

Integrating CSR as an Internal Marketing Tool

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Abstract—Maintaining, retaining, attracting, and motivating talented employees in an organization has become extremely tough and at the same time, an imperative job in today's economy. CSR, widely recognized as Corporate Social Responsibility, of an organization has proven to be highly effective when it comes down to the marketing programs internal to the organization. Such CSR activities are efficiently done by the fulfilment of employment needs and by drawing talented and motivated employees of the organization in identifying strongly with the organization. At the end of which, CSR has thus so far been proven to be responsible when it comes down to providing substantial returns for the employee as well as the organization itself. This research paper elaborates on how the Corporate Social Responsibility of a firm can be used as a marketing tool in the internal marketing of a corporate body using case studies of contemporary deployment by corporate organizations worldwide. However, benefits from the deployment of CSR activities stand juxtaposed by the challenges that stem from such CSR initiative deployment that the organization faces internally among employees. Lastly, this research paper aims to outline some of these challenges as well as the solutions to curb these respective challenges.

Index Terms—Corporate Social Responsibility, Internal Marketing, Corporate Strategy, CSR.

I. INTRODUCTION TO CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR)

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) refers to actions and policies at the disposal of corporates designed to positively impact the world around them. CSR is based on the premise that firms should seek other socially beneficial goals, in addition to increasing profits, as part of their overall strategy. Minimizing environmental impact, encouraging employee participation, and making charitable contributions are all examples of popular CSR goals. According to many firms, CSR is an essential aspect of their corporate image, and consumers are more inclined to do commerce with organizations that they see as more ethical. Business social responsibility (CSR) initiatives may thus play an essential role in corporate public relations efforts. In addition, some business owners are compelled to participate in CSR activities because of their personal beliefs.

Adam Weinger, the President of 'Double my Donation', an organization that administers employee matching-gift programs, argues that in the long run, prioritizing CSR goals produces an engaged employee base that, in turn, becomes an asset for the firm. In order to hold a company's stakeholders, the general public, and itself socially responsible, sustainable business practices (CSR) is a self-regulatory business model used by companies. Firms can be aware of their influence on all parts of society, especially economic, social and environmental, by adopting a corporate citizenship model. CSR is just as vital for a business as it is for the community. Companies and their workers benefit from CSR initiatives because they create a stronger community and a greater sense of belonging for both parties.

Prior to becoming socially responsible, a firm must ensure that it is accountable to itself as well as the interests of its shareholders. Businesses that implement CSR initiatives often have matured to the point that they can give something back. As a result, significant firms often use corporate social responsibility (CSR). The more a company is known and successful, the more duty it has to set an example of ethical conduct for the rest of the industry. It is imperative for a corporate to realize and utilise the potential of a CSR model as an efficient marketing tool for its organization. Meeting this rising essential gives customers and potential business partners a more favourable impression of your organization, which is a priceless asset in today's cutthroat market and ever-changing consumer demands.

II. UNDERSTANDING INTERNAL MARKETING

'Internal Marketing' is explained by theorists as well as economists as a rubric under which corporate social responsibility can be used efficiently as well as effectively to retain and acquire employees for the organization. This concept is regarded or seen as a perspective which holds that the companies which succeed in the market with their talented employees, who are successfully and efficiently acquired or retained by the measure of the fulfilment of those particular needs of the customers, can be the ones who can efficiently manage their employees best just by viewing them as eternal customers who are ready in fulfilling their needs through a compelling menu of job-products. This helpful feature termed 'job product' includes salary, health benefit packages, and job responsibilities which are designed with careful consideration all together efficiently, contributing to job satisfaction, employee retention, and productivity. In this particular regard, the managers are responsible for critical tasks, which are to identify as well as understand the required needs when it comes down to the differences in the segments of the employees, configuring job products which clearly and efficiently include corporate social responsibility initiatives in addressing the needs required for a diverse workforce.

III. CSR: A STRATEGIC INTERNAL MARKETING TOOL?

The contemporary economy is driven by fierce competition among employees who are creative, motivated, determined and even talented according to or amounting to what McKinsey & Company has characterized as war-related to finding rare talent. It is very commonly regarded that the success of the company or a particular organization hinges on their very ability to attract talented employees to work for their company. CSR activities of a company are considered legitimate, which can be mounted by the share of evidence found necessary in compelling and increasing the importance of attracting and retaining talented employees of the company.

There are various who seek out socially responsible companies, and in that regard, this move looks like a sensible one to increase and attract more talent. In the words of the former Deloitte CEO Jim Copeland: “The best professionals in the world want to work in organizations in which they can thrive, and they want to work for companies that exhibit good corporate citizenship”. These were the enthusiastic steps taken, but despite such injections of enthusiasm and the resources put into CSR, the research domain suggested that very few organizations could optimally leverage their respective efforts in winning this war they were facing to find talent. This paper discusses the various vital barriers that are efficient towards an effective deployment and suggests multiple steps that various companies can take to increase CSR effectiveness in the realm of employment.

There are various definitions of corporate social responsibility. While those definitions of CSR abound, it is necessary as well as imperative to note that they all allude when it comes to essentially contribute to the commitment of the organization towards making improvements in the societal well-being through discretionary business practices and through various contributions that could be made using the resources of the corporate. It is also imperative to note that organizations can have multiple CSR initiatives in diverse areas. For example, taking the case of KLD Research & Analytics, Inc., which is regarded as a significant provider when it comes to a company-specific CSR information, effectively rates the companies of majorly three broad dimensions which are regarded as:

- An environment which clearly includes the efforts made in recycling and the multiple uses of clean energy.
- Social Issues take into account minority as well as women’s benefits along with safety and health dimensions.
- Governance which indicted compensatory practices and even transparency.

One pertinent fact which needs to be noted in this context is that while the top management is often content with the management of CSR engagement scheme at a broad level, with it comes the time of implementation, which is strongly regarded as a critical driver of the effectiveness amongst the stakeholders who are regarded to be the employers and the consumers, pertaining to the specificity and the focus which it brings along when a company effectively and efficiently supports or engages itself in a social initiative.

IV. CASE STUDY: CSR INITIATIVE EMPLOYED BY COCA-COLA AS A MARKETING STRATEGY

Companies like Coca-Cola and Dettol have successfully utilized their CSR initiatives as part of their marketing strategy, which reaches billions of people worldwide. NDTV’s coverage of Coca-Cola’s recent –“Support My School” campaign in India has made it one of the most talked-about CSR projects in the country. This ad appeals to large since it focuses on a global issue about children in Rural and small-town schools, their rights, and their need for education. As a result, vital resources may be sent to the places where they are most needed while, at the same time, it also communicates with its target audience in a non-advertising and non-deceptive manner, serving as a springboard for future consumers to come. It is a win-win situation for a country of school-age children and Coca-Cola too. This CSR initiative provides resources now, while subliminally, it works by taking advantage of vulnerable children by plastering their thoughts with its brand name is the best way to make a lasting impact on them.

Coca-Cola seems to be doing things the correct way by being a significant player in the field of business (CSR) branding. As a different sub of marketing, CSR marketing has emerged. To put it in another way, it is the smartest thing to do while you have a global customer base. It is not only Coca-Cola’s initiatives that have been skilfully packed, branded and communicated; too many firms have begun discussing their CSR programs too early and in too apparent a manner.

Every organization aims to have a positive impact on the world around it. It needs to consider internal and external elements when determining whether or not it is accountable for anything. By balancing the organization’s aim with its capabilities, this border of responsibility-acceptance becomes a perfect indicator of its integration with its external environment. Organizations grow more critical of their ecosystem when they broaden their scope to encompass more external elements and create a giant circle of responsibility.

Throughout its history, Coca-Cola has been engaged in several environmental initiatives. To freshen the world and affect the world in all areas, including their corporate social model, they adhere to their mission statement while also at the same time leaving a stamp of their brand’s name on these impactful initiatives, hence yielding marketing benefits from these CSR initiatives. The firm has implemented several UN Sustainable Development Goals, with water conservation and trash management as their primary concerns. All nations where Coca-Cola does business will benefit from Coca-Cola’s goal of creating a sustainable environment for all those affected by their company. At the same time, these tactics get the company marketing too.

Employees nowadays seek socially responsible companies. These CSR activities of Coca-Cola serve as leverage for external marketing as well as for their internal marketing as the company navigate its way to invest in and improve society. In this attempt to leave a pro-social positive impact on the environment and society, it does so more importantly on its primary stakeholders too, its employees. This showcasing of efforts is pertinent in the strive to retain and acquire a young and talented workforce that is enthusiastic about associating themselves with such a pro-social organization. Moreover, these environmentally and socially conscious efforts of corporates will help them embrace an ever-expansive diversity in the workplace.

V. CHALLENGES OF THE CSR MARKETING MODEL

One can efficiently note that there are fortune 500 companies that engage in a multitude of CSR activities where the efforts made by these companies are wholly deployed based on normative rather than on the motives regarded as profit maximization at the behest of the senior management team. These are the programs which are usually managed by the relations made by the community of what Ward and Smith (2006) have called the 'ghetto' of the public affairs department rather than those departments or even those business units who are responsible for having bottom line responsibilities when it comes to often depriving them of the CSR from being well integrated with the strategy of the business. However, such arguments are definitely not the basis to give suggestions on why companies have not engaged in any form of strategic thinking upon the deployment of the CSR initiatives.

Upon research, it has been found that the internal stakeholder group of employees with the efficient ability of corporate social responsibility in serving as an effective internal marketing lever is only something that is limited by four related issues:

1. When it comes to CSR, multiple companies often choose to keep their employees at arm's length by completely not communicating the details and extent of their CSR to the respective stakeholders consistently and straightforwardly.
2. Companies are even formulating their own corporate social responsibility programs without the explicit knowledge of providing consideration when it comes to the diverse set of employee needs seen fulfilled by such programs.
3. It comes to companies that are not efficient in understanding the mechanisms behind the psychology necessary in linking the CSR programs to anticipate positive returns from their employees.
4. Those companies who decidedly choose a top-down approach in the formulation, maintenance, and execution of their CSR programs are often necessary for mandating the employee's participation rather than soliciting them to get involved on their terms.

VI. OPPORTUNITIES: OPTIMAL CSR STRATEGIES

As the CSR trend becomes more widespread and is also resulting in rapid changes, what was once regarded as an ancillary to the business practices is now quickly converting into an essential marketing element of the corporate strategy. However, there is ample research which suggests that the companies or the organizations are in dire need of shifting their approach to the CSR management if it is not the one efficiently supporting or providing a helping hand in fully realizing the returns it has to promise or is giving, keeping in mind the traditional approach now which is no longer sufficient in acting as a CSR strategy in the diversified world which global organizations. Based on the multiple barriers mentioned in the next part of the paper, the recommendations made are necessary to take the following steps to maximize the return on investment when it all comes down to the CSR initiatives in the employee domain.

The first one revolves around increasing the employee proximity to CSR. The second one is more generally responsible for using the contingent input-output approach when it comes to formulating and implementing CSR initiatives, which are imperative in adding the subsequent evaluation and management techniques of those CSR outcomes. The third one, although necessary for understanding and fulfilling the needs of the employees related to CSR, mainly diverts all the attention towards targeting strategic employee segments. On the other hand, the fourth one focuses on strengthening the employee's identification with the company and finally enabling the employees to become the co-creators of the value of corporate social responsibility.

VII. CONCLUSION

Corporate Social Responsibility is regarded as most effective when the employees play the role of the actual enactor of these CSR programs, with the company acting as an enabler. In essence, CSR is regarded as an overly complex strategic endeavour that demands considerable attention as well as a commitment by the company in order for it to pay it back. However, it can yield rich dividends as a potential internal marketing instrument if done right.

CSR must be executed in tandem with the company's overall brand development plan to succeed. An integrated method or a selected approach may be used to accomplish this. A commitment-based brand might benefit from an integrated marketing strategy. Businesses may use this method to promote their CSR activities by tying certain brands. Using CSR marketing to alleviate hunger in Nigeria and improving dental health with their Brushing Day & Night campaign are two examples of selected CSR marketing techniques from Unilever brands. Firms also carry out invisible CSR actions but do not appear in the marketing materials. If your CSR efforts do not directly influence your customers' purchasing decisions, but you still need to spend on such initiatives to build trust and credibility with the general public, this is the best option.

CSR can also be used efficiently as well as effectively in being able to retain as well as acquire employees for the organization. It has proven to be highly effective when it comes down to the marketing programs internal for the organization, which are efficiently done to fulfil the employment needs and draw the talented and motivated employees of the organization to identify strongly with the organization itself. In the end, they have thus been proven to be responsible for providing substantial returns for the employee and the organization itself. However, with the deployment of CSR initiatives comes multiple challenges the organization faces internally. Many companies are investing millions of dollars in CSR initiatives, and it has never resulted in being more worthwhile to assess the process of returns with the employees and even optimizing the return on such high investments, especially when it comes down to considering the impact it will have on the group of stakeholders regarding their competitive advantage.

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