

Road map for corporate social responsibility

CSR is right up HR's alley and it's a great way to add strategic value

Do you think corporate social responsibility is just another make-work project that adds little value? Are you too busy with head counts, workforce forecasts and employee engagement to take on the job of corporate social responsibility in your firm, too focused on day-to-day survival to think about such matters?

Think again. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) — also known as sustainability — is fast becoming recognized as a key business driver of shareholder value. CSR-oriented firms have outperformed industry peers during the recession, and CSR has been identified by many business management gurus as crucial to future competitiveness through its ability to foster innovation.

While the talent war has abated with recession-induced unemployment, it will pick up again post-recession — the hunt for the best and the brightest will continue to be fierce in a structurally shrinking labour market.

Many candidates take social responsibility and environment commitment seriously when selecting employers. And who hasn't witnessed the connection between happy employees and productivity gains? Embedding an authentic CSR commitment in a firm's operations and strategy — how it conducts business day-to-day — can be an advantage when it comes to hiring and retaining talent.

CSR has irrefutable links to the HR mandate and there is more need — and opportunity — than ever for HR to add strategic business value to the organization.

But saying CSR is important is one thing. Successfully implementing a strategy is another. My firm created a road map and checklist for HR managers to help them discern their role and develop tactics for integrating a social and environmental ethic throughout a company.

The HR road map

Highlights of the HR road map include:

- HR professionals have a key role to play to help a company achieve CSR objectives. Employee involvement is a critical success factor for CSR performance. HR managers have the tools and the opportunity to leverage employee commitment to, and engagement in, a firm's CSR strategy.
- High-performing CSR organizations foster a culture of CSR and fully integrate it throughout operations, rewarding and incentivizing CSR decisions, initiatives and outcomes.
- Employees prefer to work for organizations aligned with their values — thus, incorporating CSR into an employer brand can enhance recruitment and retention, particularly in tight



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labour markets.

•CSR can be applied to the HR tool kit, resulting in a road map or pathway for HR practitioners to follow who wish to contribute to the achievement of their organization's sustainability and business aspirations, thereby improving a firm's economic prospects while enhancing social and environmental conditions locally and globally.

Closing gap between awareness, action

There is a lot of doom and gloom about global warming, species decline, resource scarcity, child poverty and global disparities. Many people are anxious about the role they can play both at home and work to reverse those trends.

But there is a gap between awareness and action. What is called for is a "new way of doing business around here" — essentially a change management process wherein the board, management and workers are called upon to rethink the way things have been done in the past. They need to look at everything through the lens of social and environmental impacts and opportunities.

HR managers can play a central role in conceiving and implementing a change management process that institutionalizes the CSR ethic. From a risk management perspective, firms that espouse CSR but do not engage employees are liable to err in implementing projects and initiatives.

As the saying goes, "CSR minus HR equals PR." Customers, employees and suppliers — the key stakeholders of any organization — are likely to become cynical if the employee engagement aspect of CSR integration is under-managed.

10 steps to embed CSR in an organization

The following 10 steps, if well-executed, can help a firm avoid the minefields while capital-

izing on employee goodwill and enthusiasm in migrating a company towards a deeply embedded CSR orientation.

Step one: Embed CSR into the firm's vision, mission, values and strategy.

Step two: Include CSR in the employee code of conduct.

Step three: Ensure workforce planning and recruitment support CSR goals.

Step four: Incorporate CSR into employee orientation, training and competency development

Step five: Include CSR as a factor in compensation and performance management systems.

Step six: Follow best practices in change management when implementing CSR across the organization

Step seven: Engage employees in CSR strategy development and implementation.

Step eight: Integrate CSR in traditional HR mandates of employee wellness, volunteering, employee commuting and HR procurement.

Step nine: Implement employee communication programs on CSR to foster employee take-up and buy-in

Step 10: Include CSR in employee engagement surveys and measure and report on your CSR integration performance

HR is responsible for many of the systems and processes — such as recruitment, training and communication — on which effective CSR implementation depends. It also has the relevant knowledge and skills for advancing organizational learning and change — prerequisites for any successful CSR strategy.

HR is so central to implementing a firm's CSR effort, and CSR is becoming increasingly central to a firm's business success, that HR is arguably more central to a firm's profitability than ever. By participating in, supporting and championing a CSR strategy and its implementation, an HR department can become even more of a crucial driver of corporate performance.

This practical road map and checklist can help forge the path for enterprising HR managers and departments seeking to contribute to a sustainable workplace. You can help your organization chart its course towards becoming a high-performance CSR organization and play your part — as we all must do — to put society on a more sustainable path.

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