

“Make CSR efforts clear to see”, new paper tells businesses

Submitted by: BlueSky Public Relations Ltd

Thursday, 25 May 2023

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Companies need to place a stronger focus on coordination when implementing CSR, finds new research from ESSEC Business School.

Tommaso Ramus, Associate Professor at ESSEC, and his co-authors David Risi from University of St. Gallen, and Christopher Wickert from VU University aimed to uncover how organizational departments work together to implement CSR, drawing on a comparative case study involving seven large Swiss financial institutions with established CSR departments.

To get a clear idea of how CSR and functional departments collaborate, the researchers combined two different perspectives on CSR implementation, enactment and coordination.

Enactment is defined as a combination of strategies and structures aimed at promoting commitment to CSR and involving it in day-to-day activities. Coordination, unlike enactment, focuses on how the different departments can work together to implement CSR, but with little focus on the processes and structures involved in CSR actual implementation in daily activities.

The researchers derived six courses of actions required for CSR implementation, exploring both coordination and enactment. The courses of action were divided based on whether they were from functional departments, e.g.: HR and Finance, or CSR Departments, which are part of business operations.

While both CSR and functional departments influence the implementation of CSR, the research team examined how they work together.

Dr. Ramus and his colleagues interviewed members of CSR-specific and functional departments in order to get a deeper understanding of the companies and to learn how CSR documents and reports are presented internally.

From the literature, and Dr. Ramus and colleagues' own comparisons of enactment and coordination, they concluded that both approaches are necessary to ensure the smooth implementation of CSR. Dr. Ramus explains “We call this ‘coordinated enactment’, meaning a combination of strategies and processes to ensure the smooth implementation of CSR.” The strategies aim to promote commitment to CSR first, and then inclusion in day-to-day operations. They also ensure communication and coordination between departments.

Effective implementation of CSR requires that CSR departments progressively delegate the enactment of daily activities to functional department, keeping a coordination role that ensure the coherent implementation of the company's CSR strategy and its smooth integration in daily operations.

Dr. Ramus says “Companies face a lot of pressure to implement CSR, and then often receive criticism after it is implemented. Our research provides some insight on how to see more success in the

implementation of CSR.”

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If you would like to speak with Professor Ramus about his research or read the paper, please contact Georgina at BlueSky Education at georgina@bluesky-pr.com