

## How to Make CSR a Work Culture Instead of a Policy

When lecturing about CSR I always ask the audience about their opinion on whether CSR is a culture or a practice. The responses vary across the spectrum from people saying it's a practice to people saying it's a culture and a fair combination in between.

Unfortunately, there is no practical answer to that question and in my opinion although the best approach is the middle path i.e. a combination of culture and practice, the answer lies in a tailored approach for each organization based on the organization itself, its values, its size and its already existing culture. Meaning, large organizations would find it difficult to purely build their CSR on a culture because it would take too long to build a culture of CSR throughout the organization on the other hand, small and medium sized organizations would find it difficult to codify their CSR approach because its an additional layer of policies that they can do without.

Organizations that are facing the dilemma of culture versus practice can ask themselves the following question:

"Where do we stand with respect to CSR?" Is it:

- a. A value system we inherently believe in
  - **Culture Present Practice Missing**
- b. A practice that we would like to invest more time and effort in
  - **Practice Present Culture Missing**
- c. CSR is something that gives us a competitive advantage so we have to do it
  - **Culture and Practice Present More of Both Valuable**
- d. We are not sure of the business case of CSR for us but we have to do it for our reputation or because our competitors are doing it
  - **Culture and Practice Missing Both Needed**

Depending on the answer it may be worth focusing on one approach versus the other.

### A CSR Culture

When Darwin set the stage for the evolutionary process theory he had no idea that his theory would be applied to organizations' work cultures as well. Much like nature's selections when it comes to biological evolution, the current work cultures evolvement is due mainly to decisions and selections made over time by top management based on their beliefs. But is this evolutionary process making way for CSR to become part of the work culture?

Based on the importance of a culture for CSR and the need for integrating such culture throughout an organization to get maximum value, it is important to consider firstly, how an organization can establish a culture of CSR and secondly, how it can integrate and embed such culture throughout an organization.

### Creating a Culture for CSR

In order to create an effective and aligned culture of CSR in an organization, it is important to ascertain the unique business case of CSR for such an organization. In doing so, the organization would need to build an awareness and understanding towards CSR in general and then identify the potential added value of CSR for such an organization or its sector.

For example, Dohaland as a business involved with real estate invests in CSR through its developments and addressing the community needs surrounding its developments. It has aligned its CSR philosophy with its business increasing the added value of its CSR investments.

**Integrating and Embedding a Culture of CSR**

The task of integrating and embedding a culture of CSR into the workplace falls under the responsibility of the Human Resource (“HR”) Department and their management. Internal communication is often funnelled through the HR department and accordingly it is through such department that a change in an organization’s culture can begin and this is where HR leadership plays a critical role in coordination with upper management to adopt CSR into their core business strategies.

HR should be held responsible to effectively communicate the necessary CSR message and values that the organization desires to instil. This infiltrates all departments, operations and key to all decision-making processes.

Some key practices that can instil CSR as a work culture include:

- Building momentum for change by framing CSR as
  - A financial opportunity, or try to put it in quantitative terms
  - Part of everyday business language; avoid emotional language
  - Innovation or about being cutting edge
  - Being about quality of service or product
- Fostering Commitment towards CSR by:
  - Prioritizing CSR issues in decision making
  - Demonstrating CSR commitment through leadership and “walking the walk”
  - Making it easier and providing support for employees to make CSR decisions

For example, in Vodaphone Qatar where the message of CSR is built around a purpose-based approach to empower employees to make certain decisions along certain principles, the decision-making matrix for every department is built around the I Decide/We Decide Model.

Head of Dept. Decides Alone <b>I Decide</b>	Head of Dept. Decides with the Employee <b>We Decide</b>
Head of Dept. Decides Based on Input From Employee <b>I Decide Based on Your Input</b>	Employee Decides <b>You Decide</b>

- Engage employees by:
  - Ensuring basic concerns like pay, work-life balance, working environment etc. are addressed
  - Creating small incentives that magnify or accentuate potential changes

*Globally, 93% of CEOs see Sustainability as important to their company’s future success. Yet, most do not know how to embed sustainability into their company.*<sup>1</sup>

**Are you from the 7%?**

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<sup>1</sup> Embedding Sustainability in an Organizational Culture, Network for Business Sustainability, 2010

<b>Total Word Count:</b>	<b>875</b>
<i>Breakdown</i>	
Text:	759
Table Example 1	41
Table Example 2	75

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**Maali Qasem is the CEO and founder of Schema.** Over the years Maali has been a driving force in influencing the corporate culture of the region.

Maali initiated and continues to run under Schema the bi-annual Corporate Governance and Responsibility (“CGR”) Forum. The CGR Forum is a unique knowledge-generating platform created to identify, address and enable development in the areas of Corporate Governance and Corporate Social Responsibility, while building an awareness of the importance of Sustainability. For more information please visit: <http://www.cgrforum.com>

**About Schema:**

Schema is established to play an advisory practice to provide advice on corporate governance and corporate responsibility practices and principles. Schema is committed to promote value by interactively providing innovative advice on corporate governance and corporate responsibility frameworks and infrastructure tailored to each client and to the regional environment thereof.

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