
For Immediate Release

Panel of Professors Gives GE Grade of B+ for Statements on NAFTA and Protectionism

PHILADELPHIA (May 6, 2017)—A poll asked a panel of business school professors to grade GE and its Chairman and CEO Jeff Immelt on statements he made Friday on free trade agreements. “Protectionism is not the answer, he said, “rather than withdrawing from trade deals, we should work to modernize and improve them.”

The panel awarded GE and Immelt a grade of “B+” for the statements.

The Real Time Expert Poll[®] involves a panel of experts hailing from 39 world-renowned universities, including Oxford, Cornell, Columbia, INSEAD, Georgetown, Princeton and University of Pennsylvania. The panel periodically grades companies that take political stands, and also rates those companies on their transparency, consistency and other dimensions. The poll is administered by *Drexel’s Institute for Strategic Leadership* in partnership with the *American Marketing Association*.

A total of 21 professors participated in this edition of the poll. A majority of panelists gave Immelt an A, however, one panelist gave him a failing grade. The average grade, using standard GPA calculation was a 3.3, a B+. Grades varied somewhat based on the political leaning of the panelist. Somewhat surprisingly, conservative panelists awarded the highest grades (A) although the statements run counter to some of the Republican President’s plans. The lowest grade was for those who self-reported as middle of the road (B/B+), and liberal panelists gave the company and Immelt a B+.

“Trade impacts a number of industries and states,” responded one anonymous panelist, “Immelt is justified in seeking to influence this critical issue.” Another panelist said that Immelt’s statements make “a great case for business,” but that he might have connected his statements more to “how it helps American workers.”

The poll asks panelists to rate the company across four additional dimensions. The panel gave the highest marks for maintaining a consistent message (4.4 on the 5 point scale), and for acting on an issue that is materially relevant to its stakeholders such as investors, employees, and customers (4.1). Assessments of GE and Immelt were also positive for transparency in stating its position (3.9), and for taking leadership on the issue (3.9).

“While there is always some risk in companies stating public policy opinions, says Daniel Korschun, an associate professor at Drexel’s LeBow College of Business, and lead administrator of the poll, “trade is an issue of material importance to GE and its stakeholders. He adds, “Immelt has managed to avoid direct confrontation with the Trump administration, yet still argues forcefully to keep trade open.”

Polls are administered periodically when a company takes a public stand on a political issue. More details about the initiative, as well as a complete list of panelists (with contact information) is available at www.lebow.drexel.edu/corporate-political-activism-panel. Questions about the panel, poll, and methodology can also be directed to Dr. Korschun at dek46@drexel.edu.

For Jeff Immelt's full remarks, see this transcript supplied by GE:
<http://www.gereports.com/competing-for-the-world/>

About the Institute for Strategic Leadership at Drexel University

Drexel LeBow's Institute for Strategic Leadership (ISL) led by Executive Director Alison Young advances an evidence-based perspective to leadership. The Institute believes that clear, verifiable support will help leaders diagnose preconceived ideas and assumptions that may not be accurate, and replace them with practices that have been proven to be effective. The Institute generates evidence-based knowledge through research grants, curriculum development and corporate outreach.

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About the American Marketing Association

The American Marketing Association (AMA) is the largest marketing association in the world, and an official content partner of the poll. Trusted by nearly 1 million marketing and sales professionals a year worldwide, the AMA has more than 70 professional chapters and over 350 collegiate chapters throughout North America and select international locations. The AMA serves organizations and individuals who practice, teach and study marketing across the globe. It serves as a forum for connecting like-minded individuals to foster knowledge sharing and relationship building; to be a trusted resource for marketing information, tools, education and training; and to advance marketing practice and thought leadership.

For more information about the AMA, visit www.ama.org or follow the latest AMA news at @AMA_Marketing.