

# 5 Principles that Will Convert Your CSR Plan into a Reality



In today's changing business environment, companies must adapt to a variety of needs and challenges in social, environmental and ethical areas. These emerge from the stakeholders with which they interact, such as customers, employees, consumers, ESG investors, regulators, the third sector, vendors, and the public at large [you can read more about this in our blog here](#)

How you respond to these challenges will affect your company's growth, reputation, business differentiation and employer branding.

## How can you do it?

There are five basic principles you should follow to support your first steps in defining and consolidating a CSR strategy and turning it into reality.

Let's first answer some questions:

- How do the needs of your company align with the needs of society and the environment?
- Are your core values reflected in your organizational culture and engagement with employees, vendors and customers?
- How are your reputation and loyalty manifested?
- What are CSR content areas that relate to your products and/or services?
- What kind of sector-wide collaborations can you engage in that are relevant and creative?
- How will your message, communications and measurement look like?

These and other questions will help you identify your organization's purpose, its key dimensions and how to reach your north star. They will help you tell your organization's story creatively and authentically in all channels.

## 5 Principles that will convert your csr plan into a reality



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### Company Purpose

start with the 'why', then the 'what' and then the 'how'.

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### The North Star

authenticity, relevance and priorities.

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### Baseline Standarts

where is your company in terms of CSR standards?

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### The Strategy

subject, concept and ecosystem

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### CSR Action

doing, telling and measuring

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## COMPANY PURPOSE

### Start with the 'why', then the 'what' and then the 'how'. What's your company's vision? What's its purpose? What value does it create?

Today, leading global companies and brands are constantly defining and redefining their purpose. Apart from making money and creating profit for their shareholders (which is the result), what is the 'why' that guides their business differentiation and positive impact on society?

Purpose is defined making statements like: "We exist to... and we do it uniquely by .... (the how), to have a positive impact on the environment and society at large."

Before developing the strategy and plan, you must define the purpose clearly, coherently and in direct connection with your company's business reality and capabilities. This lays the foundation for a dialog about your organization's culture, products and services. Most of the companies that lead a successful CSR effort today are driven by a clear purpose that is translated into their vision, mission and decision making, and they constantly adapt their purpose over time.

Here are some examples:

- **Happiness** – Coca Cola "celebrates moments of happiness"
- **Connections** – FedEx strives to develop mutually rewarding relationships with its team members, partners and suppliers, whereas Vodafone "connects for a better future"
- **Personal empowerment** – Unilever's Dove "celebrates the beauty of every woman, wherever they are"
- **Innovation and quality of life improvement** – Roche states that its solutions "do now what patients need next", and IKEA's brand purpose is "to create a better everyday life for the many people"

And there are many others like curiosity and creativity (LEGO), to name just another two.

The 'why' (purpose) is the seed, followed by the vision you want to reach. Only then comes the 'what' (the mission), and the tasks that will help you get there. All these move forward while preserving the 'how' (the values).

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## NORTH STAR

### authenticity, relevance and priorities.

Finding your north star is a strategic process that is imperative for building a CSR program. In other words, what social, environmental and ethical subjects should your company be involved in based on its needs, capabilities and stakeholders' priorities? How can these be positively leveraged to create value for both the company and its stakeholders over time?

This process requires adapting and synchronizing the objectives, values, needs and capabilities of several groups – management, the organization as a whole, and the stakeholders that directly and indirectly exercise an effect on the company (for example, employees, customers, the community, regulators, vendors, and others).

In more practical terms, this is where you create your CSR discovery map. This map is a matrix with all the subjects discussed during in-depth business surveys, focus groups, and feedbacks that enables you to prioritize the topics that will eventually become your organization's compass. Since resources are limited, it is imperative to concentrate on the few topics that will comprise the main skeleton.

For example, in its latest 2019 CSR report Intel indicated that in addition to their core subjects, they were focusing on matters like employee safety and health, energy efficiencies, diversity and inclusion, financial growth, business ethics, and climate impacts.

Remember! The more **authentic** and pertinent to the company's culture the result is, the more **relevant** it is to its commercial-social surroundings, the more it **relates** (directly or indirectly) to its values, products and services, and the more it will succeed in achieving its business objectives while fostering social, environmental and ethical values.

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## BASELINE STANDARDS

### where is your company in terms of CSR standards?

There are several international rating organizations that measure CSR, for example, GRI, Global Compact, SASB, SDGS, and CDP. In Israel, the leading one is [Maala](#), which is considered the Israeli standards-setting organization, annually publishing the Maala ESG Index on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange. Maala also serves as a 'hub' of the Israeli CSR community within Israel and represents Israel in global CSR and sustainability networks.

How do you make it to the index?

Complete a (voluntary) multiple-choice questionnaire about topics like diversity and inclusion, organizational ethics, safe and healthy work environment, social contribution, Community Involvement, transparency, and other topics. The questionnaire is used as a tool that enables companies to map gaps and define objectives for improvement compared to the standard in Israel and internationally. It also enables companies to 'package' their social-environmental activities into a properly communicated and well-designed strategic plan.

The questionnaire is updated every two years by a professional public committee, so that it covers all relevant areas as well as social-environmental trends that are expected to become standard in the future. These may include regulatory updates or advanced procedures and norms established by leading corporations in the economy.

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## THE STRATEGY

### subject, concept and ecosystem

This is the definition of a unique CSR strategy that comprises the material dimensions and selected objectives. Each subject chosen will be developed into short and long-term action plans that will also include their communications strategy (internal and external).

For example, if you select diversity and inclusion as core topics for your company, with an emphasis on promoting and helping people with disabilities, you must define also measurable objectives. These may include recruiting more employees with disabilities; making facilities, products and services more accessible; creating digital campaigns that raise awareness; making internal events that call employees to be more involved with communities and associations of people with disabilities; creating a community of employees with disabilities; changing the procurement policy to encourage purchases from diverse vendors; organizing innovative events that solve problems and challenges among this population, and more.

Internal and external partners

Before executing the program, it is important to identify and adapt the ecosystem so that it provides an environment conducive to success (win-win).

What are the target populations and what are the personas within those groups? Which are the social organizations involved with CSR? Government ministries and local authorities? Commercial companies? Cross-segment collaborations will create in-depth relationships that are both essential and valuable.

Internal partners – it is also imperative to make sure that managers and employees are motivated to participate in the process. Managers, teams and 'CSR coordinators' will become impact ambassadors that will lead the activities and will promote brand in and outside the company.

Brand-marketing concept

The strategy requires defining marketing objectives, slogans, creative concepts, tactical action plans and messages that differentiate and reflect the values of a company and its target audiences.

Public relations and communications reflect the true work of the company in the field, not the other way around. One of the most common mistakes companies make is to build a communications program that is not aligned with their reality. This leads to the opposite effect, damaging the company's image, reputation and brand's growth over time.

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## CSR ACTION

### doing, telling and measuring

The business sector can be divided into several groups – those who walk and don't talk, those who walk and 'almost' don't talk, those that 'almost' don't walk and don't talk, and those that walk the talk.

An effective, significant and valuable CSR program requires 360-degree commitment and activities involving consolidation campaigns that cover internal communications, content events, social/environmental/ethical initiatives, and promotion in digital channels and social media.

The more authentic, creative and effective the campaign, the higher the impact on and value for stakeholders, and the higher the measure of the company's reputation and growth.

Measuring impact

To ensure the CSR plan is effective and of the highest quality, you must closely measure it using digital and other tools, from internal communication to marketing to widespread campaigns. Effectiveness is measured by asking questions like the following:

- Did the campaign achieve the desired exposure among the target interested audiences?
- Is there a well-founded increase in the company's reliability and reputation?
- Do your posts and ads call to actions?
- Does the sense of belonging and satisfaction of employees increase?

All these and many others are KPIs that should be weighted and analyzed in real time so that the CSR strategy is constantly improved and optimized.

## To sum up,

The perfect combination of objectives, values and capabilities, and the effective implementation of the above principles will enable your company and many others to grow and create authentic CSR strategies that lead to optimum results.