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Social Duty and Her Function in Communication Strategy of Firm

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Abstract:

Social responsibility is not charity, it's a duty. Today we see all major companies following social responsibility.

Social duty is not only attention allotted consumers, customers and contractors, communities and environment, as well employees and implicit their family. In concept triple bottom line, social duty presume achievements of social level, financial plane and environment level and follow a positive impact on society and, in same time, financial achievements. Education is an area that gets a lot of interest.

Nowadays, society faces an important series of transformations. This is due mainly to passage to approach of the sustainable development of the society. Contributions in this sense are necessary from all sectors of activity. In Europe, a higher and higher number of societies start to implement activities of social duty. Business passes, in a voluntary manner, beyond obligations of law, concerning social sphere and environment protection and start to use a series of instruments and measures in this sense.

Social duty is not translated only in attention granted to consumers, customers and suppliers, communities and environment, but also to employees and implicitly to their families.

Social responsibility represents the obligation of a company, besides the legal obligations or the ones imposed by economic restriction, to attend long term objectives that are in the advantage of the society.

The companies that are responsible socially are obliged not only towards the shareholders, but also towards the ones interested in their activity.

The purpose expected by companies to sustain a responsible behavior, is on one part the improvement of an image and on the other part, the promotion of management based on values spread as part of the organization.

In the conditions of globalization of economical life, aspects regarding the social responsibility and the ethical problems, become extremely important preoccupations, of the societies of external commerce. These societies take into account the moral obligations towards employees, environment, customers, suppliers, social responsibility towards countries in which they develop the activity or the attitude towards the other actors of the world economy (ONG, governmental associations).

From the perspective of triple performance - “triple - bottom line”- social duty refers to: success at social, financial and environmental level, pursuing a positive impact on society and, in the same time, obtaining financial success. Concept “triple bottom line” derived from rapport of

United Nations in 1987 regarding strategies for development of durability, from “Our common future”, known under the name of “Rapport Brundtland”.

A socially responsible company respects human rights, treats in equal manner all the employees, no matter sex, religion, ethnical appartenance, offers the possibility to persons with special needs to be employed in a company, offers opportunities of professional and personal development, ensures the equilibrium between professional and social life (through packages of benefits, trainings to which they participate, implementation of health standards and work protection OHSAS 18001, communitarian programs, of volunteering), creates a proper environment as part of which employees develop activity, an economics of working space, treats with special attention the business ethics and aspects connected to corporate governance, ensures internal communication, as a function of the department of human resources, initiates a permanent dialogue through which will supervise the degree of satisfaction and expectation of employees, etc.

A research that was initiated by the management consultancy agency McKinsey & Company regarding corporate philanthropic actions emphasized the fact that this does not represent only a sign of free generosity, but they aim to reach business objectives only when they initiate such an activity, in the following order:

- Improvement of reputation -70%;
- Improvement of employees - 40%;
- Optimization of the employment system and fidelity of the employees - 42%;
- Differentiation towards concurrence - 38%

Most of charitable actions pursues: education, community, economical development and environment. If for Europe, the environment represents a priority, for North American continent, priority is represented by health. Also, regarding education, Americans are much more active than Europeans.

According to another study realized by the consultancy company Grant Thornton, the most justificative factors which determined the corporative responsibility are:

1. Keeping key employees (65%);
2. Maintaining costs under control, for efficiency of the resources and environment protection (63%);
3. The need to increase faith and loyalty of the customers - reinforcement of the brand (56%);
4. Fiscal reductions (44%);
5. Saving planet (40%);
6. Better relations with investors (39%);
7. Governmental pressures (38%)

Also, corresponding to the same study, regarding the implementation of CSR, the most current practices are:

- measures for improvement of employees' health (71%);
- programs of Internship and scout talent (61%);
- donations in name of charitable causes/ actions (65%);
- active promotion of diversity and equality (64%);
- supporting employers' work flexibility (62%);
- efficient management of wastes (59%);
- efficient management of energetic resources (57%);
- participation at the life of the community (55%);
- changing products/ services (41%);
- assisting other companies to improve performances (35%).

Ambassadors of the programs of social duty are employees of the unit. Studies show that, for more and more employees, social and ethical values of the company as part of which they work have become important. From this reason, employees must have an important public for CSR strategy of any company.

Competition character of a company is also the expression of dynamism, preparation and professionalism of the employees.

Work environment reflects the values of the company and has positive effect on employees, shapes their attitude and performances. Ensuring an area of comfort for employees can be realized of a series of facilities, as for example: modern locker rooms, restaurant for having meal inside the unit, medical cabinet, as well as a medic, available each day, sportive competitions, etc.

Area of internal communication in information of the employees regarding the activity of the company (evolution and changes in structure of the organization, sales situation, strategy and politics), increasing the degree of engagement of employees in respect of the organization - employee engagement-through specific events.

A study realized by one of research departments of The Economist, showed that companies with financial performances are leaders in CSR. In another expression, investment in CSR does not represent an impediment; on the contrary, performance in the field of CSR is essential for success of a company.

Organizations and managers must gather knowledge about a particular market, with a pre-necessary property to pass to the following involvement stage. Culture is here an important phenomenon, which is manifested through local practices. Insufficient understanding of techniques and local tastes can disrupt any future commercial development.

On the future, we will have in Romania more and more companies with social character. On one side, because social problems exists and will exits. On the other side, because more and more international organisms and private companies fight for what, in west countries, is known with the name of corporate social responsibility (CSR) or corporate citizenship.

Any company has connections with the local community that is formed from clients, suppliers, competitors, former or potential workers, opinion groups, shareholders, local authorities, representatives of local, national and international mass –media.

There are several levels of involvement of the companies in the life of community¹.

For example, a company realizes basic activities: pays taxes, respects law, negotiates in a honest and honorable manner with the personnel, suppliers and shareholders. Also, the company takes into consideration the effects of the activities on the environment and tries to minimize the negative effects with the control of pollution and avoiding the wrong use of the manufactured or commercialized products. At this level, the commerce company will take action more in the spirit than after the law, attempting to anticipate the tendencies in legislation and in the behavior of the customers. These two levels cover what most of the commerce companies think that is their responsibility towards the society and the groups with which interact. In the third place, the commerce company has a different vision. It takes into account the healthiest environment, the best perspectives and is preoccupied to do something about the problems that prevents the normal development of the society.

Public relations are of vital importance for the realization of the planning and management of the relations of the commercial company with the ones involved or affected by its activity or with the ones that influence the development of the company's affairs.

¹ Peach, L. – Effective Corporate Relations, McGraw-Hill, Maidenhead, 1987, p. 191

The company must first of all identify the local communities and then plan the relations with these ones according to its objectives.

A manner of implication of a company in the support of the local community is the creation and the support of certain associates that will develop projects of local interest.

These activities can be realized by the own company's effectiveness or by a consultancy company² and cover the donations, the involvement of the company's staff, the training, the social projects and the awarding of facilities, the visitors centers, the opened days, the protection of the environment, public discussions, the relation with the media, etc.

It should be taken into account, also, the approach of the strategy based on which a commerce company has also capacities that are necessary to realize an advantage from it. A possible source of advantage can be marketing techniques that are specific to certain cultures. Another is born from use of managerial skills in the entire organization, especially using only sources.

Until present moment, was not developed a definitive method for the evaluation of the behavior of the companies. Still, analyze can be realized, starting from the following characteristics³: individual initiative (degree of responsibility and freedom of persons); integration (measure in which will be ensured a coordination of the subsystems of the organization); support given to employee by managers; identity (measure in which employees are identified with the organization); time organization; compensation criteria; attitude in front of risk (degree in which employees are encouraged to be innovative and take risk); attitude in front of conflict (degree in which employees are oriented to a open critics and the modality of solving conflicts); communication models, control; etc.

In Romania, we are witnesses of the beginning of a movement of social responsibility. Except for programs of great companies, involvement in community is associated rather to philanthropy than to a responsible manner of leading business. The amplexness of the contribution brought to community is insufficiently known and studies, unlike countries with tradition in this field where there are studies aiming the evolution of movement, as well as results of social responsibility actions.

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² Harrison, S. – *Public Relation - An Introduction*, Routledge, London, 1995, p.p. 127-130

³ Ionescu, Gh. Gh. - *Cultural dimensions of management*, Economic Publishing House, Bucharest, 1996, p. 53