

# What Do Your Neighbors Think About You? Talk to Them and Find Out



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**ONE ASPECT OF SOCIAL** responsibility is engaging and developing better, more meaningful relationships with neighboring business, residences and the community at large. The long-term viability of the aggregate industry is dependent on obtaining and maintaining its social license to operate within the local community. As these licenses are heavily dependent on local political opinions, the balance can shift from pro-business to anti-business quickly.

Residential encroachment is continuing to advance and surround aggregate facilities while technology has improved, which provides neighbors and communities with better tools to get their message across through social media. In an effort to generate positive public relations and stay ahead of any negative press, aggregate companies need to communicate more, and more effectively with their neighbors and their communities. Sustainability through the pursuit of social responsibility encourages companies to engage neighboring residences, businesses and the community (also referred to as external stakeholders) in positive, constructive and consistent dialogue in an effort to maintain an aggregate company's license to operate. However, implementing social responsibility initiatives throughout a corporation is one of the most challenging concepts of sustainability.

These challenges were observed in the statistics generated from a survey conducted by NSSGA on sustainability initiatives being implemented throughout their membership. The results generated from the survey were discussed at the Sustainability Task Force meeting held during NSSGA's 2011 Annual

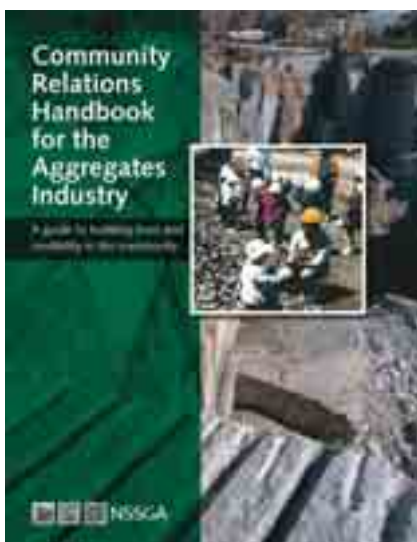
Convention in Las Vegas. The main concern identified from the survey statistics centered on the concept of social responsibility and engaging external stakeholders:

- 32 percent hold periodic community meetings,
- 34 percent indicated that they seldom talk to their neighbors,
- 40 percent perceive their neighbors are interested in what they do and give suggestions,
- 32 percent indicate that they discuss with their neighbors how to implement their suggestions,
- 26 percent indicate that they discuss their neighbor's reactions and how to continually improve.

These statistics paint a picture that many consider the concept of social responsibility and stakeholder engagement to be somewhat intangible or not valuable to their current business practices and philosophies.

So how can NSSGA's Sustainability Task Force help to foster competitive advantages focused on social responsibility to ensure its membership's social license to operate maintains secure? Are there more tools that can be developed to assist companies in the pursuit of social responsibility? In an effort to answer these questions, the members attending the Sustainability Task Force meeting discussed many concepts and ideas. The main suggestion produced from that meeting was to promote the NSSGA *Community Relations Handbook for the Aggregate Industry*. This guide provides insights into:

- The benefits of developing long-term relationships between operations and the local community;



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- How to use two-way communication effectively;
- How to address challenging questions concerning truck traffic and dust; and
- How to host an open house or operation tour.

Companies that encourage community involvement, consider a community's concerns and support the community's needs are finding that they have less "Not In My Back Yard" (NIMBY) issues with the nearby residents or the local community when requesting to renew, modify or obtain new operating permits. This in turn saves the organization time, money and effort in the expansion processes, thereby creating a competitive advantage. NSSGA's Sustainability Task Force recommends that aggregate producers use the *Community Relations Handbook* and begin to implement some of the suggestions as a means of pursuing social responsibility by engaging external stakeholders consistently through positive public relationship building efforts to gain competitive advantages and sustain their business for years to come. Efforts such as those recommended in the *Community Relations Handbook* help put social responsibility and, ultimately, sustainability into action. ■

Copies of the *Community Relations Handbook* can be obtain at <https://www.nssga.org/commerce/store.cfm>.

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