Recent results reported in the largest global study of company reputations indicate that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is the key driver of a company’s public image.

The 2016 Global RepTrak report from the Boston-based Reputation Institute tracked more than 240,000 ratings of organisations around their products and services, governance and innovation. Their research indicates that more than ever, customers and employees are looking to the CSR brand of a company or an organisation to form a positive perception.

In fact, the fastest growing emphasis from the general public is in the specific CSR areas of governance, citizenship and workplace. Improving positive perception can lead to higher sales, employee engagement and attraction of better talent.

The top-ranked companies here in Ireland according to Reputation Institute are, in order, Bord Bia, Easons, An Post, Google and Lidl.

Even further, an Economist survey noted 74 per cent of its respondents saying that corporate citizenship, which is another term for CSR, can help increase profits at their company.

TOP FIVE POINTERS
Where your own organisation may rank on the CSR scale likely depends less upon the list of charities to which you contribute and more upon how holistic is your approach to CSR.

As an international communications and leadership strategist and consultant, who has worked with Fortune 100 companies like Pfizer, McKesson and Wells Fargo, here are my top five recommendations to help you and your organisation focus and improve your CSR:

1. **Integrate CSR**: From top to bottom, how inter-connected and inter-twined are your CSR strands? Do they radiate from your vision statement to the desks of each employee? Step back and carefully examine your vision statement. Does it capture an element of doing social good? Does it capture anything at all? Messaging, by definition, should be repeatable, emotional, brief and clear. If your vision isn’t “visionary” and can’t be repeated by your employees, you should consider updating and refining it. Next, audit and assess how you are communicating your sustainable business goals throughout your organisation. Take surveys. The answers may surprise and re-direct you.

2. **Formalise Environmental and Social Justice**: Integrating CSR into the corporate culture of a business takes a formal process. Addressing climate change and social justice can and should become part of this process. Many indicators suggest the success of political climate change efforts depends on influence from the private sector. Businesses are no longer adversaries, they are drivers. They’re drivers of equalising gender, sexual preference and family issues. For instance, in Ireland, fewer than 11 per cent of women are on the boards of listed companies. By taking on this and other statistics of inequality head on, a brand can distinguish itself from the pack and lead the way toward empowering all women on the boards of listed companies. By taking on this and other statistics of inequality head on, a brand can distinguish itself from the pack and lead the way toward empowering all...
of its employees. As the World Business Council for Sustainable Development says ‘Business cannot succeed in societies that fail’

3. **Encourage Employees to Turn Off:** I recently toured the massive Dublin compound of offices that house Google. From its on-site medical clinic, gym and swimming pool to the free coffee bars and myriad of healthy snack drawers, employees’ needs appeared to be taken well into consideration. “That’s because they want their employees never to leave!” scoffed a friend when I mentioned how impressed I was. But in today’s mobile device world of always being connected, aren’t all employees everywhere working at a Hotel California? We used to call it ‘burn-out’ but now it’s more like constant stimulation overload. Such overloaded employees should be encouraged to take breaks. Google also provides real swing sets and relax-pods. Promoting reflection, refreshment and re-charging is essential. Unlike the Eagles’ famed hotel, help your employees to check-out and really leave. If only temporarily.

4. **Structure Cross Collaboration:** When departments get out of silos and stretch horizontally to become more communicative, everyone benefits. I’ve been working for the past six months with a top company to flatten its structure to cross and combine skills toward common goals. Since 2014, for example, Marks and Spencer, Nike, General Motors, along with a growing host of other top businesses, formed a coalition committed to fighting climate change under the unified banner We Mean Business.

5. **Teach and Deploy Storytelling:** How do you captivate EVERY audience? Through vivid storytelling. Sure, you can include detail points and data – but only as support for your story. From monthly internal communications meetings, to quarterly client update reports, this is the way every presentation should be approached. There is no excuse for ever putting up a boring PowerPoint slide full of text. If you have to apologise for your slide, it shouldn’t be shown. This applies to any company – no matter what the industry.

While not a new term, promoting your organisation’s corporate social responsibility is quite-simply expected and should not be underestimated in value.

**About the Author:**
Gina London is an Emmy-winning veteran CNN anchor and correspondent who now serves as an International Communications and Employee Engagement Strategist. She is based in Cork where she serves a variety of multinational clients.

**CHAMBERS IRELAND CSR AWARDS 2016**

The shortlist for this year’s Chambers Ireland CSR awards will be announced in July, with the overall awards presentation taking place in Dublin on Thursday 1 September.

Every year, since it was first established in 2004, the awards scheme continues to recognise the work undertaken by Irish and multinational companies to improve the lives of their employees and to enhance the civic environment in which they operate.

This unique competition offers the business community a chance to promote their efforts in CSR and gain recognition for best practice. The awards are presented in a variety of categories covering all areas of CSR.

**Application Process**
The CSR Awards are free to enter, and companies may enter every category, but only once and they may only enter a specific project once. For example; if you have a project that you think might fall under a few different categories, you need to decide which category you wish to enter. See here to download applications and for more information. Please read the category definitions and guidelines carefully here before submitting an application.

**Judging Process**
Once the deadline has passed, the applications go through a two stage judging process. The awards are judged by two separate panels comprising experts in the field of CSR. The first panel will decide the shortlist while the second panel will decide the category and overall winners. The judging process is completely independent and no representative from Chambers Ireland sits on the judging panel. Read here for more information.

**Awards Ceremony**
Following completion of the judging process, the shortlist for the awards will be announced in July. The awards will be handed out at a black tie dinner on 1 September. Each shortlisted candidate will receive a framed citation on the night and each winner will receive a specially designed piece of engraved Waterford Crystal.

For further information about the awards contact Carly Mooney at Chambers Ireland on 01-4004300. For award updates and other CSR activities, email carly.mooney@chambers.ie – include ‘CSR Mailing List’ in the subject line.