



## What Board Members Should Know About Communicating CSR

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Since creating stakeholder awareness is a key prerequisite for reaping the strategic benefits of any business initiative, it is imperative for board members and senior executives instituting a social responsibility program to have a deeper understanding of the key issues related to CSR communication. This report discusses what to communicate (i.e., message content) and where (i.e., message channel), as well as the major factors (internal and external to the organization) that affect the effectiveness of CSR communications.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR), defined broadly as “a commitment to improve [societal] well-being through discretionary business practices and contributions of corporate resources,” occupies a prominent place on the global corporate agenda in today’s socially conscious market environment.<sup>1</sup> More than ever, companies are devoting substantial resources to various social and environmental initiatives—ranging from community outreach and neutralizing their carbon footprint to socially responsible business practices in employment, sourcing, product design, and manufacturing.

These unprecedented CSR efforts are driven not only by the ideological construct of a corporation as a force for social change but also by the financial return that could be reaped from such endeavors. Surveys of senior executives and CSR professionals indicate that CSR creates unique business value

in a number of ways—by building reputation, enhancing employee morale, and strengthening competitive positions.<sup>2</sup>

Consistent with these findings, a growing body of academic research attests that:

- A company’s positive record of CSR fosters consumer loyalty and, in some cases, can turn customers into brand ambassadors and advocates who may be willing to even pay a premium to support the company’s social policies.<sup>3</sup>
- CSR may offer a competitive advantage in attracting, motivating, and retaining talented employees<sup>4</sup> and socially responsible investors.<sup>5</sup>

Stakeholders (customers, employees, and investors, among others) are key to the success of any business, and CSR has the unique ability to cultivate stakeholder relationships.



**Stakeholder awareness** Needless to say, the business returns to CSR are contingent on the stakeholders’ awareness of a company’s CSR activities. However, recent empirical studies revealed that awareness of a company’s CSR activities among its external stakeholders (e.g., consumers) or even its internal stakeholders (e.g., employees) is typically low, hence constituting a key stumbling block in the company’s quest to reap strategic benefits from a social responsibility program.<sup>6</sup> Consistent with these findings, of the 20 attributes measured in the annual Harris Interactive corporate reputation study published by the *Wall Street Journal*, people are most in the dark about corporate responsibility: questions about whether companies are socially and environmentally responsible consistently elicit the most “don’t know” responses.<sup>7</sup>

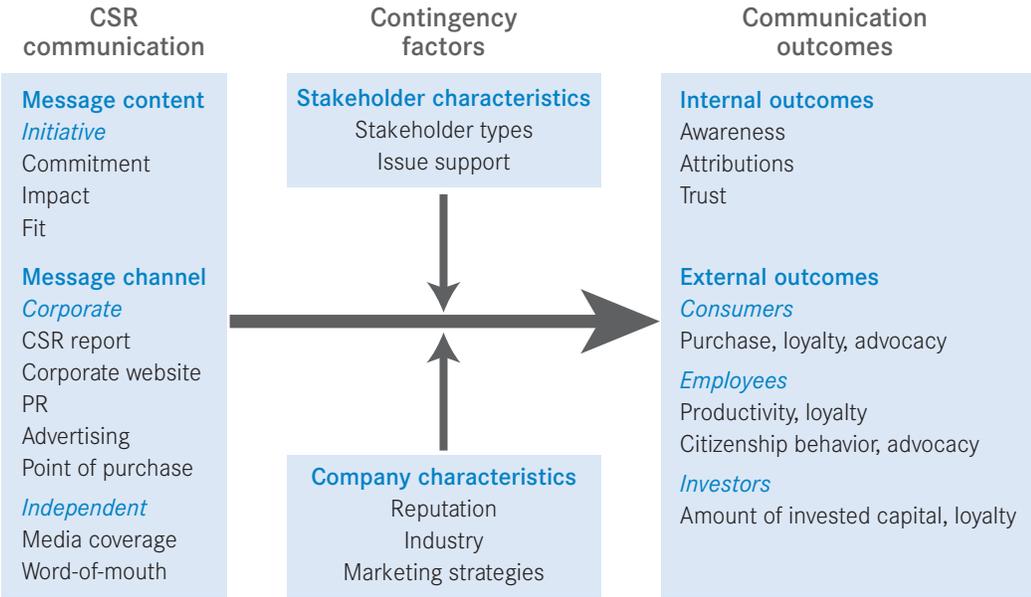
**Stakeholder skepticism** Beyond awareness, another key challenge to CSR communication is how to minimize stakeholder skepticism. While stakeholders claim they want to know about the good deeds of the companies they buy from or invest in, they quickly become leery of companies’ motives when organizations aggressively promote their CSR efforts. Unlike other marketing information such as product quality and new innovations, a company’s CSR information reflects a company’s “character,” or “soul.”<sup>8</sup> The identity-revealing nature of CSR activities makes stakeholders’ attributions of the motives underlying those activities crucial: there might be a backlash if stakeholders perceive predominantly

self-serving, profit-related motives, rather than a company’s genuine concern for improving societal welfare.<sup>9</sup>

Recent research on CSR attributions suggests that stakeholders often perceive both intrinsic, genuine motives of social and environmental concern as well as extrinsic, profit-related motives.<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, stakeholders are often tolerant of extrinsic motives as long as CSR initiatives are attributed to intrinsic motives as well.<sup>11</sup> This growing tolerance of extrinsic motives indicates that as stakeholders learn more about CSR and companies’ motivations, they are increasingly willing to adopt a “win-win” perspective, believing that CSR initiatives can and should serve both the needs of society and the bottom lines of business.

Since creating stakeholder awareness and managing stakeholder attributions are key prerequisites for reaping the strategic benefits of any business initiative, it is imperative for board members and senior executives instituting a CSR program to have a deeper understanding of key issues related to CSR communication. These include questions surrounding what to communicate (i.e., message content), where to communicate (i.e., message channel), as well as an understanding of the factors (internal and external to the organization) that influence the effectiveness of a CSR campaign. Figure 1 presents a conceptual framework of CSR communication.

Figure 1  
A Framework of CSR Communication



## What to Communicate: Message Content

CSR communication typically focuses on a company's involvement in various social causes. There are several factors a company can emphasize in its CSR communication, such as its commitment to a cause, the impact it has made on the cause, and the congruity between the cause and the company's business (i.e., CSR fit).

**CSR commitment** A company can support a social cause in various ways, including donating funds, in-kind contributions, or providing other corporate resources such as marketing expertise, human capital (e.g., employee volunteering), and R&D capability.

CSR commitment has three key aspects:

- 1 the amount of input;
- 2 the durability of the association; and
- 3 the consistency of input.<sup>12</sup>

In CSR communication, a company can choose to focus on one or several aspects of its commitment to a social cause. For example, in its 2007 corporate responsibility report,<sup>13</sup> Target used these words to describe its signature Take Charge of Education program: "Target... donates a percentage of purchases made on Target credit cards to K-12 schools

### Examples of Message Content

Three recent campaigns exemplify key aspects of CSR communication.

#### **Target (Take Charge of Education program) for CSR**

**commitment** "Target... donates a percentage of purchases made on Target credit cards to K-12 schools that cardholders designate. Since we launched the program in 1997, we've donated more than \$246 million to schools."<sup>a</sup> "[As part of the program,] we'll track purchases made by participating REDcard® holders, then send a no-strings-attached donation check directly to the school principal. Checks are distributed once a year. If the total of accumulated donations is less than \$25, the amount carries over to the next payment period."<sup>b</sup>

#### **Pampers ("1 Pack=1 Vaccine" program) for CSR impact**

"Pampers is committed to improving the lives of babies around the world... Working together with parents and UNICEF, one area we've chosen to focus on is newborn tetanus, a major health problem in developing countries. Newborn tetanus claims the lives of more than 140,000 babies each year, but this disease is preventable. If an expectant mother receives the vaccine before she gives birth, both she and her baby will be protected from this disease. The "1 Pack=1 Vaccine" program... helps get these lifesaving vaccines to the women who need them. Here's how it works: For each pack of specially marked Pampers diapers

and wipes that you buy during the promotion period, Pampers donates the cost of one vaccine to UNICEF. It's a small step but it can and does lead to big change. Thanks to parents like you in Western Europe and the United States, the Pampers/UNICEF 1 Pack=1 Vaccine program has helped provide more than 100 million vaccines that protect moms and babies from maternal and neonatal tetanus."<sup>c</sup>

#### **Avon (The Avon Breast Cancer Crusade program) for CSR fit**

"The Avon Breast Cancer Crusade was launched in 1992 as a small pioneering program in the U.K. Avon in the U.S. adopted the Crusade the following year. Over the last 18 years, Avon philanthropy has raised and donated more than \$700 million to breast cancer programs around the world, supporting cutting-edge research to find a cure for or prevent breast cancer as well as programs that enable all patients to access quality care. Funding supports awareness and education: screening and diagnosis; access to treatment; support services; and scientific research. Beneficiaries of the Avon Breast Cancer Crusade range from leading cancer research and clinical centers to community-based, non-profit breast health education programs."<sup>d</sup>

a "Target: REDcard: Take Charge of Education," Target website, accessed February 15, 2011 ([target.com/tcoe](http://target.com/tcoe))

b Ibid.

c "Children's Charities: Caring for Babies around the World," Pampers website, accessed February 15, 2011 ([www.pampers.com/en\\_US/childrens-charities-around-the-world](http://www.pampers.com/en_US/childrens-charities-around-the-world))

d "Avon Foundation for Women: Breast Cancer Crusade," Avon Foundation for Women website, accessed February 15, 2011 ([www.avonfoundation.org/breast-cancer-crusade/](http://www.avonfoundation.org/breast-cancer-crusade/)).

that cardholders designate. Since we launched the program in 1997, we've donated more than \$246 million to schools.” In this example, the company emphasized all three aspects of its commitment: the substantial amount of input (e.g., \$246 million) as well as the durability (e.g., since 1997) and the consistency of the company's support (e.g., a percentage of purchases made on Target credit cards).

**CSR impact** Instead of the input side of its involvement in a social cause, a company can focus on its output: that is, the societal impact, or the actual benefits that have accrued (or will accrue) to the target audience of a social cause. For example, in partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Pampers has launched a social initiative, “1 Pack = 1 Vaccine” to give tetanus vaccines to expectant women in developing countries and to save their newborns from a disease called newborn tetanus. The title of this program clearly communicates the societal impact of the program and the impact of the consumer's purchase of the Pampers' products designated for the social program.

Emphasizing a company's CSR commitment or CSR impact is an effective communication strategy because CSR communication should be factual and avoid the impression of “bragging.”<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, a company's CSR commitment and its social impact also serve as diagnostic cues with regard to its underlying CSR motives. In particular, data shows that the durability of support for a cause was used as a cue for judging a firm's motives: longer term commitments were more likely to be seen as driven by a genuine concern for increasing societal/community welfare, while shorter term campaigns were more likely to be viewed as a way to exploit the cause for the sake of profit.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, research has documented positive associations between the perceived societal impact of a company's CSR initiative and consumers' intrinsic attributions, resulting in consumers' advocacy behaviors toward the company.<sup>16</sup>

**CSR fit** Another important factor to communicate is CSR fit, or the perceived congruence between a social issue and the company's business. Stakeholders often expect companies to sponsor only those social issues that have a high fit, or a logical association, with their core corporate activities.<sup>17</sup> CSR fit may result from common associations that the brand shares with the cause, such as, product dimensions (e.g., a herbal products brand sponsors the protection of rain forests), affinity with specific target segments (e.g., Avon fights breast cancer), or corporate image associations created by the brand's past conduct in a specific social domain (e.g., Ben & Jerry's and the Body Shop's activities in environmental protection).<sup>18</sup>

CSR fit is important because it affects stakeholders' CSR attributions.<sup>19</sup> Low CSR fit, due to the lack of logical connection between a social issue and a company's business, is likely to trigger stakeholder skepticism and extrinsic attributions, hence reducing their positive reactions to a company's CSR activities. Therefore, a company should highlight the CSR fit of its social initiative if there is congruence between the social issue and its business pursuit.

When a company does not have a high natural fit with the social cause it supports, it should elaborate on the rationale for its social initiative to increase perceived fit. For example, DenTek Oral Care, a sponsor of the American Diabetes Association, includes in its sponsorship communications the information that diabetes can lead to tooth decay, bad breath, dry mouth, and gum disease.<sup>20</sup> Because many people may not know about diabetes-related dental problems, the sponsorship might otherwise seem to be a bad fit. By elucidating the underlying link between the sponsorship and its core business, the company is able to create a high perceived fit and reap greater business returns to its CSR activities.

## Where to Communicate: Message Channels

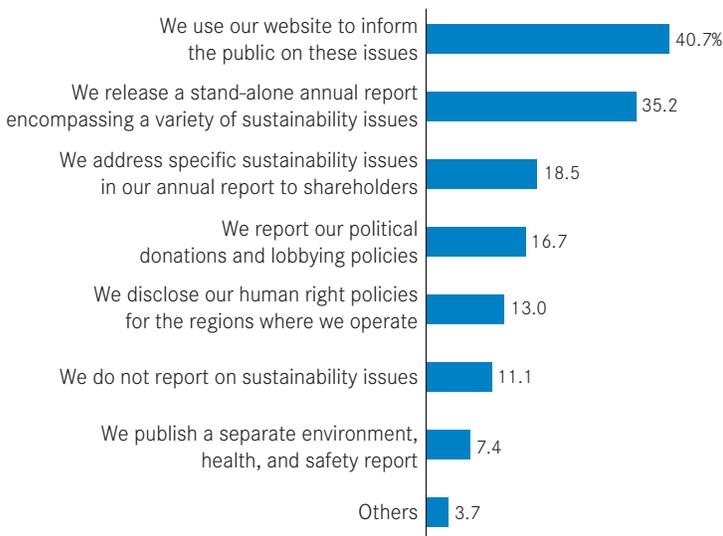
There are a variety of communication channels through which information about a company's CSR activities or record can be disseminated. A company can communicate its CSR activities through official documents, such as an annual corporate responsibility report, press releases, and a dedicated section of its official corporate website; it can also use TV commercials, magazine or billboard advertisements, and product packaging to communicate its CSR initiatives.

**Corporate responsibility reporting** Corporate responsibility reporting has gone mainstream. In 2008, according to an extensive analysis conducted by KPMG, nearly 80 percent of the largest 250 companies worldwide issued corporate responsibility reports, up from about 50 percent in 2005.<sup>21</sup> Although data on corporate reporting are less satisfactory for the United States alone, a 2010 survey of U.S. public companies by The Conference Board shows that at least 35.2 percent of participants release a stand-alone annual report encompassing a variety of social responsibility issues, and that 18.5 percent address the specifics of some of those issues in their annual report to shareholders (Chart 1).<sup>22</sup>

Chart 1

### How does your company report to stakeholders on sustainability issues?

Number of respondents; percentage of total respondents (N=54)



Source: The Conference Board, 2010. Percentages do not add up to 100 due to the possibility of selecting multiple answers.

**Traditional advertising channels** In addition to corporate responsibility reporting and communication through corporate websites, companies also use traditional advertising channels to communicate their CSR activities. For example, Diet Coke has been running TV commercials on its CSR initiative to help raise women's awareness about heart disease, and the brand has also set up a website ([www.dietcoke.com/reddress](http://www.dietcoke.com/reddress)) to communicate the brand's commitment to the cause and various ways for consumers to get involved.

**Product packaging** Companies can also use product packaging to communicate its CSR initiatives. For example, Stonyfield Farm prints messages on the lids of its six-ounce yogurt cups to communicate the company's involvement in a wide variety of health and environmental initiatives.

**External communicators of CSR** In addition to company-controlled CSR communication channels, the ranks of external communicators of CSR (e.g., media, customers, monitoring groups, consumer forums/blogs) that are not entirely controlled by the company continue to grow. These external communicators are likely to vary in the extent to which they are controllable by the company. For example, a company might be able to exert greater control over the content of CSR communication by members of its value chain (e.g., employees, channel members) than by those who are not part of the value chain (e.g., monitoring group, customers).

Moreover, there is likely to be a tradeoff between the controllability and credibility of CSR communication: the less controllable the communicator is from the company's perspective, the more credible the CSR communication is to the stakeholders, and vice versa. Stakeholders will likely perceive the company as more self-interested than other noncorporate sources and, consequently, judge CSR communication via corporate sources as less credible than noncorporate sources. Specifically, research shows that consumers react more positively to a company's CSR activities when they learn about such activities from a neutral source (i.e., an independent organization that provides unbiased evaluations of corporate activities).<sup>23</sup> Therefore, although getting media cooperation is often difficult, companies should try hard to get positive media coverage from independent, unbiased sources, such as editorial coverage on TV or in press.

### **Stakeholder word-of-mouth: employees and consumers**

Companies should try to encourage informal yet credible communication channels such as word of mouth by stakeholders. In particular, companies should not underestimate the power and reach of employees as CSR communicators.<sup>24</sup> Since employees typically have a wide reach among other stakeholder groups through their social ties and are often considered as a credible information source, companies should “tune up” their internal CSR communication strategy and find ways to engage employees and convert them into companies’ CSR advocates.<sup>25</sup>

Another powerful stakeholder group—consumers—can also serve as an informal yet highly effective CSR communication channel. In particular, the power of consumer word-of-mouth has been greatly magnified by a variety of blogs, social networking sites (e.g., Facebook), and other social media platforms. Companies like Stonyfield Farm and Ben and Jerry’s have been benefiting from consumer ambassadors who raved, in the virtual world, about their social responsibility endeavors.

## **Moderators of Communication Effectiveness: Company-Specific Factors**

By revealing the character of the information sender, some company-specific factors will likely influence the effectiveness of CSR communication. This report discusses two factors of this type: corporate reputation and CSR positioning. The influence of these factors is expected to be greater for company-controlled communication than for third-party communication.

**Corporate reputation** Conceptualized as “a collective representation of a firm’s past actions and results that describes the firm’s ability to deliver valued outcomes to multiple stakeholders,” corporate reputation encompasses different dimensions—product quality, innovation, investment value, people management, and CSR.<sup>26</sup> Reputation will moderate the effectiveness of CSR communication because it often serves as a pre-existing schema upon which stakeholders rely to interpret ambiguous information about the company, including its CSR activities.<sup>27</sup> One aspect of corporate reputation—a company’s existing, or prior CSR record—will be perceived as a particularly diagnostic cue for stakeholders evaluating the merits of the company’s CSR communication.

In general, companies with good reputations, perceived to have high-source credibility, will likely find the positive effects of their CSR communication to be amplified, whereas the effects of CSR communication in the case of companies with poor reputations could be dampened or even backfire.<sup>28</sup> Interestingly, research has also shown that companies with neutral ethical reputations are likely to reap greater business benefits from CSR communication than companies with positive ethical reputations.<sup>29</sup>

In addition to corporate reputation, the industry in which a company operates will also moderate the effectiveness of CSR communication. For instance, stakeholders are often suspicious of companies in certain industries (e.g., tobacco, oil), an attitude that can pose a major challenge to communication strategists.<sup>30</sup>

**CSR positioning** Another company-specific factor, CSR positioning, is also likely to influence the effectiveness of CSR communication. CSR positioning refers to “the extent to which a company relies on its CSR activities to position itself, relative to the competition, in the minds of consumers.”<sup>31</sup> While many companies engage in a certain activity to affiliate themselves with a social cause (e.g., a philanthropic foundation), some—Timberland, Ben and Jerry’s, and the Whole Foods Market being the best known examples—develop a more holistic portfolio of CSR activities (including product-related activities) that can position the business as the socially responsible brand among competitors. In this case, CSR becomes the major competitive advantage for the company in the industry.

For example, in the U.S. supermarket sector, the Whole Foods Market brand is strongly positioned on CSR, as it espouses the core value of “caring about our communities and our environment.”<sup>32</sup> Moreover, this value pervades virtually every aspect of the Whole Foods’ business, such as organic and sustainable sourcing to environmentally sensitive retailing, the devotion of at least 5 percent of its annual profits to a variety of causes, and the company’s encouragement of its employees to conduct community service during working hours.

A company’s CSR positioning can significantly amplify the effectiveness of CSR communication. Stakeholders are likely to pay more attention to a comprehensive and coherent CSR message and believe in the authenticity of the social commitment.<sup>33</sup>

## Moderators of Communication Effectiveness: Stakeholders-Specific Factors

Certain characteristics of stakeholders, the recipients of CSR communication, also have the potential to moderate the effectiveness of CSR communication.

**Stakeholder type** One unique characteristic of CSR communication is that it often has many potential audiences—ranging from legislators, business press, investors, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to local communities, consumers, and employees.<sup>34</sup> These different audiences vary in terms of their expectations of businesses and their information needs, and thus may respond differently to CSR messages and CSR channels. Accordingly, it is imperative for a company to tailor its CSR communication to the specific needs of multiple stakeholder groups.

In general, stakeholders can be classified into two types:<sup>35</sup>

- 1 opinion leader audiences, such as the business press, investors—both mainstream institutional investors and the social responsible investment (SRI) community – and NGOs; and
- 2 the general public, such as consumers and local communities.

Each of these stakeholders groups may respond to CSR communication in various ways.

Opinion leader audiences are more likely to actively seek out CSR information about a company and use the company’s CSR report to get a comprehensive picture of its record of social responsibility. Among the opinion leader audiences, corporate responsibility “experts” such as thinktanks, commentators, and social responsibility initiative (SRI) analysts are predominantly looking for hard evidence of the social impact of a company’s CSR programs: ultimately, to them what matters are indicators, benchmarks, targets, and trends, as evidenced by the CSR report and other sources. Therefore, to increase the credibility of their CSR communication among corporate responsibility experts, a company should adhere to leading reporting standards such as the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and AccountAbility’s AA1000. (See Charts 2 and 3 below for survey findings on reporting standards used by U.S. public companies.)

Chart 2

### Which of the following sustainability guidelines or projects has your company been a signatory to or formally endorsed?

Number of respondents; percentage of total respondents (N=54)



Source: The Conference Board, 2010. Percentages do not add up to 100 due to the possibility of selecting multiple answers.

Chart 3

### Which of the following phases in a sustainability initiative would benefit from standardization?

Number of respondents; percentage of total respondents (N=34)



Source: The Conference Board, 2010. Based on the participating company’s own experience, as assessed by the respondent. Percentages do not add up to 100 due to the possibility of selecting multiple answers.

In contrast, another type of opinion leader audience—the mainstream investor—is more concerned with shareholder value maximization and hence the business case of CSR. Accordingly, when communicating CSR to this stakeholder group, companies should explicitly discuss the business impact of their CSR activities, and how their social initiatives are linked to key business metrics such as customer equity, employee retention, corporate governance, and risk management.

The general public (from consumers to the local communities) often does not actively seek CSR information about a company, even with regard to issues they consider to be particularly important.<sup>36</sup> The general public often becomes aware of a company's CSR activities either through independent channels (e.g., editorial coverage on TV and in the press, stakeholder word-of-mouth, etc.) or corporate communication channels (e.g., high-profile cause marketing campaigns, advertising, or point-of-purchase communication such as displaying CSR information on the product label). To effectively reach the general public, companies should use a variety of these communication channels, or alternatively, focus on one or two highly relevant channels, based on the preliminary analysis of the audience segment that wants to be targeted.

**Issue support** Defined as “the extent to which stakeholders support the focal issue of a company's CSR initiative,” issue support affects the effectiveness of CSR communication because it is related to the motivation to receive and process information on social responsibility. Research has shown that information perceived as self-relevant (as opposed to nonrelevant) elicits voluntary attention.<sup>37</sup> Since issue support reflects stakeholders' personal needs and values, all else being equal, CSR information on initiatives that stakeholders deem important or personally relevant is more likely to break the media clutter and receive support.

An effective way to increase issue support is to actively engage stakeholders in the social initiative by soliciting their input in the selection of the focus of the CSR activity. For example, in a recent promotion by GAP, the U.S. apparel company, the company donated 5 percent of each dollar amount spent at its stores to one of six non-profit organizations directly chosen by the consumer from a list. The nonprofit organizations were selected by GAP based on the wide range of domestic—education (Teach for America) and child hunger in the United States (Feeding America)—and global issues—the environment (World Wildlife Fund) and diseases including AIDS, TB, and Malaria in Africa (the Global Fund). By allowing stakeholders to choose the issue and the nonprofit organization, GAP was able to enjoy high issue support from its consumers and thereby enhance the effectiveness of its CSR communication.

For all of these reasons, before launching its social initiatives, a company should engage in some marketing research to gauge stakeholders' support for a variety of social issues, and ultimately undertake those initiatives that matter to its key stakeholders. In this context, it should be noted that stakeholders' view of what social issues are the most important shifts. While Americans ranked crime prevention and homelessness as priority issues in the early 1990s, issues such as education, health and disease, and the environment were paramount in 2004.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, regarding health and disease, the top priority issues are, to list a few, fighting heart disease, breast cancer, children's diseases, and obesity and nutrition.<sup>39</sup>

A company should always monitor what its key stakeholders consider as priority issues. Of course, the selection of a “hot” issue should also be balanced with consideration of CSR fit and impact, as stakeholders expect companies to address social or environmental problems that are relevant to their core business and on which corporate action can make a difference.

## Recommendations for Board Members

The business case of CSR is documented by a large body of multidisciplinary empirical research. Due to the identity-revealing nature of CSR activities, a company that invests in social initiatives will be able to generate favorable stakeholder attitudes and behaviors (e.g., purchasing, seeking employment, investing in the company) and also build durable corporate/brand image, strengthen stakeholder-company relationships, and enhance stakeholders' advocacy of corporate action (e.g., word-of-mouth, employee organizational commitment, and citizenship behavior).

However, communicating these activities is far from simple. If stakeholders perceive a lack of clarity regarding the company's commitment to CSR, doubt the effectiveness of its CSR initiative, or miss the connection of a certain social activity to the core business, a backlash can occur. CSR communication must overcome stakeholder skepticism to generate favorable CSR attributions.

Considering the significant investment required to support a CSR program and the critical role that stakeholder relations play in today's business strategy, board members should become familiar with communication challenges facing social responsibility activities. The following recommendations may offer corporate directors some guidance for overseeing the implementation of effective CSR communication strategies.

- 1 Seek CSR activities that fit into the business strategy**  
Before deciding to allocate resources on a certain CSR activity, the company should fully evaluate how the activity fits within the business strategy as well as the ability of stakeholders to naturally perceive such congruence. When a company does not have a high natural fit with the social cause it supports, its communication campaign should elaborate on the rationale for its social investment to increase the perception that the investment is coherent with the business.
- 2 Emphasize CSR commitment and impact to foster consumer advocacy**  
Today's stakeholders receive an abundance of information on the societal causes pursued by business corporations; as a result, they may respond to new initiatives with skepticism and suspicion. For this reason, any CSR communication strategy should adequately emphasize and document the long-term commitment by the company and the concrete impact of its CSR activities. Research shows that consumers can become important

advocates of a company if they are persuaded about the quality of its CSR program, both in terms of investment supporting it and its proven effectiveness.

- 3 Seek credibility through the support of independent, external communication sources**  
There is a likely tradeoff between the controllability and credibility of CSR communication: the less controllable the communicator is from the company's perspective, the more credible the CSR message is to the stakeholders. Stakeholders tend to perceive the company as more self-interested than other non-corporate sources; consequently, they judge the representation of a CSR activity by in-house marketing and publicity experts as less reliable than the documented report by a reputable external source.
- 4 Encourage employee and consumer word-of-mouth**  
Certain stakeholders are themselves important CSR communication resources. A CSR communication strategy should therefore strive for various forms of stakeholder engagement. Employees, in particular, through their social ties, may have a wide reach among other groups of interest in the company. In addition, today, the power of consumer word-of-mouth has been greatly magnified given the popularity and scope of social media platforms such as blogs and social networks.
- 5 Select social initiatives with high issue support.**  
Since CSR communication on initiatives that stakeholders deem important or personally relevant is more likely to break the media clutter and be more effective, companies should monitor what its key stakeholders consider as priority issues, and undertake those initiatives with high issue support. Stakeholder engagement in the design and implementation of CSR strategy will result in initiatives with high support from stakeholders and, in turn, enhance the effectiveness of subsequent CSR communication.
- 6 Be mindful of stakeholder perception of business industry**  
The effects of CSR communication may also be moderated by the reputation of the industry in which a company operates. For instance, stakeholders are often suspicious of companies in the tobacco or oil industries, an attitude that can pose a major challenge to communication strategists. In these cases, a company should fully recognize the issues that weakened the stakeholder perception of the industry and emphasize its efforts to become an agent of change within the industry.

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