

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: ROLE OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

J. William Ebenesr Matthew*

Dr. G. Sundharavadivel**

Introduction

Business organizations have wakened up to the need for being committed towards Corporate Social Responsibility. But still majority have just been taking up some form of philanthropic activities for its stakeholders. Nurturing a strong corporate culture which emphasizes Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) values and competencies is required to achieve the synergistic benefits. The employees of an organization occupy a central place in developing such a culture which underlines CSR values and competencies. The present study, therefore, is an attempt to explore the engagement of human resource management professionals in undertaking Corporate Social Responsibility. It also suggests Human Resource Management to take a leading role in encouraging CSR activities at all levels. The combined impact of CSR and human resource activities, which reinforce desirable behavior, can make a major contribution in creating long term success in organizations.

Creating a culture of change and responsibility starts with HR. Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives is a great way to begin. A committed set of employees who infuse enthusiasm for such programs would enable friendly competition and recognition programs. The corporate failures created a culture of mistrust in the corporate world. Employer brands are being eroded and the

*** Ph.D Research scholar, Department of Adult and continuing education, University of Madras, Chennai**

**** Associate Professor, Department of Adult and continuing education, University of Madras, Chennai**

once sacred trust that employees had with stable pensions, defined benefits and lifelong jobs, are being replaced with pay for performance and adjustment to new learning goals. In this environment, Corporate Social Responsibility can go a long way in rehabilitating the employer brand with potential new hires and society at large. It can help defeat the image that corporate objectives are rooted in single minded profit at the expense of society and the environment.

Social and community connections that are encouraged by employers give employees permission to involve their companies in meaningful ways with the community. Employers can connect with their employees and the community through:

- Company matches to employee charitable contributions;
- Community programs and volunteer days;
- Corporate sponsorship of community events; and
- Encouraging employees to participate in CSR activities.

Three Key Areas of Corporate Social Responsibility

Focusing on three key areas for Corporate Social Responsibility can help create a cohesive map for the present and future:

- Community Relations,
- Training and Development, and
- A Cohesive Global Corporate Social Responsibility Platform

Encouraging Community Relations through HR team includes implementing reward programs, charitable contributions and encouraging community involvement and practices. Examples of these programs include sending emails and company newsletters to staff members that highlight employees and managers involved in community relations or creating monthly reward programs to recognize efforts by individuals within the company.

Training and Development programs that explain the connection between the company's core products or services and the society at large, their value to the local community and ways in which employees can get involved in appropriate CSR projects would sustain and direct these initiatives.

Global Corporate Social Responsibility policy, centrally managed, is important to acknowledge successes and measurements according to accepted standards. Central to measuring and communicating these results is the use of a Web-based Human Resources Information System (HRIS) that is available globally to employees and managers with any Web browser. In order to encourage and maintain a clear and cohesive global workplace, it is critical for the entire global workforce of a company to be on a single, multi-functioning HR platform, which allows for distributing a sound corporate responsibility plan.

Having a global HR solution that offers companies flexibility, ease of use and the right mix of tools is essential to the success of both employees and employers alike, as they manage and maintain work-life balance and thrive in a changing environment that includes taking on social responsibility. The success of your Corporate Social Responsibility plan is possible with an HRIS that provides the capability to effectively plan, control and manage your goals, achieve efficiency and quality, and improve employee and manager communications.

The flexibility of your HRIS system is critical to tracking and pursuing a sound Corporate Social Responsibility plan and a Web-based system provides an unparalleled level of both scalability and accessibility to implement your Corporate Social Responsibility plan at a global level. This is an increasingly important endeavor, as companies, societies and people coexist productively and in harmony, across the planet we all inhabit.

The role of HR function in embedding the CSR values

An organization can exhibit a better image in the minds of people by presenting itself as an excellent employer which cares for its people and involves them in the ambit of social responsibility. This involvement of employees indicates the strategic importance of HRM in the CSR initiatives of an organization. Human Resource policies have to create awareness towards the need to achieve the business goals in the best possible and ethical manner. With the help of HR functions, the socially responsible values can be inculcated and sustained in the organizational culture.

- The HR department should take the responsibility to develop a formal policy on sustainable practices involving employees.

- The orientation programme of newly recruited candidates should be designed in a manner that corporate philosophy about CSR gets highlighted.
- The commitment of top management towards CSR is very important which should be expressed in tangible terms to reinforce the right kind of behavior in the organization.
- To keep employees energized about the organization's socially responsible initiatives.
- The Performance Management System has to be designed in a manner so that it measures the socially responsible initiatives taken by employees.
- The Training facilities may also be made available to instill the CSR culture among employees. The company has also included social responsibility in the latest management development initiatives like the global "Passion for People" management skills programme.
- Code of ethics of an organization can stimulate social responsibility to a great extent reinforcing amongst its employees the underlying values.
- The HR department of the company has also to develop an e-learning course for its employees on CSR framework.
- Responsible Human Resource Management practices on equal opportunities, diversity management, whistle blowing, redundancy, human rights, harassment shall give credibility to the CSR initiatives of the organization.
- Social Reports or Sustainability Reports should be prepared to underline the organization's commitment to social or sustainable practices.
- The Human Resource department should effectively measure and evaluate CSR activities. The value added by CSR in the form of direct results, such as, economic savings and indirect results like increase in employee satisfaction, less employee turnover, measured by staff attitude surveys, shall indicate contribution to improved business performance.

Conclusion

Successful programmes on social responsibility rely heavily on enlightened people management practices. In this context HR department is assumed to be the coordinator of CSR activities in

getting the employment relationship right which is a precondition for establishing effective relationships with external stakeholders and thus can orient the employees and the organization towards a socially responsible character. There is also an increasing trend in the corporate sector which has started leveraging upon employees and their management for exhibiting their commitment towards CSR. With a strong and committed organizational culture reinforced by responsible Human Resource Management practices, the organizations can achieve heights of success by improved profitability, employee morale, customer satisfaction, legal compliance and societal approval for its existence. It is high time for all other organizations to capitalize upon the existing Human Resource Department in framing such practices, procedures and policies that ensure the internalization of quality, ethics and excellence in the whole system. By doing this they can sensitize the employees and the whole organization towards CSR without adding any additional cost. In the rapidly expanding global workplace, the implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives, allows sound corporate HR practices.

References

1. Sharma S., Sharma J. and Devi A. - Corporate Social Responsibility: The Key Role of Human Resource Management Suparn Sharma, Jyoty Sharma, Arti Devi, Business Intelligence Journal.
2. Agrawal Kalpana Corporate Excellence as an Outcome of Corporate Governance: Rethinking the Role and Responsibility of HRM, the ICFAI Journal of Corporate Governance,
3. Bhatia S Business Ethics and Corporate Governance, Deep and Deep Publications Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi.
4. Fenwick Tara, Bierema Laura Corporate Social Responsibility: Issues for Human Resource Development Professionals, International Journal of training and Development.
5. Redington Ian, Making CSR Happen: The Contribution of People Management, Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.