

# CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AMID COVID-19

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COVID-19 pandemic, though presented itself aggressively targeting humans' health, it shed the light on the state of governance of organizations across the globe. The tough reality of so many organizations presented itself from the mediocre humane dimension governing the relationships between the different subordinates within the organizational hierarchy. And the aforementioned dimension clashes with the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) which has been recognized as crucial to the competitive advantage, survival and continuity of organizations (Castro-González et al., 2019). The current practices in many organization caught by the transformation of work habits have suffered from the lack of responsible behavior towards the employees. According to Issahaku, Anthony and Bakari (2020), employees suffered sudden work-life balance changes leading to depression, higher levels of exhaustion, stress, and lower productivity and quality.

The aforementioned symptoms may surprise organizations which have a strong CSR culture and which have acted differently under normal conditions but failed to deal with the same under the pandemic environment. Therefore, the social dimension of CSR suffered a setback which may influence the future relations between employees and the company. The setback will be simply manifested in loss of trust. Hejase et al. (2012) have defined two important forces which are fundamental in shifting the human resource (HR) function in organizations namely, the management of on-going, rapidly evolving change and workplace flexibility. It is not surprising that both forces are strongly present now-a-days.

Consequently, and according to Lipiec (2001), IMD (Laussane, Switzerland) and Cranfield University (UK) research reports emphasize that responsibility of human resource managers will shift and broaden in the future. According to them, the future tasks of the HR manager will have to encompass the following: (43.5%) Personnel management and managers' competencies (training, path of carriers); and (41.8%) Organizational development (change management, organizational culture). The dimension of society under CSR guards for the best practices applied to employees' satisfaction mediated through empowerment, flexibility, creativity & innovation, and servicing the customers. Therefore, having engaged employees in the workplace capitalizes on their emotional commitment which they feel towards their organization and the consequent actions they endeavor to ensure the organization's success (Hejase, 2020).

Marom & Lussier (2020) call our attention to the fact that COVID-19 pandemic provided organizations with an opportunity for deep examination of social responsibility practices. "*While corporation' efforts were stretched to the limit, the situation served as a magnifying lens examine CSR in its core sense, and not as a "nice to have" or public relations campaign*" (p. 261). Furthermore, Murphy's (2020) proposed 18 different outlooks that enforce engagement must be seriously considered to upgrade the societal dimension within CSR as it supports the positive assertiveness between employer and employees and consequently, if these outlooks are nourished constantly "*leads to employee trust and builds ownership, positive forces which strengthen the leadership efforts to mitigate the*

*pandemic negative symptoms and help to build resilience with full employee support*” (Hejase, 2020).

Raffiee & Byun (2020) strongly assert that employees are the most valuable organizational resource, and how the firm treats its employees is related to its performance. In fact, “*CSR toward employees may include multiple aspects such as job security, fair remuneration and compensation, health and safety, suitable working conditions, organizational justice, avoid discrimination-diversity and inclusion, labor relations and collective bargaining, flexible work arrangements, training and career path, and more*” (Marom & Lussier, 2020). Some of these aspects are more significant in relation to the situation caused by COVID-19 pandemic. For example, “*it goes without saying that job security, compensation and health and safety are highly important in this context*” (Marom & Lussier, 2020). An overview of some of these aspects, with some example companies that followed this practice, is provided in Table 1.

Table 1 CSR DIMENSIONS - STAKEHOLDERS - EMPLOYEES	
Companies	Details
Amazon, Starbucks	Paid time off / paid Leave (full or limited)
Lowe’s, Walmart, Target, Marriott, Disney world, Tesla, Macy’s, Everlane, Sonder, Nissan, Honda,	Furlough-keep the job open (Limited period, partially), Waive attendance policy for a certain period (Limited period), Quarantine pay,
Facebook, Google, Microsoft, Apple, Twitter, Amazon, CISCO, Coca-cola,	Work from home, Flextime, Telecommunicating
Walmart, Trader Joe’s, Apple, Amazon, Instacart, Doordash, McDonald’s, Burger Kind, Kroger, etc.	Paid sick leave (various period)
Multiple business: Coca-cola	Keeping employees safe, protecting measures
Target, Uber, Whole foods,	Support services such as financial assistance.

Source: Marom & Lussier (2020).

CSR benefit to organizations has been widely recorded, nevertheless, there are often costs to be paid before getting the sought for payback on the investment. The cost for the lack of CSR to a business could follow a snow ball effect. Manz (2015) contends that CSR has been in the news constantly for the past several years. Then, being socially irresponsible gives the company a negative reputation that leads to more difficulty in attracting customers, investors, and employees, and it can lead to costly lawsuits. “*Money can be made again, but a negative reputation can take years to improve, and a good reputation may be lost forever*” (Lussier & Hendon, 2017).

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