



When Doing Good Comes Naturally

Corporate social responsibility is built right into 99 Cents Only Stores' DNA.



SOME COMPANIES HAVE A DEDICATED task force to make sure they are doing good work outside of their day-to-day business operations. But others, like 99 Cents Only Stores, have social good baked into the very core of their corporate mission. As a company that carries name-brand consumable and general merchandise at a steep discount, the price-point retailer serves its communities just by doing what it does every day. With more than 350 stores spanning four states, including California and Texas, 99 Cents Only Stores ensures that over 23 million people have access to fresh produce that won't greatly deplete their paychecks. "In many cases, we are their

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CEO, 99 Cents Only Stores

only source of affordable fresh produce," says CEO Jack Sinclair. "When that's not available it takes a huge toll on society, with health care costs and diseases like obesity and diabetes."

99 Cents Only Stores also goes above and beyond everyday altruism when communities are hit by hard times. When Hurricane Harvey slammed Houston last year, for example, the company pitched in by donating much-needed supplies. It keeps a focus on kids, too, helping youth from underserved communities attend events such as professional baseball games and take trips to the zoo—typical childhood experiences that too often elude them. Some lucky teachers in 99 Cents Only Stores communities get to go on school-shopping sprees and can even win a chance to pay off some of their student loans. These social-responsibility initiatives have a genuine halo effect because they extend the company's core mission.

"When you get customers coming up to employees, telling them how glad they are that the store is here so that now they can afford to feed their families, it's not only personally gratifying but good for business," says Sinclair. In fact, the company boasts revenues exceeding \$2 billion annually.

But 99 Cents Only Stores doesn't just do well by the people it serves; it also takes care of its vendors—namely, farmers. The company has figured out a way to practice waste reduction that benefits everyone. By purchasing "imperfect but still delicious" produce from farmers who supply high-priced grocery stores, the stores are able to offer high-quality products to customers at a lower price. They also help the environment by salvaging produce that would have otherwise ended up in a landfill. It's a win-win situation all around, for the company, its customers, farmers, and the environment. ●