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Corporate Social Responsibility: Micro and Macro level

Parul Jain Research Scholar, NIMS University, Jaipur, Rajasthan

ABSTRACT

Being Socially Responsible means that people and organisations must behave ethically and with sensitivity toward social, cultural, economic and environmental issues. Striving for social responsibility helps individuals, organisations and governments have a positive impact on development, business and society with a positive contribution to bottom-line results. This paper explores the level of social responsibility: Micro and macro level. How CSR (Corporate social responsibility) is different from ISR (Individual social responsibility). With the help of some case studies and real life experience we will place light on the importance of individual social responsibility.

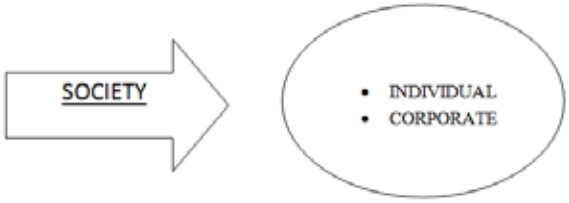
KEYWORDS: CSR (Corporate social responsibility), ISR (Individual social responsibility), Society

Introduction

CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) has been the buzz for a while. Several attempts have been made to define, practice and document CSR. But increasingly and from varied and independent pockets in the world people are talking about a different and more basic social responsibility. ISR-Individual Social Responsibility has all the takings of being a high impact change maker. Hence, Society is divided into two levels:

Micro level: It consist Individual

Macro level: It consist Corporate



ISR (Individual social responsibility)- Definition

ISR may appear to be a new concept in relation to CSR, but it is a concept as old as The Golden Rule — Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. ISR expands on this by promoting a proactive stance towards positively influencing and affecting the people and environments outside your immediate circle. ISR is at the roots of CSR, because a corporate comprises of individuals and hence determines the social responsibility culture it creates. This is the intermingled relationship between CSR and ISR. Individuals are becoming more socially responsible and, in response to this Corporations and Companies need to become more socially responsible to meet consumer demand.

The International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) states: "In the wake of increasing globalisation, we have become increasingly conscious not only of what we buy, but also how the goods and services we buy have been produced. Environmentally harmful production, child labour, dangerous working environments and other inhumane conditions are examples of issues being brought into the open. All companies and organisations aiming at long-term profitability and credibility are starting to realise that they must act in accordance with norms of right and wrong."

Socially responsible individuals are demanding companies and organisations to become more socially responsible. Individual Social Responsibility (ISR) is about an individual becoming responsible in his/her actions that have affected on communities outside his/her immediate circle. There can be an argument about also including family and friends, but it would be rather pertinent to include them as part of Individual Personal Responsibility.

Workshop for Civic Initiatives Foundation (WCIF), Bulgaria, describes ISR in its position statement on Social Responsibility as "The individual social responsibility includes the engagement of each person towards the community where he lives, which can be expressed as an interest towards what's happening in the community, as well as in the active participation in the solving of some of the local problems. Under community we understand the village, the small town or the residential complex in the big city, where lives every one of us. Each community lives its own life that undergoes a process of development all the time. And everyone of us could take part in that development in different ways, for example by taking part in cleaning of the street on which he lives, by taking part in organization of an event, connected with the history of the town or the village or by rendering social services to children without parents or elderly people. The individual social responsibility also could be expressed in making donations for significant for the society causes – social, cultural or ecological. There are many ways of donating, as for example donating of goods or donating money through a bank account or online".

ISR is not only about:

1. Committing acts of charity
2. Working for the communities where you have material interest.

These only form part of ISR, which is a broader concept that can be manifested through action as below:

1. Philanthropic behaviour of an individual
2. The campaigner, volunteer and activist instinct in the individual that picks-up and supports issues affecting the society.
3. The above two coupled with an individual being ethical (integrity, honesty) in his/her outward dealings.

How ISR is a core of CSR?

The following points will show the relationship between ISR and CSR.

1. ISR is at the roots of CSR, because a corporate comprises of individuals and hence determines the social responsibility culture it follows.
2. As CSR is being increasingly viewed as a tool to push wares a greater need for ISR is expected. The example of www.kiva.org in giving people the power to empower is a big indicator of the shift.
3. If ISR becomes way of life CSR may be an automatic end result.
4. "The social responsibility of business is to make a profit," famously said Milton Friedman, the Nobel Prize winner. He explained that in making a profit a company creates thousands of jobs, both directly and indirectly through suppliers, distributors and retailers. It imparts valuable skills to its employees. It pays crores in taxes. It improves the lives of millions of satisfied customers with its products and services. This is an enormous service to society. If some shareholders get rich on the way, so what? Companies should focus single-mindedly on their competence, providing goods and services better than their competitors, and not get distracted by extraneous activity. A company's social responsibility is to make profits legally, not to harm nature, and uphold the highest standards of governance.

We have many questions all-around like: Can we have corporate social responsibility without employee social responsibility (ESR), Consumer social responsibility (CNSR), investor social responsibility (IVSR) and manager social responsibility (MSR)? Or more generally, how can we have corporate social responsibility without individual social responsibility (ISR)?

Is ISR possible?
Yes, it is possible.

The successes of ventures like www.kiva.org that empower individuals to bring sustainable change are case in point. Furthermore, the advent of Web 2.0 and social networking has fuelled Individual activism, campaigning and giving.

But there is still a long way to go. According to The Harris Poll, June 18, 2007 when it comes to individual social responsibility, two-thirds of U.S. adults have "Good Intentions" – they believe that social responsibility is a good idea, and they do what they can in terms of volunteering, but they do not sacrifice huge amounts of time or money. At the top end of the spectrum, 8 percent of U.S. adults "Practice What They Preach" and for this group, individual, as well as corporate, social responsibility is extremely important. One-quarter of U.S. adults, however, follow a philosophy of "To Thine Own Self Be True" and, for this group, social responsibility has little consequence in their lives.

On the other hand the trends show that the biggest growth for big charitable organisations in the world is coming through individuals and not through corporations and governments.

The aspects of ethics, honesty and integrity surely need further consultation.

Discussion:
Is it right that the corporate executive would be spending someone else's money for a general social interest? Insofar as his actions in accord with his "social responsibility" reduce returns to stockholders, he is spending their money. As his actions raise the price to customers, he is spending the customers' money. As his actions lower the wages of some employees, he is spending their money.

The corporate executive is also a person in his own right. As a person, he may have many other responsibilities that he recognizes or assumes voluntarily- to his family, his conscience, his feelings of charity, his church, his clubs, his city, his country. He may feel impelled by these responsibilities to devote part of his income to causes he regards as worthy, to refuse to work for particular corporations, even to leave his job, for example, to join his country's armed forces. If we wish, we may refer to some of these responsibilities as "social responsibilities." But in these respects he is acting as a principal, not an agent; he is spending his own money or time or energy, not the money of his employers or the time or energy he has contracted to devote to their purposes. If these are "social responsibilities," they are the social responsibilities of individuals, not business.

Instead of giving high amount of salary like 70 lacs per annum package to their employee which is in general point of view is more than sufficient, a corporate manager should spend some amount of money to society and should give proper time and keenness for society welfare.

Conclusion
It is very important to understand the most important stuff that we as a individual must have the responsibility towards society wellbeing and development. We must act as a responsible human being for society augmentation.

We cannot simply accept that we will respond positively to "doing good"; it must be good in our role as consumer, investor, and employee and so on. In addition, it is impractical to speak of corporate social responsibility without understanding that for corporations to be socially responsible we all have to be socially responsible as individuals in our various roles. We are all consumers. We are all investors. We are all employees. Hence, we cannot expect CSR without ISR nor ISR without ESR, IVSR and CNSR at the very least.

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