



The Review

INSIGHTS, IDEAS & INFORMATION

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White Maple is a strategy consulting firm. We aim to deliver results for clients that produce lasting improvements to performance through facilitating alignment between strategy, the market and brand, and the organisation's people, structure and processes.



We focus on working with service organisations. Principal sectors include:

- Commercial (business-to-business)
- Government
- Member organisations and charities
- Professional services

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CSR: just another TLA?

BY JANET SHEPHERD

Management speak is littered with TLAs (Three Letter Acronyms!). CSR is one of the latest. It stands for Corporate Social Responsibility. This article aims to get behind the jargon by explaining what it is. It also explores why it should be seen as an important strategic and management issue, rather than as a fad or gimmick. Effective integration of the principles and practices of CSR can help organisations to gain lasting competitive advantage and performance improvement.

WHAT IS CSR?

Corporate Social Responsibility is about organisations integrating social and environmental concerns into their operations, including their interactions with their customers and other stakeholders.

A fundamental premise is that organisations are integral members of the societies and communities in which they operate and that organisations cannot perform effectively if customers, staff and wider stakeholders do not trust them to contribute to society positively and responsibly, rather than just exploit it for their own ends.

The key elements of social responsibility are:

- operating ethically and with integrity;
- treating employees fairly;
- respecting human rights;
- sustaining the environment for future generations;
- being a caring neighbour in the community.

CONTEXT

As awareness of environmental matters gathers pace and increasingly informed customers ask questions about how products and services come to them and how people who made or delivered them are treated, all types and sizes of organisations will have to give more attention to CSR issues. In this increasingly transparent and global world, positive brand/reputation management is central to organisational performance.

The UK Government's ambition is to see all private, voluntary and public sector organisations take account of the economic, social and environmental impacts of their activities. The European Union is discussing how to legislate in this area.

It's not only for-profit organisations that need to consider CSR issues. The media are also beginning to focus on how non-governmental organisations operate. How many charitable organisations have looked into their procurement activities or enquired where their reserves are invested to ensure that they are not inadvertently supporting things that are contrary to their aims?



WHY NOW?

One of the pressures that organisations are now facing from different stakeholders, such as investors and non-governmental organisations, is to be more open about their environmental impact and social performance, alongside their economic performance.

The UK Company Law Review includes a requirement to disclose material risks. The EU has invited all publicly quoted companies with at least 500 employees to report on their performance against economic, environmental and social criteria.

France already has a legal requirement for companies with over 300 employees to produce financial accounts of social activities and Germany has been requiring the same since the 1980s.

Organisations are making adherence to various environmental and social standards a requirement of their suppliers or a prerequisite for tendering or entering into partnerships. Although this started with requirements with manufacturers, it is now extending to service providers.

At the same time, organisations are feeling the pressure for change from within, with younger staff and managers wanting to align their personal and corporate values with those of society. A new survey for totaljobs.com reported that 45% of the 5,000 staff

"...BEWARE APPROACHING CSR SUPERFICIALLY..."

CSR SOURCES

Some sources of further information about CSR:

CSR Europe

www.csreurope.org
Fact sheets; lists of CSR books (from Amazon); and free e-magazine.

CSR Forum

www.iblf.org
Company profiles and case studies; management toolkit (under development); and information about CSR in specific sectors (e.g. professional services).

UK Government CSR site

www.societyandbusiness.gov.uk
The Government's 2002 report on CSR; information on what the government is doing; and case studies on "the business case".

FTSE4Good

www.ftse4good.co.uk
FTSE4Good indices are designed to measure the performance of companies that meet globally recognised corporate responsibility standards.

Business in the Community

www.bitc.org.uk
A charity aiming to "create a public benefit by working with companies to improve the positive impact of business in society". A source of free publications and research; and details of events.

AccountAbility

www.accountability.org.uk
AccountAbility is dedicated to the promotion of social, ethical and overall organisational accountability. Research (e.g. on the CSR business case); news; and pdf of the AA1000 Assurance Standard.

Chrysalis Economy

"How citizen CEOs and corporations can fuse values and value creation".
By John Elkington. Capstone Publishing, 2003.

Ethical Corporation Magazine

Articles, reports and an overview of what is happening with CSR. Details at www.ethicalcorp.com, including advice on implementing CSR.

surveyed said they would not work for a firm which had no ethical or environmental policies - even if they were offered up to £10,000 a year more.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

Including social responsibility in your business and operational strategies can offer significant benefits. These include:

- Strengthening the organisation's reputation and brand.
- Positively differentiating the organisation from competitors.
- Reducing exposure to risks and associated liabilities.
- Identifying new opportunities.
- Saving money.
- Improved customer loyalty.
- Attracting, retaining and motivating good employees.
- Increased sales and profits.

An organisation's environmental and social management capability can be an effective measure of overall management quality and strategic thinking. This is why financial institutions are taking a growing interest and have noted that the Dow Jones Sustainability Index has grown by 180% since 1993 compared to just 125% for the Dow Jones Global Index.

New research from the Social Market Foundation reveals that 82% of UK consumers prefer to purchase goods and services from socially and environmentally responsible companies and says that 23% would choose to do so, even if the ethical option is more expensive. Examples of those that are benefiting are organic food retailers and companies such as The Co-operative Bank, which has built a strong reputation for prioritising social and ecological issues and uses 'Customer Led, Ethically Guided' as its strap line.



WHERE TO START?

Commitment. Like any new management concept and initiative, CSR needs to gain the commitment of senior management. To achieve this it will usually be important to have a compelling business case that shows how CSR can contribute to achieving strategic goals.

Knowledge. The difficulty some organisations come up against, and what often prevents them from starting, is that they don't have the knowledge to connect their activities with their social and environmental impacts. Or they don't know where to go for best practice information on addressing them. To overcome this it may be necessary to conduct some research, commission some assistance or join a relevant network. See the side bar for some initial sources of information.

Impact analysis and planning. It will be useful to identify the external concerns that may be most relevant to your organisation. Then identify key business policies, processes and activities and assess their social and environmental impacts (this could be included as part of existing risk management programmes). Once you know what these are, you can develop criteria to prioritise them, to plan the actions required and to allocate resources. The processes for managing these issues are no different from managing other business issues. The key is to think creatively and treat social and environmental responsibility as an investment.

"SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY NEEDS TO BECOME AN INTEGRAL PART OF AN ORGANISATION'S CULTURE."

Measurement and communication. Establishing systems for measuring, reviewing, reporting and communicating your organisation's CSR strategies and performance will be an important catalyst to improving and maintaining CSR performance (see also the article on metrics in Issue 3 of The Review: this is available on our website). There is a wide variety of indicators that can be selected to fit with your CSR goals. Indicators and measures can relate to, for example: community investments; environmental performance; market/brand performance; and internal measures (e.g. staff perceptions; health & safety; diversity).

Values. Social and environmental responsibility needs to become an integral part of an organisation's culture. The ultimate aim is to build a commitment to environmental and social issues into organisational values and into business and brand strategies.

CSR (despite the acronym!) can become a way of thinking and of working that can help organisations to improve their overall performance and to achieve lasting competitive advantage. However, beware approaching CSR superficially or as a "gimmick", this could do more damage than good. People will see through the "spin". CSR is what you do and measure and how you behave; not what you write and say.

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Staff surveys: improving performance and relationships

BY LISA HART AND BOB EMPSON



Some organisations are afraid of surveying staff opinions because they worry about what they will say. This article suggests that staff surveys not only provide vital information to improve performance but also help to strengthen the relationship with staff. Key techniques and implementation steps are summarised.

USES AND BENEFITS

Some of the many potential uses of staff surveys include:

- measuring staff satisfaction and morale and trust in the organisation;
- evaluating understanding of both the organisation's strategy and policies and of personal roles in implementing them;
- evaluating the brand (e.g. what staff think it stands for and the extent that they care about it, or asking new staff why they joined);
- getting feedback on key business processes, initiatives and projects (e.g. internal communications; training/development; IT systems);
- gathering ideas for improving the organisation's performance;
- profiling the workforce (e.g. to monitor progress against diversity goals).

Thus surveys can produce very valuable management information to help improve performance in a wide variety of areas. However, an added benefit can be improving the organisation's relationship with its staff. High performing organisations need to have a dialogue with customers to understand their needs and get their ideas for improving products and service. If staff (who really know how the organisation operates) are also treated like customers, with views being gathered in systematic and representative ways, the organisation's relationship with them can be improved because they are made to feel like valued and trusted partners.

TECHNIQUES

Some key survey techniques are summarised below (please note that there are detailed methodological issues relating to all these techniques; these summaries only touch on some of the issues that need to be considered):

Paper questionnaires. Self-completion paper questionnaires are probably the most common technique. They can include both multi-choice ("tick the box") and open-ended questions. Beware of off-the-shelf solutions: they need to be tailored to fit with your survey objectives and culture (e.g. language).

Web based questionnaires. These are increasingly popular. They can be very cost effective, particularly when responses automatically go in to a database enabling fast (even real-time) analysis.

Focus groups. It is useful to conduct some independently facilitated focus groups as a step in the design of paper and web questionnaires. They can also be an excellent method for gaining an in-depth understanding of views about certain issues.

Consultative forums. These tend to be on-going and regular rather than "one-off". They can be equivalent to works councils. Forums can either comprise staff and management representatives and/or they can be "open-house". Virtual forums on intranets are another methodology.

However, remember that surveys cannot replace direct, regular and open dialogue between an organisation's management and staff.

KEY STEPS

Senior management commitment. This is essential. Staff need to see that senior management are committed to surveys, particularly in terms of feedback and acting on results. Senior management also need to be closely involved in agreeing surveys' objectives and question areas.

Survey objectives. Write down why you are undertaking a survey and what you want to get out of it. This will help to avoid asking redundant questions.

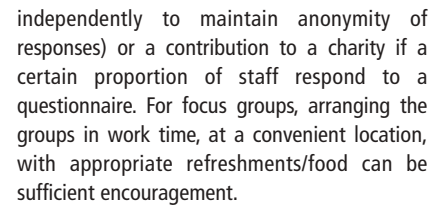
Staff involvement. Involve some staff representatives in the survey planning. This will help staff see that the survey has no hidden agendas and encourage full completion and high response rates. You will also benefit from getting ideas on, for example, the language to use in questions and on the practicalities of administering the survey.

Survey design. This step includes selecting the survey methodologies and designing the questionnaires. If the methodology involves using a structured questionnaire, it is very important to test it before applying it to the full survey.

Communication. It is vital that at the outset all staff understand why the survey is being undertaken. Staff need to witness senior management commitment to sharing results and taking action.

Confidentiality. Confidentiality of individual (and even small group) responses is essential. The involvement of an independent agency to conduct the survey and analyse the results can help to reassure people. There is evidence that some people are particularly worried about the confidentiality of web based surveys (consider having the survey hosted independently and/or offer a paper based option; staff can also be given personal access passwords to complete the survey).

Encouraging participation. You will want as many people as possible to respond to questionnaires and to participate willingly with other forms of research (e.g. focus groups). Key to this will be the extent to which the earlier steps have been considered and implemented. You should not have to give rewards to get people to participate; however, you might consider, for example, entering respondents into a prize draw (handled



independently to maintain anonymity of responses) or a contribution to a charity if a certain proportion of staff respond to a questionnaire. For focus groups, arranging the groups in work time, at a convenient location, with appropriate refreshments/food can be sufficient encouragement.

Analysis. Statistics from quantitative surveys can be produced quite inexpensively by some agencies. Paper questionnaires should be designed to facilitate automated processing. Statistical techniques can be used to understand patterns, trends and relationships within the data. You might also want to produce metrics (e.g. staff satisfaction) for ongoing monitoring or to benchmark results against other organisations. Remember that many (most!) people are more comfortable with graphs and graphics rather than numbers!

Action and follow-up. An action plan, addressing opportunities to improve performance, should be produced as soon as possible. Ideally staff should have some involvement in developing it. Senior management will also need to explain, where appropriate, why action is not being taken on certain issues that have been raised. The plan should include a programme of follow-up and review so that everyone knows how and when progress will be monitored.

Feedback. How and when results and actions will be communicated in the organisation should form part of the initial project plan; it should not be an afterthought. Typical methods include: a summary report; presentations by senior management; briefing managers/supervisors on the results so that they can discuss them with their own teams; and publishing details in internal publications and on intranets.

Staff surveys can provide another means of dialogue between and amongst staff and management. There are risks that if they are not undertaken well they can be quite damaging. However, the potential benefits are considerable, not just in terms of the information they produce but also in terms of the values and culture that they display and promote. Additionally, staff surveys can be valuable tools for enhancing the relationship with staff, thus contributing to improvements in satisfaction, motivation, retention and performance.

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Book Reviews

Very often when, as consultants, we first meet an organisation we are given a copy of a strategic plan produced a few years ago. Sometimes this is a tome. Sometimes it's just a few pages. But the complaint is usually the same: "we didn't implement". Agreed projects and actions had not been followed through. At the end of the day, strategy is not about the plan or the intent. It's about what gets done and it's about results. So here are two books about strategy that focus on effective implementation (or, more dramatically, execution!).

Execution. The Discipline of Getting Things Done

By Larry Bossidy & Ram Charan

Bossidy & Charan start with the thesis that execution is "not just something that does or doesn't get done" but that it is a discipline that includes a specific set of behaviours and techniques. They challenge that "the real problem is that execution just doesn't sound very sexy". They are probably right: we find that the part of strategy that energises people is the initial analysis, imaginative thinking and rigorous debate. Interest often wanes when its time to discuss the nitty gritty of what, how, when and who.

They offer three "Building Blocks" of execution:

- The leader's seven essential behaviours: there is good, practical stuff here, for example: set clear goals and priorities, reward the doers and follow through.
- Creating the framework for cultural change: helpful advice on how to change an organisation's culture to one that gets things done.
- Having the right people in the right place: "leaders focus intensely and relentlessly on people selection".

Then they describe three "Core Processes" of execution:

- The people process: "if you don't get the people process right, you will never fulfil the potential of your business".
- The strategy process: this part is perhaps a bit thin (although some readers may find the lists of building blocks and key questions helpful).
- The operations process: this addresses the common problem that firms have detailed budgets that are not connected with the reality of how they will be achieved.

If you are struggling with effective execution, you will undoubtedly get some valuable principles and practical ideas from this very good book.

OVERALL RATING 

Crown Business, 2002. \$27.50

The Art and Discipline of Strategic Leadership

By Mike Freedman with Benjamin B Tregoe

This is a book about strategy and leadership. However, its contents reflect the authors' belief that "discipline is essential" in not just the process of strategy development but also in its execution. Five of its fourteen chapters focus on implementation.

They don't claim that implementation is easy. Common pitfalls are highlighted:

- not getting started;
- a lack of commitment from some key stakeholders;
- losing focus ("strategic drift");
- misallocation of resources ("strategic dilution");
- weak integration of business processes;
- failure to measure and monitor;
- initiative fatigue;
- impatience;
- not celebrating success.

They suggest that "the root cause of these pervasive, troubling trends is a lack of discipline" and that the most important discipline is effective project management. They dedicate a full chapter to "Strategic Master Project Planning" which includes a particularly helpful discussion of how to identify strategic projects.

The best of the chapters about implementation is probably the one on communication. Communication is seen as an important driver for promoting ownership of the strategy throughout the organisation and for gaining feedback about it. Very helpful is the "Communications Matrix" model that can be used to structure an analysis of "who" needs to know "what" about the strategy. "Golden rules" of communicating strategy are offered, for example: "face-to-face is always better".

Whether you are new to strategy or a seasoned leader, there is no doubt that you will find value in this book. It successfully integrates the concepts of strategy formulation and implementation with leadership. Its focus on the practicalities and realities of implementation is what really makes it stand out. Excellent.

OVERALL RATING 

McGraw-Hill, 2003. £15.75 (Amazon)

WEB SITES

In this issue we focus on web sites offering maps. This is a reminder that spatial analysis and related decisions (e.g. in which geographical areas to develop business; where to locate outlets and offices; how to distribute efficiently) are frequently of strategic importance. Here are a handful of some of the more useful sites.

Multimap.com

www.multimap.com

In addition to free services such as a GB route finder and street maps and a global atlas, this site includes lots of chargeable services (e.g. traffic information and address search) and other facilities to find hotels, buy tickets and find historic photos. The aerial photos of GB are quite fun to look at!

OVERALL RATING 

Streetmap.co.uk

www.streetmap.co.uk

Very easy to use, fast and accurate street map finder; covers Great Britain. Searchable by postcode, street name, OS grid and even telephone number (but, oddly, when we inserted the White Maple telephone number, the site took us to the Houses of Parliament!).

OVERALL RATING 

Map24

www.map24.co.uk

Offers a variety of services for businesses (e.g. interactive maps on your web site so that customers can find the quickest route to your nearest branch). Includes a rather clever route finder. Street maps are not very detailed. Covers UK and other west European countries.

OVERALL RATING 

National Geographic

www.nationalgeographic.com/maps

A wide variety of maps are available for free (e.g. good Xpeditions Atlas and thematic maps). The MapMachine was not that easy to use and was quite slow. Pop-ups are annoying. Lots for teachers and kids too.

OVERALL RATING 

Maps.com

www.maps.com

The online maps seem to be rather basic. Irritating pop-up advertisements. However, some useful maps in the reference section; many are good for kids (e.g. the world's volcanoes and history maps). Lots for sale, including business services (mainly US related).

OVERALL RATING 

WHITE MAPLE NEWS

1%

White Maple Consulting has a commitment to donate at least 1% of net profits after tax to selected charities. For the financial year ending February 2003, donations have been sent to: The Alzheimer's Society; Macmillan Cancer Relief; and Save the Children. Clients during the year were invited to indicate how the fund should be allocated between the three charities.

FACILITATION CHECK LIST

One of our core services is designing and facilitating a wide range of management meetings, workshops and conferences. To help clients to plan these efficiently we have produced a "Meeting and Facilitation Check List".

This is available free on request to clients and readers of The Review. Please email us on info@whitemaple.net if you would like to be sent a copy.

THE REVIEW: INDEX

Issues 1 -3 of The Review (all available on our website in the resources section) have featured the following articles:

Issue 1 (Nov 2002):	Service recovery Coaching
Issue 2 (March 2003):	Leadership Strategy (SWOT analysis)
Issue 3 (July 2003):	Brand Metrics (performance measurement)