

CSR-Management

Exploring and making efficient use of potentials

Management of CSR – no established routine yet among the responsible persons in companies

In recent years, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has gained a fixed place in the public discussion on the core, legitimacy and limits of corporate actions. The routine use of the term easily misleads us from the fact that CSR is only professionally managed in a few, mostly major and frequently also listed companies.

In the majority of the other companies, the responsible players have to date hardly even developed a common understanding of how they should exercise their corporate responsibility towards society practically and effectively. Systematic CSR management is thus far from being routine among those responsible. Instead in many companies, an abundance of activities linked to citizens' involvement can still be observed with an untold contribution to the solutions for core corporate activities and the associated socially relevant questions. Losses or the waste of financial and personnel resources are almost negligible consequences of CSR communication built on this and lacking a strategic basis.

Corporate communication as a self-motivated process owner

Corporate communication has a special self-interest in systematic CSR management: to allow specific use of responsibility as a factor effective in reputation, the relevant social claims on the company must be gathered and structured in advance. Basically, the clarification process required aims at understanding as precisely as possible the requirements of professional CSR management on the company and what benefits possible changes may bring.

Even without direct impact on many management decisions, corporate communication can be used as a self-motivated process owner since without this clarification it cannot effectively fulfil an increasingly important part of its reputation commission. The missing competencies required for the overall process are provided by a network of internal and external players which also underlines the character of CSR as a cross-sectional task.

Four steps towards a CSR management programme

1) Situation analysis

The social responsibility of a company is not defined per se with the result that topics and priorities of CSR management are to be clarified for each individual case. One particularly expedient instrument is the analysis of responsibility-relevant topics along the value chain of the company. This methodical approach at the same time opens up answers to the question of the "Business case of sustainability". A materiality matrix is drawn up as the result and this shows the relationship between relevance and significance of main CSR topics for the company and its stakeholders. This clarifies the question of the relative value of mega topics such as climate change or responsibility in the supplier chain for the company's CSR management.

2) Future options

While the materiality matrix helps to compile the relevance and significance of the multitude of CSR topics for the company at a glance, the development of future options concerns identifying alternative opportunities for action on the way to systematic CSR management. A gap analysis relates the key factors of the situation analysis with selected strategy options and development paths of the company. Thus for example, the chances & risks linked to the topics relevant for the company are summarised to form development paths with defined chance-risk profiles.



3) Decision to change

Up to this point, a possibility space for alternative development paths has been described with consideration to external and internal framework conditions. To enable those responsible to make a decision on the direction of development, it is now necessary to develop management approaches for every development alternative. They provide a concrete picture of the effort expected and intended benefit of every path alternative as compactly as possible and without the details of implementation programmes. This links the strategy and the aims of the company and the CSR management.

4) Action and benchmarking

After the decision in favour of a development path to CSR management appropriate to a situation and the company, management and communication practices are to be further developed correspondingly. To this end, the internal persons responsible from the various management areas develop pro-

grammes that process the respective identified requirement for change. Thus relevant CSR topics finally find their way into the decisions in the various areas of accountability. At the same time, CSR communication receives a credible strategic basis evidenced by actions.

The duration and intensity of the clarification and development process of a CSR management programme depend primarily on factors such as the complexity and size of the company, the decision-making pathways, ownership structure, conciseness of the previous strategic control, cooperation culture and the useful process depth and width resulting from these factors.

Process step	Situation analysis	Future options	Decision to change	Action and benchmarking
Task	Recognising priorities	Estimating potentials	Weighing up effort and benefits	Sharpening the profile
Aim	Compiling topics and stakeholders	Actual & target, recognising chances and risks	Selecting development path	Developing management and communication practices
Implementation	Check value chain under CSR aspects	Describing strategy options and development paths	Developing paths in line with management approaches	Developing change and communication programme
Result	Materiality matrix	Gap-Analyse	Decision submission	CSR management programme

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Our communication habits and infrastructures are changing rapidly. What unites this development is that they encourage and demand dialogue. Each and every individual is becoming increasingly significant in communicative terms and thus also relevant for a company's reputation and economic success. For navos, sustainable, serious dialogue with all stakeholder groups therefore provides the basis of communication. We have mastered the art of conducting essential dialogue and are specialised in stakeholder dialogue, crisis communications and public affairs. navos stands for groundbreaking, contemporary and functional communication. With our 50 employees from our offices in Berlin, Düsseldorf and Hamburg, we particularly work on behalf of clients from the energy, environmental, telecommunications and financial sectors.

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