

5 TIPS FOR EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATING YOUR CSR STRATEGY

What is CSR communication and why is it important for a company?

1. Define a coherent and structured CSR communication plan
2. Involve your stakeholders in your CSR strategy
3. Choose the right tools and communication channels to promote your CSR commitment
4. Work with a responsible communication agency
5. Communicate your CSR policy through a solid charter and detailed report

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

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CSR Communication, Responsible and Ethical

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Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is now a real driver of growth and development. Therefore, communicating about your CSR actions and commitments is crucial. What are the best practices to follow when communicating about CSR actions? Big Media gives you 6 tips to implement for committed communication.

Effective CSR communication first involves disseminating the company's values, actions, and commitments in terms of social and environmental responsibility. CSR communication is essential, as it strengthens brand image, demonstrates transparency in company practices, and builds legitimacy with clients and consumers. The strategic impact of "sustainable" communication lies in its distribution to all parties involved, whether internal (employees, suppliers) or external (consumers, etc.). To avoid any suspicion of greenwashing, this communication must be carried out with sincerity, seriousness, and responsibility.

WHAT IS CSR COMMUNICATION AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR A COMPANY?

CSR communication consists of demonstrating transparency regarding commitments and practices related to sustainable development.

As consumer behavior evolves, CSR communication has become a priority within businesses. According to the 2022 barometer of the perception of corporate engagement by the Society and Consumption Observatory, 60% of the French people say that the environmental impact of a product or service has become a purchasing criterion. 42% are even willing to pay more for an environmentally friendly product.

To support the implementation of a good responsible marketing strategy, ADEME (the Agency for Ecological Transition) highlights three main areas in CSR communication:

- The first area is transparency, which involves providing clear and comprehensive information about the actions and commitments made in this area. This means open communication about practices, goals, and results, fostering trust with stakeholders.
- The second area is coherence. The company must ensure that its communication aligns with its actual CSR actions, avoiding greenwashing or any inconsistency between words and practices.
- Finally, the third area is commitment, which involves interactive and participatory communication with stakeholders to promote exchange, cooperation, and co-creation of CSR initiatives.

These three areas form a solid foundation for responsible, sustainable, and engaged communication that is both effective and authentic, though not always easy to implement.

¿WHERE TO START? ¿HOW? ¿WHY?

These are questions that can arise before announcing various CSR measures or positions. While there are many ways to approach ethical communication, here are some keys to getting the ball rolling.

1. Define a coherent and structured CSR communication plan

According to Bpifrance Le Lab, 90% of SME leaders are involved in CSR actions, but only 25% claim to have a medium- or long-term action plan. Planning actions is crucial for implementing a CSR approach and communicating effectively both internally and externally.

While it's natural to want to communicate about all positive actions, it's important to prioritize. This doesn't mean downplaying commitments, but rather asking the right questions based on intentions. For instance, if the goal is visibility, one must ask: Who is the target audience, and what do they mainly expect? All this should be considered and defined within a CSR strategy that answers the following questions:

- Why this project?
- What CSR objectives and topics to prioritize?
- For whom: what audience?
- What messages? By what means?
- Who: who is responsible for the CSR communication campaign? Who is responsible for each CSR action?
- When: what is the timeline for actions?
- How much: what budget is allocated?
- With what expected results: what are the measurement indicators?

All of this should be communicated in a clear, concrete, and factual manner, avoiding greenwashing and socialwashing.

2. Involve your stakeholders in your CSR strategy

To succeed in CSR communication, it is essential to engage and raise awareness among all internal and external stakeholders about CSR issues: clients, shareholders, suppliers, communication managers, top management, CSR committees, employee representatives, and employees.

According to a 2023 Odaxa study for Oracle, 92% of French people believe that CSR is a crucial issue, with 31% considering it a priority. Since an informed employee is an engaged employee, it is crucial to share the steps of this virtuous roadmap internally. This strategy has many advantages in terms of employer branding, boosting employee motivation and engagement, and retaining talent.

Some examples of internal CSR communication:

- Sharing “success stories” about employee engagement
- CSR training on eco-friendly practices such as waste sorting in the workplace
- Group workshops to involve employees in CSR-related discussions

3. Choose the right tools and communication channels to promote your CSR commitment

Just like the CSR communication plan, choosing the right formats for the right channels is essential. It's not enough to communicate about commitments; it needs to be done intelligently. The tools chosen should be adapted to the intended audience and communication objectives.

Being creative in informing about your CSR approach

- **Website:** The company's website is its storefront. It should be clear, user-friendly, and easy to navigate. Unlike minimalist communication, the website can provide detailed information about the company's CSR commitments.
- **Social media:** Integrating social media into the digital communication strategy is crucial. Choosing the right platforms helps maintain a direct link with consumers.
- **Print media:** Printed materials, though less common, can still be part of a CSR communication plan. Attention should be paid to the paper used, the quantities printed, and the suppliers involved.

4. Work with a responsible communication agency

Not everyone is an expert in communication. While many companies have an internal CSR communication manager, they can also turn to specialized responsible communication agencies. In France, there is a certification for agencies working on CSR projects called "RSE Agencias Activas," created in 2018 by the Communication Agencies Association and AFNOR Certification.

5. Communicate your CSR policy in a solid charter and detailed report

Having a strong CSR charter is essential. While it is not mandatory, it is fundamental. The charter should formalize the company's commitments in terms of ethics, environment, and social responsibility, forming the foundation for all CSR actions. The CSR report details actions, results, impacts, and commitments over a given period. This document helps ensure transparency and accountability to both internal and external stakeholders.

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