

Corporate Leaders Must Rethink Engagement with Civil Rights Organizations, New Advisory Says

New advisory from Phase 2 Consulting™ examines how corporate relationships with civil rights organizations influence regulation, public trust, and governance.

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As major corporate initiatives increasingly unfold under regulatory scrutiny and public input, [Phase 2 Consulting™](#), the Washington, D.C.-based strategic advisory firm led by [Dr. Lamell J. McMorris](#), today

released a new advisory highlighting the strategic importance of corporate relationships with civil rights organizations. The advisory offers a framework for corporate leaders to build credible partnerships with trusted community institutions that strengthen public trust, foster constructive dialogue, and help companies navigate complex regulatory environments.

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Bernice King, American lawyer, Martin Luther King Jr.'s daughter

“At this pivotal moment, companies must recognize that civil rights organizations are more than advocates. They are strategic partners in shaping the future of business and society,” said Dr. Lamell McMorris. “Too often, companies see these relationships as public relations tools. In reality, they are both a moral compass and a strategic advantage.”

The advisory highlights how relationships between corporations and civil rights and community organizations influence public dialogue, regulatory review processes, and long-term business planning.

Dr. McMorris serves on the boards of several national civil rights organizations, including as Senior Vice Chair of the National Urban League, and has long worked at the intersection of corporate leadership and modern civil rights institutions.

For corporations operating in regulated and politically visible industries, relationships with historic civil rights and community organizations can shape the certainty, timing, and cost of major business initiatives. These institutions often serve as trusted bridges between communities, policymakers, and the institutions shaping economic opportunity.

Major corporate initiatives, including mergers and acquisitions, infrastructure development, licensing approvals, and market expansion, frequently involve regulatory review and public input. Constructive engagement with civil rights and community organizations helps companies understand stakeholder perspectives and navigate regulatory processes more effectively.

The 2025 Edelman Trust Barometer found that a majority of respondents expect CEOs to address societal issues and build trust with the communities where their companies operate. At the same time, the political environment surrounding corporate diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives has grown more polarized, prompting some companies to reassess how they engage with civil rights and advocacy organizations. Many corporations are now seeking transparent ways to maintain constructive relationships with trusted community institutions.

Dr. Bernice A. King, CEO of The King Center, emphasized the importance of leaders who are able to build meaningful bridges between institutions and communities.

“My father taught us that authentic leadership is about building bridges - connecting communities, institutions, and hearts—in the ongoing pursuit of justice, opportunity, and human dignity,” said King. “When leaders bring together business, civic leadership, and communities around that shared commitment, they help advance his vision of the Beloved Community and expand the promise of dignity and opportunity for generations to come.”

Marc H. Morial, President and CEO of the National Urban League, emphasized that strong engagement between the corporate sector and community institutions can strengthen both economic opportunity and public trust.

“Strong relationships between corporate leaders and community institutions are essential to building an inclusive and thriving economy,” said Morial.

As the social and political landscape evolves, companies increasingly recognize that engagement with credible community institutions is an important element of responsible corporate governance.

To learn more or to speak with Lamell McMorris, please contact Rosemary Staltare at Rosemary@phase2-consulting.com or 786-683-0045.

About Phase 2 Consulting™

Phase 2 Consulting™ is a Washington, D.C. based strategic advisory firm that helps corporations, institutions, and leaders build meaningful relationships with communities and stakeholders

across the United States and internationally. The firm works with clients to strengthen corporate culture, engage constructively with civic and community institutions, and advance responsible business initiatives.

To learn more, visit www.Phase2-Consulting.com

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