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## CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND COMMUNICATIONS

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### Abstract

Organisational development changes led to changes in the way they are managed and hence to dramatic changes in the professional obligations of their managers. Their daily routine requires that they should be "aware" of a huge amount of information. Indeed, in order to be successful we all have to be committed to our work and make the most of all available resources and opportunities. The founders of innovative companies have been aware for quite a long time that each company is responsible not only to its employees but also to the society. I think many people assume, wrongly, that a company exists simply to make money. While this is an important result of a company's existence, we have to go deeper and find the real reasons for our being. As we investigate this, we inevitably come to the conclusion that a group of people get together and exist as an institution that we call a company so they are able to accomplish something collectively which they could not accomplish separately. They are able to do something worthwhile — they make a contribution to society (a phrase which sounds trite but is fundamental). This group of people do something worthwhile by means of Corporate social responsibility (CSR).

### Keywords

Corporate responsibility – Communications – External dimension – Internal dimension

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## Introduction

There are many publications on organizations' routine corporate social responsibility to their employees, the society and the environment. Social responsibility is a strategic approach followed by managers who want to achieve better integration of their organization and its business environment. It is an element of their corporate culture that requires a commitment which puts the personal gain and the strictly financial interests of their company in the background and establishes new corporate values. According to M. Stefanova, social responsibility is "the responsibility of enterprises for their impact on society, i.e. the strive to minimize the negative environmental, social and economic effects and maximize the positive effects"<sup>1</sup>.

Thus the ability of an organization to learn and to increase the value and performance of its human capital have become of primary importance. Lifelong learning is a strategic goal for the European Union. It poses new requirements to those responsible for the adequate management of the organization and the efficient use of its employees' potential. This is why the processes of their professional training and development have stirred the interest of employers and experts. To be successful, each organisation should follow the strategic approach of identifying a set of competencies required from its managers. Many university graduates who want to be successful in Bulgaria are discouraged by the lack of respect for professionalism and the low competence of the managers they have to work with. Many people assume, wrongly, that they are being put off by the low levels of remuneration offered by their employers. Indeed, most often than not they are demotivated by the lack of business ethics and socially responsible behaviour of their organizations. Therefore, corporate social responsibility and ethics must be "put on a pedestal". This article aims to corroborate the thesis that CSR, as an element of the corporate culture of an organization, is equally important for its employees and the general public.

## Sustainable development through corporate social responsibility

The definition of Corporate Social Responsibility can generally be defined as a business practice that contributes to achieving Sustainable Development in the world. Social responsibility standards are viewed through the lens of organizations' responsibility to balance the three pillars of sustainable development: Economic growth; Social development y Protection of the environment. The most comprehensive definition of CSR is given in the ISO 26000 (2011) standard, which provides a detailed description of the scope, topics and principles of application of organizations' social responsibility. It is defined as the responsibility of an organization for the impacts of its decisions and activities on society and the environment, through transparent and ethical behaviour that:

- Contributes to sustainable development, including health and the welfare of society;
- Takes into account the expectations of stakeholders;
- Is in compliance with applicable law and consistent with international norms of behaviour; and
- Is integrated throughout the organization and practised in its relationships"<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> M. Stefanova and J. Toms, Corporate Social Responsibility and Communications for Sustainable Business Developmen (Sofia: Ciela, 2014), 19.

<sup>2</sup> M. Stefanova and J. Toms, Corporate Social Responsibility and Communications for ... 19.

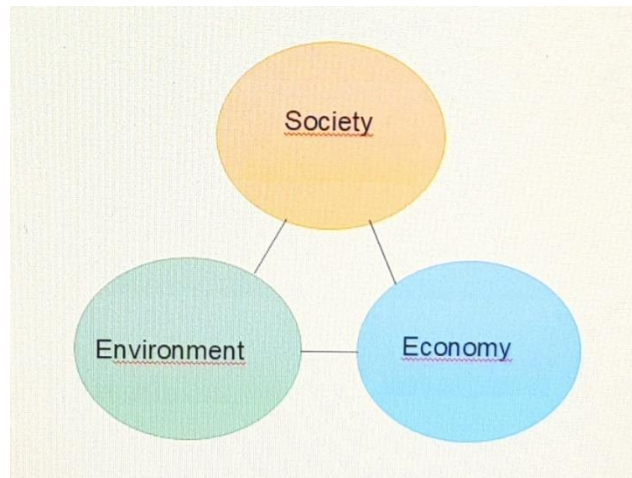


Figure 1  
Components of CSR  
Source: Systematization of the author

The policies and activities of organisations have an impact on their staff, the society, and the environment through. Therefore, CSR has both an internal and an external dimension:

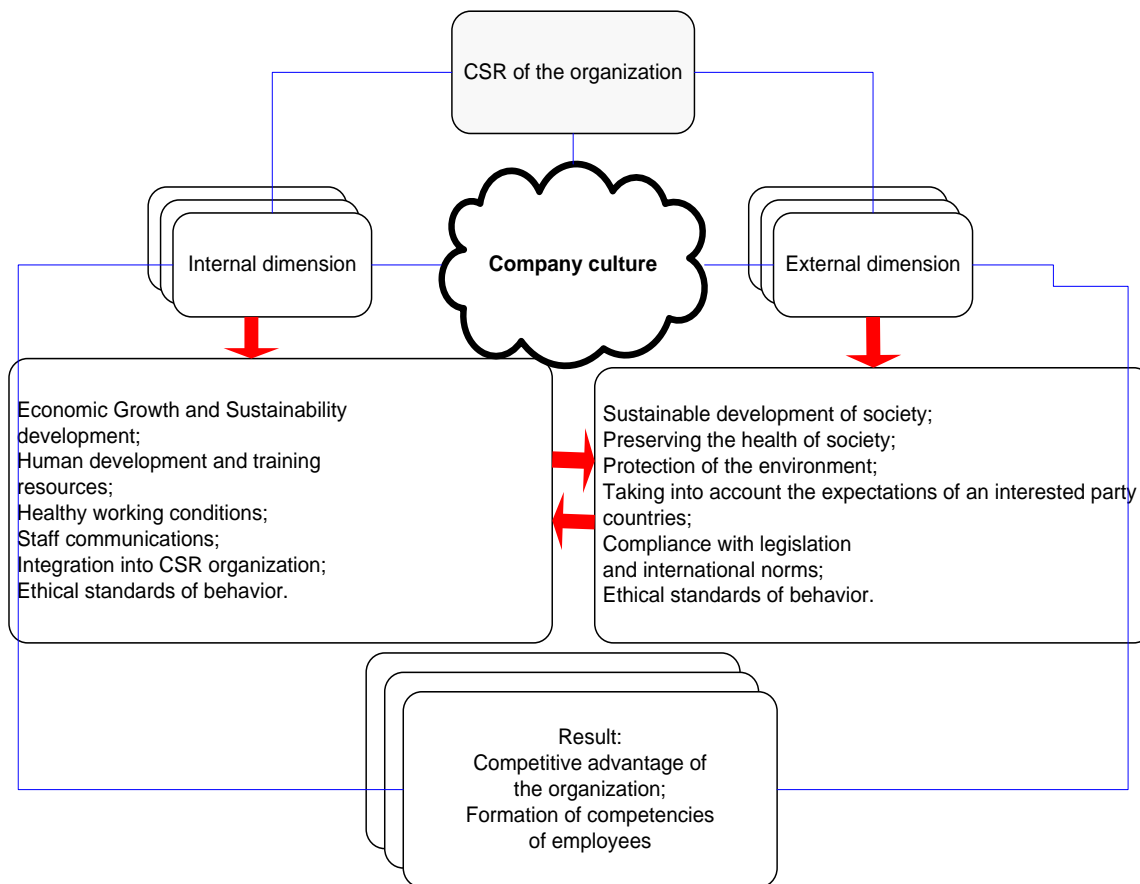


Figure 2  
Organisation's CSR  
Source: Systematization of the author

## Internal dimension of CSR

CSR improves the communication between management and employees and the allocation of financial resources for human resource development and occupational health and safety. Thus it provides the organization with a competitive advantage and improves the competences of its employees in the following aspects:

- Personal commitment and efficiency – employees develop a positive ("I can do it") mindset, commitment to finding ways to overcome the obstacles and willingness to use all available resources to achieve the set goals;
- Managerial Leadership – managerial leaders motivate their subordinates to achieve the common goals through a combination of formal authority, collaboration and mutual trust;
- Business comprehension – business skills beyond the functional ones, awareness of the financial and accounting specifics of business processes and operations, customer priorities, and the added value of continuous improvements or transformations;
- Professional and ethical behaviour - professional knowledge and skills in certain fields (e.g. legal, financial, etc.), business communication skills, teamwork, delegation of rights and responsibilities, employees' participation in decision-making processes and achievement of mutual understanding, ethical code of conduct;
- Achieving results that contribute to the success of the organization - the ability not to focus only on separate tasks but to assume broader responsibilities leading to the achievement of the objectives while observing the laws and adhering to the ethical code of conduct;
- Continuous training - continuous self-education combined with aided learning methods (mentoring, shadowing, collaboration, etc.);
- Analytical and intuitive/creative thinking - systemic approach and situational analysis, development of action plans, creative thinking for innovative solutions and benefitting from opportunities;
- Customer Focus – awareness of employee attitude on regarding the processes in the organization and its development, readiness to respond to customer feedback and take actions to remedy errors and improve the performance;
- Strategic thinking - the ability to create an achievable vision of the future, to anticipate long-term development, to choose the right course of action; ability to see beyond the details and take on challenges;
- Communicativeness, persuasion and interpersonal skills – ability to present information in a convincing and reasonable way (especially in writing); patience, empathy and understanding of the emotional, behavioural, and social aspects of the organization.

Contemporary organizations invest in their staff training. An effective approach to training is to use of external trainers to develop skills and build staff relationships that are useful for the organization and its customers. The return on the investment in training is expressed not only in better performance but also in loyalty and motivation, which are quite often than not are key factors for performance improvement as well as the main reasons for the employees to remain in the organization and to develop the competences they need to succeed in a challenging and dynamic environment. Improving their competences will not only guarantee that their professional quality is assessed objectively but also stimulate their professional development and self-evaluation and help them identify and develop the competences they need most to improve their performance and communication at work.



## External dimension of CSR

These are the effects of the organization to its partners, suppliers, the local community, the environment, etc. Organizations can have a complex relationship with the society. In addition to their direct interaction with consumers (people who buy their goods and services), they have indirect relation to the society in general by affecting the economy and the environment. The level of their social responsibility determines whether their activities will pollute or preserve the environment and whether they will respond to the specific needs of local communities by engaging in charitable contributions, providing better products and services, preservation of the environment and conservation of natural resources etc. The external dimension depends on a number of factors, such as:

- The corporate culture of the organisation defines its behaviour. For example, if the organization has established an atmosphere of inactivity or indifference to change, the heads of its structural units will not develop competences in the fields of innovation, change management, and proactive thinking. Even if they want to initiate changes or behave in a different way, the culture of the company will stifle their ambition;
- The structure of the organisation is also something that not all managers can influence. Usually, it is defined by the senior management. However, the organisational structure can have a very strong impact on the organization's relationships with the community. For example, the number of hierarchical levels, the speed of the decision-making processes along the chain of subordination, the allocation and delegation levels, and the peer relationships among managers and structural units of the company have a direct effect on managers' decision-making and communication;
- The strategy of the organisation undoubtedly affects its performance, the effectiveness of its communication and its overall behaviour. Often, however, unit managers have no influence on the company's strategy. Or even worse, the company may simply not have a strategy. This also affects the competence of its managers because the lack of direction and focus for development of the company demotivates them and they will not "feel engaged" with its development. This will inevitably worsen their competences and have a negative effect on the company's relations with partners and the community;
- Improving the image of the organization through customer loyalty/devotion. Should managers try to build customer loyalty or customer devotion when they market their brands? Many people would not know the difference between these two terms mainly due to ignorance or misunderstanding. The difference stems from the vision and the level of development of the management in the organization. Most managers would rather have customers who are devoted to their brand than just loyal customers.

Building consumer devotion is one of the greatest managerial challenges. We are becoming increasingly aware of the "20:80 rule", i.e. the concept that 20% of the customers are responsible for 80% of the organization's profit. If we consider the fact that the cost of attracting a new customer is from five to six times higher than the cost of satisfying the needs of an existing one, we shall undoubtedly understand the importance of customer devotion. Prior to launching a program for attracting and retaining customers, each organization must develop a reliable system for assessment of the level of satisfaction of its customers from the quality of its services/products. Some customers need special incentives to provide feedback to the management. However, these incentives should be cost-effective, otherwise they would result in unjustified expenses and would be considered managerial errors because the customers can get spoilt to expect unreasonable preferences from the organization and stop being loyal when these expectations are not met.

## Communication of CSR activities

### CSR communication stakeholders

Every organization, regardless of its size, should communicate its CSR the activities and projects. The first step of the process of communication is the identification of the target audience and the messages to be communicated. The aim of this communication is to share good practices with other companies as well as to identify and attract partners for its charitable contributions or environment protection projects. Figure 3 illustrates the channels and stakeholders of the CSR communication process. This model ensures the sustainability of the communication process provides opportunities for attracting other businesses to a common cause:

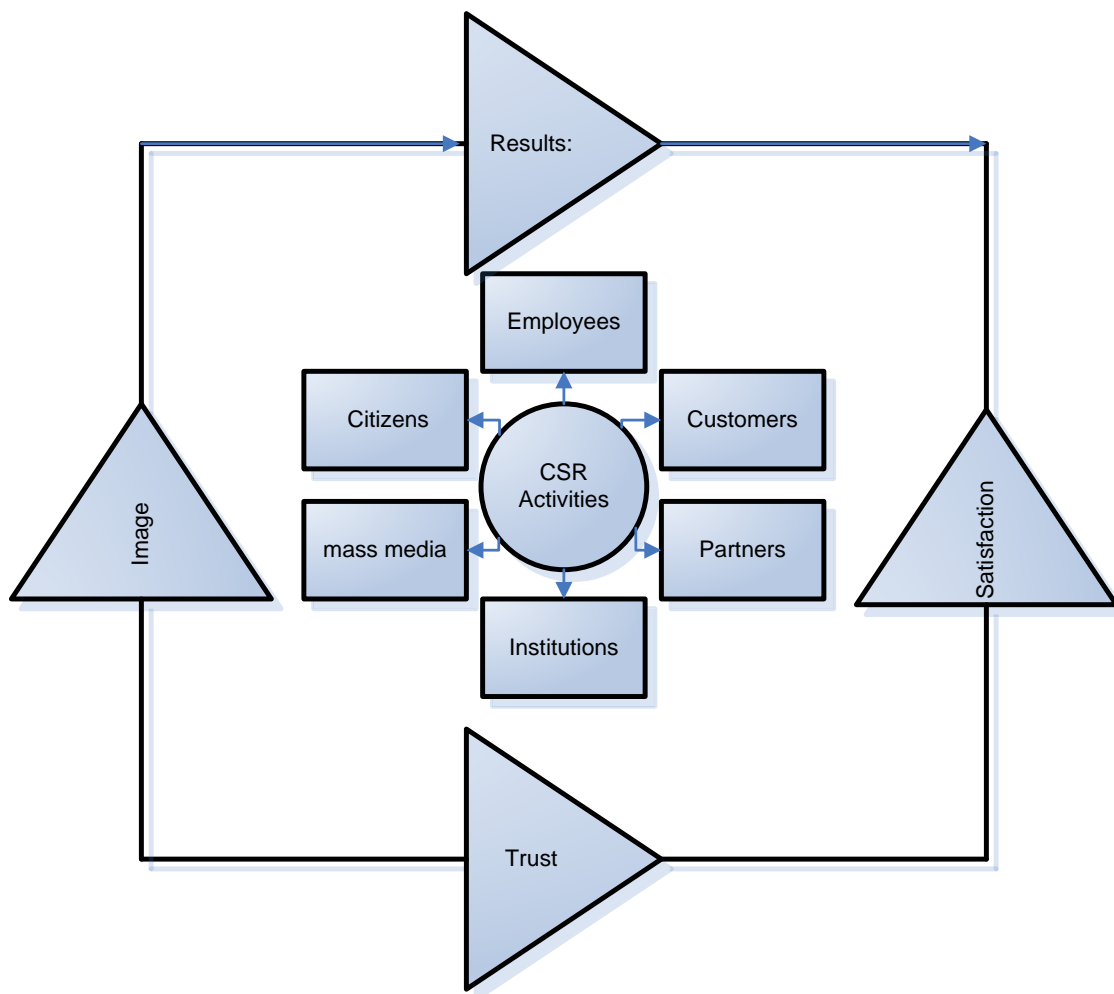


Figure 3  
Communication of CSR activities  
Source: Systematization of the author

- Communication with employees. The success of every CSR project depends mainly on the company's employees because they are those who are in charge of its implementation, i.e. it depends on their enthusiasm and motivation as a team, their commitment to the idea, the proper planning of the project activities and the recognition of

their contribution to achieving the outcomes. First and foremost, all project team members must be aware of their importance and participate willingly in the implementation of the project. They should be able to put forward proposals for its implementation rather than being told what “must be done” by the management. This will ensure their commitment and result in creative and effective solutions; in such situations the employees will put their “heart and soul” into the performance of their tasks. Team building is achieved through sharing of values such as trust, honesty, tolerance, empathy, etc., aimed at achieving results in the interests of the organisation, the environment, and/or the society in general. This type of communication flows through conventional channels, the most convenient of which is the Internet;

- Communication with customers. CSR policies for staff development and training, community support and charitable contributions, protection of the environment and other initiatives of public benefit would inevitably attract new customers. When communicated efficiently, they will make the brand more popular and recognisable, increase customer trust and loyalty, improve the image of the organization, and provide opportunities for market expansion;

- Communication with partners. To implement CSR projects, organizations communicate with other stakeholders (NGOs, companies, municipalities, associations, foreign partners). The UN Global Compact defines partnerships as “voluntary and collaborative relationships between various parties, both public and non-public, in which all participants agree to work together to achieve a common purpose or undertake a specific task and, as mutually agreed, to share risks and responsibilities, resources and benefits.” Finding the right partners is essential for the success of the project. Every organization must identify and establish relationships with other organization with whom to implement its business projects;

- Communication with institutions. The communication with various institutions (financial, legal, etc.) is essential for the implementation of the CSR activities of every organization. These institutions provide indirect support in terms of statutory regulations such as tax incentives for hiring unemployed or disabled people; industrial production in areas with high unemployment levels; tax deductions for charitable contributions; preferential transportation costs, etc.;

- Communication with the media. CSR activities should be promoted through maintaining contacts with the media and journalists. through communication channels such as press releases regarding planned activities and outcomes; press conferences and interviews; websites; social networks (e.g. Facebook, YouTube), personal blogs, etc. All these channels must be used actively because nowadays people get information from various sources. The ability to communicate successfully on the Internet (or in writing) is an essential skill in modern business relationships. Web-based communication will become a representative and reliable business card, a desirable and convenient source of customer information and a reliable contact medium (especially corporate websites). Last but not least, the corporate website can be modified easily to promote special initiatives through interesting design elements that reflect the mood of a corporate holiday, special promotions, or prize games;

- Communication with community members. The messages of the organization to community members are delivered via various communication channels (electronic media, periodicals and newspapers, corporate websites, advertisements, personal meetings). The proper management of these channels enables effective dissemination of information to the local population. They also provide feedback that enables the organization to identify issues that are important to the local community. Community members can participate in the planning, implementing and monitoring of certain activities for their benefit. If their

interests are disregarded, local communities may use the media or politicians to impair the public image of the organization.

## Conclusion

By integrating social and environmental issues with their business processes, organizations improve their performance, meet the expectations and win the trust of partners, employees and the society, and fulfil their responsibilities. Thus they benefit from the greater confidence, motivation, professional competence and moral sustainability of their employees.

Corporate Social Responsibility	
Defining	We undertake to do the right things to achieve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic growth;</li> <li>• Social development;</li> <li>• Protection of the environment.</li> </ul>
Statement	Responsibility of the organization for the impact of its decisions and activities on the society and the environment through transparent and ethical behavior; Results: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Satisfaction;</li> <li>• Trust;</li> <li>• Added value;</li> <li>• Image of the organization</li> </ul>
Measure	<u><b>External dimension:</b></u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable social development;</li> <li>• Preservation of social well-being;</li> <li>• Protection of the environment;</li> <li>• Meeting the expectations of stakeholders;</li> <li>• Compliance with the national regulations and international standards;</li> <li>• Ethical code of conduct.</li> </ul> <u><b>Internal dimension:</b></u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic growth and sustainable development;</li> <li>• Development and training of human resources;</li> <li>• Occupational safety and health;</li> <li>• Communication with employees;</li> <li>• Integration of CSR into the organization;</li> <li>• Ethical code of conduct.</li> </ul>

Table 1  
Outcomes of CSR activities  
Source: Systematization of the author

Corporate social responsibility activities are guidelines and highlights of the activity of an organization intended to ensure its long-term success and to provide it with a significant competitive advantage. Regardless of the characteristics of their business environment, all enterprises should adopt a policy of social responsibility and undertake initiatives to improve their internal processes while benefiting the society and the environment. According to the founder of Leader to Leader Institute Peter Drucker "the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be the century of the social organisation. The more the economy, money, and information are globalized, the more important it will be for the society"<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Corporate Social Responsibility Practice", BG05M9OP001-4.001-0060, funded by the Operational Program "Human Resources Development", co-financed by The European Union through the European Social Fund, (Bulgaria: Sofia, 2018) [http://rayofhopebg.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/2\\_Naruchnik-KSO\\_f\\_34.pdf](http://rayofhopebg.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/2_Naruchnik-KSO_f_34.pdf)

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