THE COMMUNICATIONS OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY- STUDY FOR ISO 26000

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ABSTRACT

This paper present the role and interaction between communication and Corporate Social Responsibility, strengtheningin the same time that communication it is a key factor to begin and keep a proper Sustainable Development strategy. The importance of communication is essential, taking in consideration the awareness in the interior and in the exterior of organization strategy, ethical, ecological and socio-economical objectives, since information regarding the impact of the company's activities, products and services as well as regarding the impacts of changes that can supervene in time, can only be provided in this way. Since there are many ways to communicate regarding the actions of CSR, it is important to know what kind of messages and ideas can resonate with a certain audience, considering the stage in which the ISO 26000 standard's development stands.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsability, communication, ISO 26000, social marketing, negociation, education

1.About CSR

Corporate Social Responsibility is not a fashionable effect; it stands on historical as well as conceptual solid bases. It appears that today no company can escape of social responsibility. Corporate's "responsible" initiatives were named in different terms: citizenship corporate, philanthropy corporate, societal marketing corporate, community affairs, community development etc.

The definition of Corporate Social Responsibility, that encompasses the vastest consensus on European level, can be found in the document published by the European Community Commission in June 2001, known by the name of "Green Card", and is the following: "the concept by which a company integrates voluntarily its preoccupations towards social and environmental problems, in business operations and in its interactions with the stakeholders".

Thus, stakeholders include the following actors: owners, administrators, employees, unions, clients, members, business partners, suppliers, public opinion, competitors, governments, electorates, NGOs, pressure and influential groups, national and international communities.

Social Responsibility means the shifting of attention over the responsibility and development as well as on the impact over the society and environment. In other words, the justification of a company's existence, that produces profit, remains intangible, but the interest of the parties involved and the influenced parties will nevertheless be assessed.

2. Communications and CSR

Many practices linked to social responsibility imply an internal and an external form of communication. Communication can thus be crucial for companies from the perspective of transparency, in demonstrating the positive facts that are being created, in creating a dialog with the stakeholders, or even for demonstrating the way in which the organization carries out and satisfies the stakeholders' interests and the society's expectations in general.

It is obvious that the importance of communication is essential, taking in consideration the awareness in the interior and in the exterior of organization strategy, ethical, ecological and socio-economical objectives, since information regarding the impact of the company's activities, products

and services as well as regarding the impacts of changes that can supervene in time, can only be provided in this way.

Another positive aspect of the importance of communication is that it convincies the employees and other persons, and motivates them to support the activities of the corporate's sustainable development without questioning precisely the

essential role of improving the reputation of the organization that is sensible regarding the problems of sustainable development.

Information regarding the social responsibility of corporations can be of extremely diverse nature; and their characteristics are underlined in the table below:

Characteristics of Information	Description
Complete	- Tackles with all activities and their most important effects.
Easy to Understand	- take in consideration the aspects of communication; - the language used and the way of presenting the subject are accessible.
Reactive	- are communicated in the interest of the involved and influenced parties;
Fair and Balanced	- the veracity of information is not questioned, but eventually detailed enough to be useful and adequate to the detailed subject; - negative results, that can result subsequently CSR activities, will not be omitted.
Current	- the activity and the timing are detailed ; - allows the comparison of current performances with previous performances or with performances of other organizations.
Accessible	- information regarding the specific domains of the action is always at the interested part's disposition.

Table 1. Characteristics of informations regarding social responsibility [6]

Ways of communication in the domain of social responsibility:
- meetings with the stakeholders;
- communication with the stakeholders on domains of interest or by specific projects on responsibility;
- permanent and constant dialogue with the stakeholders;
- communication with the shareholders and employees of the organization in order to sensitize them in the CSR direction;
- presentation of review reports, internal or external control that confirms the importance of CSR programs;
- communication opportunity by feedback from the stakeholders;
- communication with the suppliers concerning the requirements responsible for supplying;
- public communication regarding emergencies that imply the society's responsibility;
- communication regarding the product, by correct labeling and other consumer information;
- opportunities for feedback from the costumers behalf;
- articles, publications in magazines, newsletters concerning the aspects of CSR;

- promotion and marketing activities for the promotion of the aspects of social responsibility;
- presentation of public reports and the offer of some opportunities for feedback from the stakeholders and influenced parties.

Hence there are many different ways that can be used in communication that include, among others, meetings, public events, forums, reports, news, magazines, posters, commercials, letters, messages, live broadcasts, video, sites, blogs, online discussion forums, billboards, labelings, and so forth. Therefore, communication can be possible through the mass-media, by press releases, interviews, editorials and articles.

3. ISO 26000 – Communication Plan
ISO developed the future standard ISO 26000, offering orientations regarding a guide for voluntary implementation of social responsibilities. The standard addresses to all types of organizations, publics as well as those belonging to the private sphere that can be adapted in developed countries, but also in developing countries. ISO 26000 offers added value to the existing situation regarding social responsibility in effective actions concerning social responsibilities, by:

- developing an international consensus regarding social responsibility and aspects that organizations need in order to address;
- offering orientations for transposing the principles of social responsibility in effective actions;
- the refining of the best practices that evolved until the present and the releasing of information for the benefit of international communities.

ISO 26000 contains guidance, not requirements, and therefore these standards will not be used as a certifiable standard.

Communication strategies and the used tactics have to be personalized according to the target group and a certain communication schedule, because for the communication activities the identification of the adequate moment is important.

Communication objectives regarding the ISO 26000 standards are:

- general (for understanding the entire development of ISO 26000);
- pre-publication;
- the publication of ISO 26000 standards;
- post-publication.

The general objectives in communication strategies of the ISO 26000 refer to:

- communication with stakeholders and influenced parties;
- the increasing of interest by awareness concerning CSR in general and ISO 26000;
- the identification and explanation of misunderstandings regarding the aspects of CSR;
- adopting ISO 26000.

In what regards the actions of pre-publication, it is desired the luring and participation of experts and expert associates, strengthening the role of the implementation and communication committees, such as:

- ❖ political sensitivities;
- ❖ incorrect understanding of ISO 26000;
- ❖ contradictions with existing standards on national/regional/international level;
- ❖ the area's cultural and ethical values;
- ❖ national, cultural and religious communications;
- ❖ locally relevant issues, risk management;
- ❖ access to information (for example, different types of public audience can have different needs to communicate and different abilities-for instance internet accessibility can be an issue for certain categories of audience);
- ❖ limited resources for the development of communication program.

Since there are many ways to communicate regarding the actions of CSR, it is important to know what kind of messages and ideas can resonate with a certain audience, considering the stage in which the ISO 26000 standard's development stands. To assure that the message was properly focused key- messages should be clear, in simple sentences.

The selection of a communication strategy depends on the objective, on a clear understanding of it, on the audience category and on their motivations. A strategy can be active or reactive, large or small, directed on a local, regional or national level. In developing a communication strategy major opportunities to communicate or existing impediments should be taken into account. The opportunities of partnership with other organizations can be beneficial not just in financial terms, but also in activities of communication and in consolidating and exposing the messages. In making the strategy operational and in describing the way in which the key-messages will be exposed to the target audience, communication tactics must exist. The available resources and the most efficient methods have to be taken into account in selecting and prioritizing the tactics, as:

- ❖ adapting the texts and presentations to every category of audience;
- ❖ newspaper, weekly and monthly magazine articles, be trade or of general interest;
- ❖ publications in trade journals;
- ❖ media events (presentations, interviews, TV shows);
- ❖ press conferences, public websites;
- ❖ speeches, conferences, participation to seminars and/or the promotion of these

4. Conclusions

Communication is essential for participation and responsabilization, key element for an initiative for sustainable development. Thus, communication can mainly be used for: information exchange, identifying a consensus around some specific issues; supporting the accomplishment of the projects objectives, helping to identify and define the objectives. Conscious and active participation, in any moment of the project's cycle, of each interested part can be facilitated by a simple fair promotion of the development efforts.

The communication strategy approach should start by finding a "layer" between the current problems identified through the interests of the target audience and those addressed by ISO 26000. Thus, communicators should not try to directly convince the audience that ISO 26000 is important for them, but can win the audiences

interest showing that they can be positively affected by ISO 26000 and underlining the opportunities that can emerge.

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