

BUSINESS RESPONSE TO PARKLAND SHOOTING AND GUN SAFETY

This report marks the sixth in Weber Shandwick's business response series, which explores CEO and corporate reactions to challenging current events and societal issues. We most recently tracked how companies responded to the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida on February 14, 2018 and to the subsequent conversation surrounding gun safety and company relationships with the NRA. By March 24, the day of the "March for Our Lives" demonstrations, which called for action against gun violence, we collected responses from 90 companies.

Of the 90 companies that issued responses through March 24, 2018...

- + **70%** are "new" activists who did not respond to other events Weber Shandwick has tracked (immigration ban, withdrawal from the Paris climate agreement, transgender military ban, Charlottesville protests and DACA repeal). **4%** have responded to all six events.
- + **58%** are headquartered in Blue states (leaned Democratic in the 2016 presidential election). **39%** are headquartered in Red states (leaned Republican in the 2016 presidential election). **3%** are international companies.
- + **52%** issued responses through media statements. Twitter was the second most popular platform for a response (**33%**), followed by a statement on the company website (**6%**).
- + **37%** had their CEOs, founders, owners, chairpersons or managing partners respond.
- + **32%** are from the financial sector, **18%** technology, **16%** retailing. This is the first time that the tech sector was a laggard.
- + **29%** are 2017 U.S. Fortune 500 companies.
- + **3%** made statements on the day of the Parkland shooting or on the day following.

In terms of content...

- + **51%** talked about taking action in support of gun safety or gun control, including donating money to the March for Our Lives, ending NRA discounts and raising the minimum age to buy firearms.
- + **21%** mentioned "customers" or "clients" in their statements. This is the first time that customers or clients were referenced as a primary reason for speaking out.
- + **21%** of financial companies pledged to engage with clients and gun manufacturers on the issue.
- + **11%** defended gun sales or relationships with gun manufacturers or the NRA.
- + **10%** called for legislative action on gun control.

INSIGHTS:

- 1) Companies can speak out on contentious issues.** While gun control may be one of the most "radioactive" topics in the U.S., we saw a considerable number of companies speaking out, even more so than in some of our other business response analyses. Companies aren't shying away from hot-button topics.
- 2) The CEO does not have to be the spokesperson.** Fewer CEOs issued a response than what we've previously tracked. Responses can come from other executives or spokespeople.
- 3) Responses do not have to come immediately.** Very few organizations made statements within 48 hours of the Parkland shooting. More spoke out over time as the conversation focused on the NRA and gun control.
- 4) It doesn't always have to be tech.** We've previously seen tech companies dominating corporate activism, but this is the first time another industry (finance) was most outspoken. This could be a result of business ties to the NRA and gun manufacturers, which may have prompted different types companies to speak out.

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