Research Paper Commerce

The Role of the Organizational Communication In Achieving the Corporate Social Responsibility Goals

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ABSTRACT

In the last years, organizationsaremore concernedby the necessityof environmental, social and economic responsibility. The new challenges should be treated in a complex organizational sustainability strategy that cover all aspects of internal and external organizational communication, based on organization size, market positioning, reputation and desired effects. The specific objective of this paper is to characterize the relationship between organizational communication and corporate social responsibility, highlighting the perception of the employees in achieving objectives.

KEYWORDS organizational communication, corporate responsibility,sustainability, employee satisfaction workplace

INTRODUCTION

In the last years, the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility, briefly CSR, is one of the great interest for researchers, consultants and companies managers. The main reason is the emergence of international and national legislative stipulations related to CSR which constrain companies to align their practice and to transfer shared values experiences. Social and environmental best practices coming from or are imposed by other organizations collaborating in the supply chain sustainability (sustainable supply chain management) or by funding bodies / lending.

Intensification of the preoccupations for Corporate Social Responsibility is proven by the increasing number of the organizations CSR reports in recent years. Developing a social and environmental report can, of course, be a self-diagnostic tool very useful for measuring the progress made over a period.

According to a study entitled"A collection of good practice cases among small and medium-sized enterprises across Europe"[1], unlike larger companies, most of the small and medium companies SMEs don't have reports about their social and environmental practices. This can be explained by the fact that SMEs operate on less territory and could not find enough audience such as to justify the investment in time and human resources that such reporting requires. Therefore, these organizations prefer other forms of communication, such as labels or other informal channels.

THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION IN THE CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY DEVELOPMENT

Bhattacharya, & Sen, 2010 [2], recommend that a social responsibility strategy should cover all aspects of internal and external organizational communication and specific recommendations based on organization size, market positioning, reputation,desired effects etc. Such a strategy will answer at questions like: why communicate (message content), to whom we address (the target audience), how we communicate (communication channels) etc.

Before launching its social initiatives, a company should engage in a marketing research to evaluate stakeholder support for a variety of social and environmental issues, and finally, to develop those initiatives that countfor the key stakeholders. The stakeholders expect organizations to address social or environmental issues that are relevant to their core business.

Alsop, 2005 in a recent empirical research[3] has shown that awareness of customers or employees on CSR activities is reduced.Questions about involvement in social organizations or environmental consistently earn the answer "I do not know". In accordance with these observations, people are often unknowingly on issues related to corporate social responsibility. According to Bhattacharya, Korschun& Sen, 2009, lack of communication with the stakeholders, in this case, constitute a barrier in a desire of an organization to reap benefits from a social responsibility program [4].

It was noted that companies with a good reputation are perceived to be credible, have an amplified impact of CSR activities, while companies with a bad reputation have mitigated or even reversed effects [5]. Interestingly is the case of companies with a neutral reputation.The researches show that the latter have an advantage in front of those with a positive reputation in reaping the benefits from CSR actions [6].

THE ROLE OF THE EMPLOYEES IN THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

There is a variety of communication channels through which information carried out by companies may be disseminated. A company can communicate its CSR activities through official documents such as annual social responsibility reports, press releases or postings on its official website. It may also be used, advertising or product packaging media to communicate CSR initiatives. Besides controllable channels of information there are a lot of not fully controlled channels by the companies (eg.mass-media, discussion forums, blogs, and social network like Facebook etc). The latter continue to grow and become a more serious alternative for creating the image or reputation of a firm.

Dawkins, 2005, points out that a company should not underestimate the power of employees as CSR communicators [7]. Employees have connections with other stakeholder groups through their social connections and are considered to be a source of reliable information by these groups. More, Pomering& Johnson, 2009, explain how companies should highlight the role of the employees in the communication strategies

and have to find ways to turn employees into CSR „ambassadors" or „lawyers" [8].

CASE STUDY - An applicative research on the perception of employees about the company's social responsibility practices

Thiscase study was conducted on a publiccompanyproviding water and sewerage services in county situated in the western side of Romania.The company has a tradition of more than 100 years in water supply and sanitation in the county. It is a profitable company, with more than 900 employees. The company has implemented since 2005 a quality, environment, health and occupational safety integrated management system, according to the provisions of ISO 9001, ISO 14001 and OHSAS 18001specifications [9].The company develops CSR campaigns, many of them with educational role. The investments undertaken by the company in the last 10 years exceed 300 million €, money that come mainly from European funds. The investments aim to reduce environmental impact and provide quality services to a wider public. Therefore the operating area extends from year to year, reaching in 2014 more than 100 localities.

The applied methodology consisted in a questionnaire which was distributed in 31 copies among the employees. The purpose of this questionnaire was to find out the perception of employees about the company's social responsibility practices, about how they are treated in the company and about the satisfaction at workplace.The problems taken into account in the questionnaire were inspired by the 10 principles of the Global Compact (United Nations)[10]. The employees interrogated are part of the administration and middle management of the company. They had to choose answers on a scale of 5 steps: 1- strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3 - no matter, 4- agree, 5 - strongly agree.Employees were divided as follows: 13% - women with management function, 45% - women without management function, 10% - men with management function, 32% - men without management function.Overall score obtained for each category was as follows:

Table 1: Women with a management function

Category	Overallscore
Corporate social responsibility	4.42
Employees' perception	4.60
Employees' satisfaction workplace	4.19

It may be noted that in this case, the perception of women on how they are treated in the company, the degree of flexibility and internal communication are positive.

Table 2: Women without a management function

Category	Overallscore
Corporate social responsibility	4.52
Employees' perception	4.40
Employees' satisfaction workplace	4.36

Women without a managerial function believe that social responsibility is highly developed in the company.

Table 3: Men with a management function

Category	Overallscore
Corporate social responsibility	4.33
Employees' perception	4.47
Employees' satisfaction workplace	4.17

Men who have managerial function in the company are very satisfied with their work and they are treated with dignity and respect by their colleagues. However, they consider that the organization hasn't invested sufficiently in the projects with a social impact.

Table 4: Men without a management function

Category	Overallscore
Corporate social responsibility	4.43
Employees' perception	4.44
Employees' satisfaction workplace	4.18

The men without a managerial function said they are satisfied with their work and they believe that the organization doesn't sufficiently support the local voluntary actions.

In what concerns the general attitude of the employees who have been interviewed regarding CSR issues, their perception and employee satisfaction are positive:

women with a management function: (4.42+4.6+4.19)/ 3=4.40;

women without a management function: (4.52+4.40+4.36)/3=4.43;

men with a management function: (4.33+4.47+4.18)/3=4.33;

men without a management function: (4.43+4.44+4.18)/3=4.35.

CONCLUSIONS

It can be seen that in a public company providing services, which has performance, the trust and the support of employees are positive as we are expected. Therefore, the employees have the necessary motivation for participating at a good image and reputation of an organization. They could be an important channel in transmitting messages to the stakeholders.

We can conclude that in the elaboration of a strategy for CSR, organization should take into consideration more aspects like: the correlation between the overall objectives of management with marketing and communication goals. It is necessary to intensify applied research and identify best practices versus bad practices.

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