

Is CSR something that becomes more relevant over time? Is it already a standard?

CSR is a quickly emerging concept, as much as in the companies worldwide as it is awareness of CSR in the market those companies serve. Target markets, customer segments or even entire geos are more aware of the benefits and need for CSR and view companies which practice CSR are who they align with. The topic is gaining fast momentum and becoming more “table stakes” within the corporate imperatives. A Global CSR study found that a staggering 91% of global consumers expect businesses to operate responsibly to address social and environmental issues. Furthermore, 84% say they seek out responsible products wherever possible.

What kind of impact has CSR in strategy planning?

CSR plays a crucial role in a company's brand perception; attractiveness to customers, employees, and investors; talent retention; and overall business success.

What was probably the most „wow“ CSR project you had worked on? Something you found very progressive /on really good level / or something you were just really excited about. You can even give more examples.

In the quest of reducing Carbon footprint the US government is looking for greener options across our day to day lives. One key is conversion of 50% fossil fuel driven Class 8 trucks to greener options by 2025. To do so, I worked with my client to explore fuel cell driven technologies to provide greener options to affect this conversion. If this technology works, it has the potential to revolutionize long distance transportation and long haul industry.

What would you say are the current trends in CSR?

- 1: Digital Transformation And CSR Software - Digital transformation is making its presence strongly felt across all aspects of modern corporate operation – and the field of CSR is no exception. As CSR becomes a stronger influence within decision-making, companies must find the right tools to digitalise and innovate their efforts, to achieve the best results.
2. Employee Engagement - It has never been more critical to create a working environment that fosters and supports employee engagement, especially after two years of the pandemic. Only 36% of workers feel engaged in their workplace, and 38% feel exhausted after so many virtual meetings.
3. Thinking Global, Acting Local – Increasingly, acting locally is just as important as acting globally. As much as it is beneficial for companies to take high profile action on an international scale, there is an opportunity for businesses to make a really significant impact closer to home, within the community surrounding their various premises.
4. Full Supply Chain Accountability - Companies (and their stakeholders) are becoming increasingly aware of their impact on the environment and, consequently, supply chain and CSR must walk hand in hand. Good CSR practices are applicable to every aspect of a business, including its full supply chain.

5. Enhanced, Transparent Reporting - Reporting is an essential practice across multiple aspects of business, allowing organisations to track their activities and identify areas of improvement. As a result, there is a strong correlation between reporting and CSR, and a rising need to generate clearer and more transparent reports.

6: Rapid Response In Times Of Crisis - Nowadays, news - good and bad - travels extremely fast. If something happens on the other side of the world, we find out almost instantly. We are well used to a 24/7 rolling news cycle, from TV, radio, websites and social media platforms. When something significant occurs, the eyes of stakeholders and the public are on businesses and their responses. Increasingly, they expect better and more decisive responses – tangible action pre, during and post-crisis. Rapid response to crisis or emergency as a business is crucial.

With current recession, do some companies focus more on the economic aspect and they move some more sustainable projects, when the time will get better? Or postponing their CSR goals?

) It can be cheap. CSR that does not radically alter business models does not cost that much. And, as we all know, can save money. As anyone from Boots to Wal-Mart will tell you, going greener often saves money. CFOs will like that. Make the case to them, convince them that what you are proposing helps the bottom line. They may have forgotten and started thinking its all socialist plot again. Some stats on their desk might help.

2) Reputation and transparency are still key. In fact, they are now even more important. If you let people go, you need those you keep to understand why you did it. And how you did it in the best way possible. You still need talent, and talented people want to know you are well regarded.

3) Communities are feeling vulnerable. They are looking for local leadership on important issues. Your company may be able to help. Think about what you can do that's different, and that caters to their current concerns, not to your volunteering plan from last year.

4) Customers are worried. They are wondering who they can trust. Some readers may have seen the new Lloyd's TSB ads, which talk about how they are seen as solid (implying others are not). Help reassure customers with communications about anything from product safety to reliability and good service awards. These things matter. And yes, this is part of CSR.

5) Regulators are up in arms. Many are happy to use the business world as a scapegoat for their own poor regulatory incentives. Showing you are still focusing on a bit more than just sales and cost-cutting can help you reassure them that you care, and may help them stop over-reacting.

6) Green advertising has gone mainstream. People care about green if it delivers efficiency, particularly for them. So communicating well is still key, and a green/efficient message may still resonate well.

7) Newspapers are even hungrier for copy that sells. And companies provide excellent cannon fodder for editors. Ethics related cutbacks, poor customer service and extended payment terms will all start making the news. Keeping an eye on over-eager internal plans and how they might go against your values statements can help keep things consistent. No board wants to see panic, so re-iterating values in tough times may help keep things in check.

8) There is opportunity to gain trust. This is particularly true if others are cutting back. Showing you can treat your customers, suppliers and business partners fairly, even when times are tight, may help you build that bank account of goodwill, useful when you really need it.

9) Think about the short term future. Recessions don't last long, usually. Imagine the benefits of NOT cutting back once all this is over. You'll be able to crow in your CSR report, that unlike others, you kept X and Y initiative going when times were tough

10) Trim the fat. Become more evidence-based in your approach without upsetting partners who may go to the media in better times. This time they may be more understanding. Being more rigorous will only help when things pick up again.