

Corporate Social Responsibility

European Commission

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Have you ever tried to Google on terms and definitions of social responsibility and sustainability? It is striking that there are more than 20 000 hits on ecological sustainability and responsibility, but only 500 hits on human sustainability and responsibility. So are polar bears and even milk jugs more important than people? Not only in terms of research attention, but also as a focus of company initiatives? Is the P of planet; is the P of profit of more value than the P of people? Of course not, but it means that thinking in terms of leadership, human capital, employees, education, motivation, engagement, health & Wellbeing of employees, training and development is not so obvious as we should think or hope.

It is important that organisations, public or private, big or small, profit or not for profit, invest in their people. "Investment" means: be interested; invest time. Don't forget (and this is especially so in service organisations): more than 80 % of costs are related to staff. So no investments for the fun of it; not because it is good for our next employee satisfaction survey.

But because it is a simple necessity in organisations in the 21st century who wants to survive; who wants to give an answer to the complex world we live in with a continuous change and where the achievement of strategy, the goals and objectives of the organisation is the most important challenge, embedded in a process of continuous improvement. This without forgetting – even with a big emphasis – on our employees; young and old; experienced and new; male or female and from whatever origin they are.

By focusing on the people aspect in the broadest way and by using the model and international standard Investors in People, organisations can assure that

1. All efforts done on the people management field are in line with the mission, vision, strategy, values and objectives of the organization. No "one shots", but long term embedded in the organization. Made sustainable. To assure that there is a fit between the needs of the organization, the teams and the individuals. Organisations must assure that people are part of the strategy and values of the organisation. This will lead to profitable organisations (revenue and turnover; satisfaction). And statistically proven in studies.
2. They put their employees in front. To have competent, engaged and motivated employees is crucial. If this is not okay, satisfaction of customers and all other stakeholders will never be achieved. The "employability" of employees is assured. We must break through the borders of the own team; we must break the tunnel vision of team leaders. The more competent people are, the better the total of the organization will gain. This is "talent management": the starting point is the employee and not the organisation. We must get the best out of the people; not squeeze them like lemons.
3. The strategy and concrete planning of learning and development is embedded in the overall strategy of the organization. Organisations must ensure that the detection of development needs (technical and social skills) takes place at the right moment by the right people; L&D needs a good and well thought planning looking for innovate creative ways of learning adapted to the employees individual needs; goals for L&D

must be defined and finally training must be evaluated, esp. in the long term and this in order to measure its real impact.

4. People's performances are discussed and feed backed at least once a year; and in fact preferable every day of the year by means of an informal communication between manager and employee. The process of having talks is not the goal; it is the result that counts.
5. Diversity is present. IIP aims for equality and access to learning and development for all.
6. New employees feel home and really expected from their first day on. The expression that you don't get a second chance to make a first impression if fully applicable here.

All this is supported by international studies. I refer to de Waal's (2010) seminal report, 'The characteristics of a High Performing Organization (HPO)', where a meta-analysis of 290 research studies on high performance was conducted to identify common themes that made up a HPO. I further refer to several literature studies and to the papers of the Cranfield School of Management.

Organisations need guidance to implement aspects of CSR, sustainability, focusing on people. They need to follow good practices and international recognized standards. Therefor there is the international standard IIP, used in more than 80 countries. Nine indicators of high performance that put people management excellence at the heart of any organization. Because good people make good business.

On top of that, the IIP process facilitates the introduction and certification of Corporate Social Responsibility. Because for certification in the field of the corporate social responsibility or sustainable development, there is no basis or Protocol. ISO 26000 gives only themes and guidance. The business model Investors in People opens a way to audit efforts in the areas of CSR, because the model lends itself to it on the one hand side and the issued certificate confirms that the organisation is recognised as an Investor in People after an assessment (audit) carried out by a neutral and recognized an assessor (Auditor). The certificate Investors in People is therefore an indisputable proof of investments made in the area of staff and management within a framework of sustainable development.

In my role as MD of IIP Belgium I wanted you to give you a quick overview of what Investors in People can do and how this international framework for high performance through excellent people management contributes to the role organisations have to play in the sustainability policy.

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