of the NIKE Architects for Haiti Team. Those that join us will earn 25 giving points that can be used in the Marketplace.

Tinker and I will contact you with more information about connecting with Architecture for Humanity as the selection process unfolds. Please note that the Haiti rebuilding planning stages will be lengthy and Architecture for Humanity may not tap into your talent right away. With

your help we'll be ready when they need us. If you'd like to join up or if you have questions, simply select "Respond to This Opportunity."

More about Architecture for Humanity: Architecture for Humanity's mission is a more sustainable future using the power of design. Through a global network of building professionals, Architecture for Humanity brings design, construction and development services to communities in need. Learn more about Architecture for Humanity by visiting their website: <http://www.architectureforhumanity.org>