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TRAVEL INDUSTRY TRENDS IN A FEW MINUTES



## SUSTAINABILITY SEPTEMBER 2017

### CARING FOR EMPLOYEES

As consumers' scrutiny of a brand's ethical credentials increases, questions about how employees fare in a company have started influencing customers' decision-making processes.

If a company wanted proof of the need to put employee rights centre stage, here's perhaps the most convincing argument: it has been scientifically proven that happier employees are more productive than those who are dissatisfied with their workplace. A study by the University of Warwick in Coventry, England, quantifies at 12 per cent the spike in productivity that a positive work environment can have on employees. Whereas some companies might have thought that bringing table football and a few bean bags into the office would be sufficient, far-sighted brands have been investing in methods to truly care for their employees. Additionally, those companies having an eye on the long-term benefits of fostering a positive employee culture already know the importance of investing in skills and personal development to encourage employees feeling committed to their workplace.

[Starbucks](#), for example, led the way when it publicly announced that it would pay for its employees' college fees through a partnership with Arizona State University. The bachelor degree that its employees can get is achievable on both a full-time and a part-time basis.

Training on the job is just as important to show employees that a company cares – and programmes are springing up across different contexts. From newspapers such as the [New York Times](#) helping its team of journalists adapt to a

changing media landscape by pairing them with tutors who can teach them digital skills to mainstream F&B players such as [Wetherspoon](#) in the UK training hourly paid staff so they can get to managerial positions in the company all industries can benefit from this approach .

If a supermarket chain such as Wegmans is spending about \$50million on training and development every year, it is clear that a corporate budget that includes a dedication to employee development can be considered an investment (and not just expenditure).

Caring for personnel, however, doesn't necessarily end only at the employees who man an office or retail outlets – and that's particularly true of bigger corporations that have a wide international network of suppliers. Many companies are kick starting programmes in the areas where they source produce or manufacture their goods. Sometimes these are directly aimed at people who are training to be hired by the brand itself, but in most cases they take a wider approach to assisting local communities.

In Honduras, coffee heavyweight Kenco has created a project called 'Coffee vs Gangs', which teaches young people how growing coffee can turn them into independent business owners and therefore make for a feasible alternative to joining criminal groups ([coffeevsgangs.com](#)).

American food corporation [Kellogg](#) has focused on giving women a chance to become self-sufficient with initiatives such as a partnership with

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Technoserve to train 12,000 female farmers in India.

Additionally, oil giant [Shell](#) has come up with an initiative in Nigeria that involves organising football tournaments to scout young sporting talent (and prevent aspiring footballers from leaving school): the Shell Cup proves that sometimes competitions can be a useful tool to motivate and engage both local communities and employees.

