



Cisco Systems

Locations: California (HQ)

Industries: Technology Hardware and Equipment

RISK LEVEL:



High Risk

DESCRIPTION:

Cisco Systems is High Risk. The company yields to political activism in shaping corporate governance, potentially alienating consumers, dividing employees, and harming shareholders. The company implements race and identity-based policies that replace merit, excellence, and integrity with preferential treatment and outcomes. Cisco embraces corporate initiatives that redirect its central focus from business goals to partisan policies and divisive issues. This approach fails to safeguard free exercise, free speech, and free enterprise.

Corporate Weaponization

Has canceled customers, suppliers, or vendors due to their political views or religious beliefs OR corporately boycotts, divests, or sanctions regions, people groups, or industries. High Risk

In 2011, Cisco terminated a contract with a high-ranking consultant for authoring a book expressing his agreement with the Biblical definition of marriage (1). The company has hired a new CEO since this incident, though current CEO Chuck Robbins was a senior vice president at the company at the time of the firing. However, Cisco later backtracked this decision, apologizing and stating that the consultant remained a vendor with the company (2). Cisco received a score of 100 on the 2025 Corporate Equality Index (CEI) from the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), a political stakeholder group. The company recruits employees based on sexual identity issues. The company discriminates against vendors that do not promote divisive sex and gender policies, indicating it prioritizes sexual issues over merit (3)(4).

Charitable giving (including employee matching programs) policies or practices discriminate against charitable organizations based on views or religious beliefs. High Risk

Cisco's HRC 2025 CEI rating indicates the company will not donate to non-religious charities unless they embrace controversial sexual identity policies (1)(2). The company will donate to religious charities, but the receiving charity must have a policy that recipients of charitable works and donations are "not encouraged or required to learn about, adhere to, or convert to that organization's religious doctrine as a condition of receiving service from the program" (3). Cisco likely uses Benevity as its charitable giving platform. Benevity vets charities according to the Southern Poverty Law Center's Hate List, which includes mainstream libertarian, conservative, family, and religious advocacy organizations (4)(5)(6).

Employment policies fail to protect against viewpoint or other discrimination and/or are ideological in nature. High Risk

Cisco's HRC 2025 CEI rating indicates the company forces employees to attend multiple, controversial trainings on gender identity, sexual orientation, transgender issues, and divisive racial ideology. The company provides gender transition guidelines for its employees and a specific benefits guide with a comprehensive explanation of transgender services funded by the company (1)(2).

The company offers unconscious bias training as part of its "core curriculum" for managers and employees (3)(4). Cisco does not provide viewpoint protections for its employees (5).

Corporate Governance and Public Policy

Uses corporate reputation to support causes, organizations, or policies hostile to freedom of expression.

High Risk

Cisco's HRC 2025 CEI rating indicates the company agrees to allow a controversial stakeholder group focused on sexual identity issues to dictate marketing or advertising strategy. By doing so, the company risks dividing employees, alienating customers and harming shareholders (1)(2). The company's PGLE membership reflects its commitment to "operationalize" company coverage of transgender surgery and treatment, the vetting of business partners based on LGBTQ+ policies, and the financial support of LGBTQ organizations on a global level (3)(4)(5). Cisco signed an open letter endorsing the Equality Act, a contentious proposal to amend the 1964 Civil Rights Act by adding sexual orientation and so-called gender identity as protected categories. The legislation would, among other implications, grant biological men access to women-only spaces such as sports teams and public restrooms, and compel healthcare providers to deliver sex-denying healthcare (6). Cisco's CEO, Chuck Robbins, also publicly spoke out against the Georgia voting bill, and the company has joined the Civic Alliance to oppose various state-level election security laws (7)(8). Robbins has also publicly supported stricter firearm regulation in the United States (9). Cisco CEO Chuck Robbins is a member of the Business Roundtable and signed its 2019 Statement on the Purpose of a Corporation, which promotes stakeholder capitalism over traditional obligations to shareholders (10)(11). The company opposed various state and local legislation intended to protect parental rights, girls' sports, bathroom facilities, and gendered spaces (12). Cisco's Chairman and CEO, Chuck Robbins, denounced various states' legislative efforts to protect election integrity and security (13). The company signed an amicus brief in opposition to the 2016 North Carolina bathroom bill HB2, which required people to use the bathroom of their biological sex (14). The company's CEO, Chuck Robbins, signed the CEO Action for Diversity & Inclusion pledge, which includes a commitment to promote DEI through bias education training in the workplace, strategize on DEI programs/initiatives with other signatories, and engage boards of directors when developing and evaluating DEI strategies (15)(16).

Uses corporate funds to advance ideological causes, organizations, or policies hostile to freedom of expression.

High Risk

Cisco's HRC 2025 CEI rating indicates the company covers transgender related costs for its employees and their children, including paid short-term leave, puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones, chest surgeries, genital surgeries, medical visits and lab monitoring, travel and lodging. Additionally, the company has pledged philanthropic support of at least one organization or event that promotes sex and gender ideology. By allowing a political stakeholder group to dictate operations, the company increases health care costs and risks dividing employees, alienating customers and harming shareholders (1)(2). The company is a founding member of the PGLE (3). Cisco has also made progress on its 2020 pledge to donate \$5 million to the Black Lives Matter organization and related causes (4)(5). The company is a Bronze sponsor of Out and Equal and is a partner of the HRC's Foundation (6)(7). Cisco is a member of the MCCA, indicating its focus on recruiting, retaining, and promoting employees based on race (8)(9). The company is a coalition member of OneTen, appearing to prioritize diversity over merit in its hiring (10)(11)(12). Otherwise, there are no publicly known cases of the company using corporate funds to advance ideological causes, organizations, or policies (13).

Uses corporate political actions and/or financial contributions for ideological, non-business purposes.

High Risk

Cisco's HRC 2025 CEI rating indicates the company publicly advocated for controversial sex and gender ideology through local, state or federal legislation or initiatives. By allowing a political stakeholder group to dictate operations, the company risks dividing

employees, alienating customers and harming shareholders (1)(2). The company donated to the Equality PAC and has lobbied for ideological purposes (3)(4)(5).

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