goBeyondProfit CHAMPION

2020 Winner

RUSSELL ®

PROFILE OF A CHAMPION:
A Living Legacy of Empowerment

In 1952, Herman J. Russell started his empire and built a real estate and construction company. Beyond the vision for a thriving, profitable business, Russell imagined a company that nurtured the soul of Atlanta by constructing relationships as strong as buildings and businesses that fostered a circle of empowerment for customers, communities and employees. This founding vision forms the DNA and values that drive the company today. Through intentional focus, investment and heart, H. J. Russell & Company's (Russell) buildings form the skyline of the city and their corporate generosity shapes a living legacy. For nearly 70 years, the leadership of Russell has embodied the values of a goBeyondProfit Champion, and it's this enduring commitment that their peers recognize and celebrate today.

Overall Philosophy

Historically, Russell provided significant financial support for the civil rights movement and emotional support for its leaders. Additional funding went to the advancement of students and entrepreneurs with a specific focus on enhancing the living environments of some of the city's most vulnerable residents in the heart of Atlanta. The company has also proudly served as an unwitting incubator for others in the industry. This ongoing philosophy finds new vitality and innovation in the leadership of the current generations. Together the leadership--across the various subcompanies, Russell CARES and the Russell Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship--collaborates to advance dialogue, bring continuing solutions, and partner with community members and other leaders for lasting change.

From the beginning, we've been beyond building structures, we've been about building communities where everyone has a place. Construction and development are in our bones, but giving back to the community is in our heart."

Michael B. Russell, CEO,
H. J. Russell & Company

Company Culture of Giving

Goodwill and Heart Lived Out Through Russell CARES

The company values, called the Russell Way, guide its "giving" culture providing genuine commitment to associates and extending care to the communities where they live and work. Russell has always been generously active in their communities with sponsorships, donations and community service projects. Russell CARES, the firm's corporate social responsibility arm, manages their corporate giving, offering grants to local organizations for access to subsidized housing, education and strengthening the lives of young people. Thanks to Russell CARES, you'll find associates serving together at the Red Shield Shelter or Children's Healthcare of Atlanta - Hughes Spalding Hospital. In addition, signature programs bring the company's giving philosophy to life including Russell Rocks the Block (held in conjunction with their sister company, Concessions International, LLC) and the newly launched Russell Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (RCIE), a nonprofit established by the Russell Family as a tribute to their patriarch, Herman J. Russell.

Giving is more than a corporate directive, it is part of the Russell DNA"

Paul Bryant, VP, External Affairs
H. J. Russell & Company

Community Empowerment

Combining Levity and Practicality

Long before the revitalization of Atlanta's westside was trendy, H. J. Russell & Company played a vital role in the Castleberry Hill neighborhood. Today, this historic commitment lives on through the signature Russell Rocks the Block program. Imagine, if you will, a typical block party with a bounce house, live music and nourishing food creating an inviting gathering for community residents. Then, insert into this experience access to vital resources such as Morehouse School of Medicine's free health screening, WorkSource Atlanta job readiness program, voter registration tables, a STEAM educational experience, and a youth sports organization activating the minds and bodies of the attending children. Russell CARES elevates this setting of celebration honoring the community into an empowering offering of crucial resources which may otherwise be out of reach for many families. Together, Russell's CEO, president, and employees revel in community and learn side by side.

Deploying Company Resources

Raising the Collective Prosperity of Atlanta

Decades ago, Russell opened their 42,000-square-foot headquarters in historic Castleberry Hill, a neighborhood of Atlanta known for a rich industrial past followed by decades of distress prior to a resurgence in the 1990s. Today, the freshly renovated former headquarters serves as home to the Russell Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship. RCIE president and CEO Jay Bailey often shares the statistics that in the city of Atlanta a child born into poverty has a less than 4% chance of reaching the upper-middle class. And more than half of those born into poverty will remain in poverty their entire lives. Thirty seven percent of African American households have a net worth of zero, and Atlanta leads the country in economic immobility and income inequality. But the data is clear–the greatest equalizer of wealth disparity is business ownership.

For this purpose and to break the cycle, the Russell family committed intellectual and financial resources to create this new engine for entrepreneurship and economic opportunity. Launched in 2019, RCIE is the largest center of its kind in the country devoted to empowering African American entrepreneurs and small business owners. RCIE is part incubator, part accelerator, part innovation lab and part museum geared to change the narrative by telling the untold and under-told stories of African American entrepreneurs and business leaders of past and present, while offering access to space, resources, networks, mentorship, technical assistance and education. Ultimately, RCIE nurtures a prepared and capable pipeline of entrepreneurial leaders and sustainable businesses that will raise the collective prosperity of Atlanta.

"Investing in others nurtures our existence and gives one a keener sense of what a community truly needs."

Michael B. Russell, CEO,
H. J. Russell & Company

Leadership Perspective

Michael B. Russell, CEO, H.J. Russell & Company

When our company was founded, the bedrock of it was to improve the community through our work. There always had to be a bigger purpose than just to make money. We were one of the first major builders of affordable housing, and that was to ensure people had a decent place to live. From the beginning, we've been beyond building structures, we've been about building communities where everyone has a place.

Construction and development are in our bones, but giving back to the community is in our heart. I personally know to whom much is given, much is expected. As a leader, it's important for me to show and encourage our employees to also give back to the communities in which they work and live. We have a sense of responsibility to offer not just monetary support to organizations and institutions that improve and positively impact the community, we have the responsibility to give of our time and talent as well. When you have fulfilled employees and partners in business, who are equally invested in the community, great things can happen and relationships are strengthened all the way around.

Without the community, there would be no company. Investing in others nurtures our existence and gives one a keener sense of what a community truly needs. By having a pulse on the needs of people as we run our businesses, we're able to bring forth more strategic solutions and insightful considerations. By investing in getting to know ALL of the communities that make up your market, you can identify common threads and needs that span the entire city rather than just delivering to the marketplace what you think it needs.

2020 Winner

PROFILE OF A CHAMPION:

Simple Hospitality Invites Real Solutions

On an almost daily basis you read articles or position statements around the importance of business taking an active role in caring for their community. But what does that look like on the ground in our cities and neighborhoods? Often, businesses feel the weight of responsibility without clarity around how best to apply their limited time and resources to the issues. Thankfully, Creature Comforts Brewing Company brings us a honed, data-driven model that offers well-intentioned businesses a road-map that's as replicable as it is hopeful.

Creature Comforts Brewing Company wasn't looking for the spotlight. They've been heads down brewing delicious beer, sharing profits back to the community and inviting others into their physical space. They've converted genuine hospitality into tangible outcomes for Athens, Georgia.

It's their honest lens as well as a reliance on data and collaboration that makes them our first 2020 goBeyondProfit Champion.

Overall Philosophy

Creature Comforts Brewing Company believes good companies are good citizens. As a local brewery, their business model and signature products naturally bring people together. When asked the question of how to "give back", the leaders of Creature Comforts get real about what they bring to the table. They understood their finite skills and resources and focus on a model of collaboration – bringing people together – to tackle the needs in Athens, Georgia. They owned up front that they are not experts on the societal issues and sought out experts steeped in knowledge about the generational and cyclical needs holding back their fellow Athenians from thriving equitably.

"I believe when business leaders recognize the potential (and dare I say responsibility) to do more than generate profits, there is the opportunity to truly leave a legacy."

Chris Herron, CEO,
Creature Comforts Brewing Company

Cultivating Company Culture

Making Serving Simple

Everyone on the Creature Comforts team is encouraged to be good professionals and good neighbors. Serving is made simple, accessible and impactful. They can take part in any number of volunteer opportunities either through the company's defined programs or one-off volunteer projects offered around town. Long before they established branded programs like their *Get Artistic* effort helping the community thrive or their *Get Comfortable* model geared to help their neighbors survive, the team invited local agencies to use their space at no-cost in order to lend what they could to good causes. Their community outreach activities launched like any other start-up – as an idea that gained traction from passionate employees starting small, working together to achieve an audacious goal. As the beer business succeeded, they were able to bring on dedicated staff to focus on the social impact efforts. Today's tested campaign models benefit from the infusion of focused leadership and are poised to expand.

Community Empowerment

Inviting Others Into The Process

What's their model? First, they focus on the Athens community as a whole versus a specific cause. They dig into needs-assessment data for hard facts pushing themselves to remain as "dispassionate as the data" and thereby open to directing resources where they matter most. From here they invite experts into the process adopting an advisor-directed framework to glean wisdom from external partners. They turn to local social service leaders and local government officials to help understand which agencies in town are doing the heavy lifting and seeing the greatest results. Finally, they hold themselves accountable with an annual program evaluation reviewing impact data to ensure their investments are effective.

"We are literally open twice as long, serving twice as many people...It's been a wonderful blessing to partner with Get Comfortable."

-Andrew Wilkins, Bigger Vision of Athens

"It's the only grant from a business that's this robust and comprehensive...much more of a partnership than just a grant gift."

-Lawrence Harris, College Factory

Deploying Company Resources

Collaborating For Exponential Impact

They have a heart for the issues but as business leaders, they recognize the limits of their resources and skills to make meaningful headway toward social solutions. Leveraging their expertise in hospitality, they designed a simple, flexible structure making it easy for others to join in the good. They wisely sought out the Athens Area Community Foundation to create a donor advised fund making it easier to invite their customers and business associates to pool their resources. Four years later they have collectively mobilized approximately $1M to meet the greatest needs in Athens, creating indelible partnerships with for-profit and non-profit partners and realizing true impact for the community -- as well as for their employees and their brand.

It can be a paralyzing starting place to realize oh my gosh the world is broken, I want to get involved but I don't know where to begin. Which is why making serving simple, is such a huge value for our company."

Matthew Stevens, VP, Strategic Impact
Creature Comforts Brewing Company

Leadership Perspective

Chris Herron, CEO, Creature Comforts Brewing Company

"Since we opened our doors, the founding team members shared a hope that our community would benefit as a result of us operating here. Our community impact strategy started through a program called *Get Comfortable*, which strives to help those whose fundamental needs are unmet get more comfortable. We soon realized that not only do we want the citizens of our community to survive, but also to thrive. We have come to understand that there's a clear relationship between a vibrant arts scene and one's connection to that community – so we created *Get Artistic* to help residents become connected citizens. Connected citizens are more willing to be civically engaged, which was the start of the *Get Comfortable* shared investment model. As a result, we are working together as a community to help all our neighbors not only survive but ideally to thrive and to bring about greater social equity.

"For us, being a leader of a great and growing company is far more important than focusing on growth alone. Being a good neighbor is simply the right thing to do, and we also have come to see that it even lifts the business in multiple ways. We have seen a positive financial impact, and improved ability to attract and retain top talent, and most importantly, a daily sense of purpose that drives our work. I believe when business leaders recognize the potential (and dare I say responsibility) to do more than generate profits, there is the opportunity to truly leave a legacy."

For more information follow these links to the ***Get Artistic*** and ***Get Comfortable*** models. And, don't forget with every sip, you're giving a little good back to meet real needs. Cheers!

goBeyondProfit CHAMPION

2019 Winner

GAS SOUTH

Be a Fuel for Good.

PROFILE OF A CHAMPION:
Put a Stake in the Ground and Live By It

Just two years ago, Gas South operated like many companies with charitably minded leadership and employees, and generous instincts that had yet to translate into corporate practices that genuinely engaged the hearts of employees or customers. This profile charts the remarkable evolution of Gas South's corporate generosity journey from commitment to execution to impact.

A combination of decisive leadership and clear strategy brought Gas South to an exceptional juncture where today purpose plus transparency and accountability bring remarkable benefits for their business and their community. For these reasons, they were peer nominated and selected as our first goBeyondProfit Champion.

Overall Philosophy

At Gas South, every day holds the opportunity to make a difference in people's lives. The company's stated purpose "Be a Fuel for Good" sounds lofty, but in practical terms means helping customers save money with great low rates and no deposit. It means investing in employees and supporting their growth. And then there's the commitment to go beyond these strong business practices to ensure their company success directly benefits the community. Through a variety of efforts, Gas South helps people in their communities fulfill their potential with hopes that one day, everyone will join in being a fuel for good.

Cultivating Company Culture

Embracing a Purpose Journey

It all began when Gas South's leadership read the book *The Story of Purpose*. Inspired, they devised a company purpose statement "Be a Fuel for Good" and backed this up with an audacious pledge to give 5% of profits to help children in need. Next steps – they intentionally empowered their people to execute on this new purpose. A bold goal that today weaves its way throughout the internal culture of the company, spilling over into everything the company does externally. From communications, to the employee "Purpose Team" charged with propelling the purpose through every aspect of the business, to volunteerism and philanthropic efforts, all members of Gas South clearly play an integral role in demonstrating what it means to Be a Fuel for Good.

Put a stake in the ground. Make a pledge that is tangible and measurable and articulate a clear, authentic strategy for how your company is going to make a difference."

Kevin Greiner, President & CEO, Gas South

Deploying Resources

Strategy + Employee Engagement

Gas South fuels their strategy with company funds and human spirit. Recently Gas South took the tough step to revamp the process by which they consider nonprofits' requests for funds. For years, the company funded organizations and events far and wide. Last year, they lined up philanthropic efforts with their purpose pledge. They embraced the challenge to narrow the criteria for approved requests to only those who serve children in the areas of basic needs, education and illness/disability. They crafted an online application process, a one-month request window and an employee review board. Finalists present back to the company and employees vote to reward the winners $50,000 impact investments.

In addition, Gas South provides a variety of ways for employees to take part in hands-on volunteerism. Employees are empowered to lead volunteer projects with organizations that they're passionate about serving. All in all, Gas South offers a myriad of ways for the company and its people to lend their hearts, hands and resources to give back.

Thanks to Gas South for their compassion and dedication to the welfare of others.

Pam Cushenan, Assistant Professor, Georgia State University Perimeter

Gas South met my students' basic needs and consistently provided support. They are an asset to our school and community.

Michelle Curry, Principal, Norton Park Elementary

Focusing on Community Empowerment

Listening, Learning & Leveraging

Typically, companies pick a cause, an organization or an issue as the focus of their community outreach. A goBeyondProfit Champion takes the added step to partner well, bringing the right combination of resources to ensure that their community engagement leaves all participants strengthened. *What does this community empowerment look like?* Gas South showcases this intentionality with these two examples:

Carl E. Sanders YMCA STEAM LAB. - The YMCA approached Gas South with research demonstrating that youth from low-income families and those of color have fewer opportunities to engage in STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math) programs that enrich their current education and future career opportunities. Recognizing this critical need, the Sanders YMCA was determined to create free access to STEAM for their program attendees. Gas South jumped at the chance to fulfill its promise to help children in need by partnering with the Sanders Y. What did that entail? A financial commitment to help create a STEAM lab inside the YMCA branch, employee hands-on service to renovate the space, volunteer involvement each month, and an extended vision to craft an outdoor garden to supplement indoor learning and provide much needed fresh foods for the students. With this investment and multi-layered support, Gas South helps ensure a more level playing field with access to education today for tomorrow's emerging workforce.

Norton Park Elementary - Gas South supported this local Title 1 elementary school with traditional volunteer projects like clean up days and supply drives. In an effort to better understand the underlying needs affecting school success, Gas South sat down with the school leadership where they learned that hygiene and access to healthcare are crucial issues that the students face. *How does an energy provider help address healthcare needs?* They have the insight to partner well. Gas South reached out to nearby Georgia State's (GSU) dental program to discuss shared resources to tackle the problems. This resulted in informational sessions for parents where GSU provided expertise, and Gas South provided breakfast and bilingual materials. GSU then conducted screenings and dental care free of charge. Gas South supported a school-wide dental education day with employee volunteers helping GSU students guide 800 elementary students through stations to learn brushing, flossing and healthy eating habits.

Imagine the trajectory of impact when a company like Gas South leverages its purpose and resources to meet real needs.

Leadership Perspective

Kevin Greiner, President & CEO, Gas South

"We believe we have an obligation to help those in need to ensure stronger more resilient communities. This means caring for our customers and our employees as well as elevating our industry and our communities. Our pledge to invest 5% of our profits to help children in need underscores this commitment. Stronger communities translate into a stronger business, too."

Lesson Learned: "I've learned that articulating a purpose and remaining true to it is extremely powerful for building a positive company culture. New team members tell us all the time that one of the things that attracted them to Gas South is our corporate citizenship. This commitment builds morale as our people see first-hand the positive impact we have together through our financial investments and volunteer efforts."

"Put a stake in the ground. Make a pledge that is tangible and measurable and articulate a clear, authentic strategy for how your company is going to make a difference."

> ***"I've learned that articulating a purpose and remaining true to it is extremely powerful for building a positive company culture...our people see first-hand the positive impact we have together..."***

Carl E. Sanders YMCA STEAM Lab created in partnership with Gas South employees.