



Institute for Social  
Innovation



## **The influence of CSR on people management: good practices**

Extract ESADE STUDY: Influence of CSR on people management, good practices.  
CARLOS CORTES / IGNASI CARRERAS, 2019.

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AUTHORS  
CARLOS CORTÉS  
IGNASI CARRERAS

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AUTHORS

Carlos Cortés  
Ignasi Carreras

DESIGN

Vänster and Lei  
[www.vansterandlei.com](http://www.vansterandlei.com)

CREDITS

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## Introduction

## What is this study for

The main objectives of this research are **to analyse and disseminate the impact of the principles and actions of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the policies and practices of people management and, at the same time, how they contribute to the responsible management of companies.**

Through CSR, companies seek to surpass the minimums established by law, with the aim of providing added value from social commitment and with the environment. In this study, we want to reveal what direct benefits this commitment entails for the teams in their motivation, in their productivity, in the improvement of the work environment and even in their own sense of belonging to the company.

With this study, we intend to provide a mixed and not highly explored perspective of two realities that, independently, are already well known and have important elements in common, as we will see later. Therefore, we seek **a fundamentally practical approach in which the analysis we offer serves as a map for the service of taking managerial decisions.** The objective is clear: to provide people with responsibility and leadership in this area of relevant information to generate new initiatives or overcome obstacles, based on an analysis of good practices, with their learning and challenges. In this way, they will have relevant questions and useful solutions to multiply the impact of their policies, both for CSR and for people management.

From this double perspective, we hope to be able to identify new ways of addressing these policies, so that CSR and Human Resources can jointly bring greater value to the company and society. The commitment and sense of belonging of the workforce will be reinforced, no doubt, when both visions connect. **It is not about doing more, but better, and going further, configuring specific double-dimension programs that share the purpose of the company's initiatives.** We propose a different approach to a reality that until now has been interpreted from a single approach.

To this end, this analysis seeks to answer the following questions, among others: How can people management policies benefit from the CSR actions of companies? What is the current picture in the combination of both visions? What references can we find? What lessons do we draw from best practices? What challenges do we still have to face? What role does leadership play within companies that want to change their way of working and, where appropriate, how should they adapt to achieve it?

We hope that this study will serve as a guide to answer these questions and, above all, to open a path for new and different ones.

## METHODOLOGY

The methodology used to develop this study was the following:

1. Initial analysis of the state of the issue of CSR policies in connection with those of people management, from current practices and new trends.
2. Identification of four cases of good practices of companies in different areas of CSR connected with people management. For this, it was important that these cases present:
  - A high correlation between their value as a CSR action and their effect on talent management and team motivation.
  - Multiplicity of perspectives, such as disability, reconciliation, diversity, skills development or health in the company.
3. Deepening in each of these cases through personal interviews with their protagonists.
4. Dynamization of a focus group to share these practices and extract common learning for all cases.
5. Interviews with experts to compare the results obtained.
6. Disclosure of results.

Executive Summary

## Objective of the Study

The main objective of this research is **to analyse the influence of the principles and actions of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in its policies and practices of people management**. The best version of this connection is what we call ***responsible people management***.

## CSR and people management: confluences

The legislation clearly shows this alignment, in which *“the responsible management of human resources and the promotion of employment”* is one of the ten lines of action of the Spanish Strategy 2014-2020 on CSR. This parallelism is specified in the concrete measures proposed by this strategy, such as the promotion of hiring, training, diversity, health, equality or reconciliation policies. Along these same lines, and under Law 11/2018, some companies will be required to publish their non-financial information statement. The new legislation requires that they provide not only information related to environmental, sustainability or human rights issues, but also indicators *“on social and personnel issues”*, thus strengthening the connection of CSR with aspects of people management in the organisations. On a global scale, this recent regulation falls, as indicated in its preamble, within the legislative framework of the European Union and other international organizations, such as the Global Compact or the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Now, the true confluence between CSR and people management is strongly evidenced in its basic principles and is operatively articulated through some common axes:

- ✓ As a shared principle, **both CSR and people management try to surpass the legal minimums**. CSR is committed to social commitment and sustainability, beyond what is legally required. For its part, people management aims to create the best possible work environment through its commitment to a culture that promotes motivation, the development of talent, the improvement of the work environment and, above all, the promotion of the sense of belonging to the company.
- ✓ The people who work in each company constitute the main interest group for the social dimension of CSR. Thus, both views coincide in **placing employees at the centre of their policies**.
- ✓ Among the new trends in people management, talent management requires facilitating, in addition to the job, the development of skills and the career journey, continuing education, work flexibility, an environment favourable to physical and emotional health, diversity in teams and new more agile organizational models. Many of the practices analysed in this study share a common element: **CSR is present in the generation of a corporate culture and strategy that gives a better response to these more advanced people management policies**.
- ✓ Increasingly, when it comes to joining or staying in a company, people place value on it demonstrating its commitment to society and the environment, and that it reflects an effective culture of equality, diversity and transparency. In this way, **the ethics of the company and its corporate reputation and identity, which CSR largely deals with, become an asset and a benchmark for attracting and retaining talent**.
- ✓ Finally, CSR is also decisive when addressing the dilemmas that sometimes arise between people management and business requirements. The way in which the company articulates these interactions between CSR and people management, through an **appropriate organisational model** that facilitates strategic decision-making and, above all, the **effective leadership** to carry them out, is key so that both visions offer the best of each. **Responsible people management requires responsible leadership**.

In short, thanks to this binomial, social responsibility practices play a very relevant and effective role in achieving the desired commitment of the employee to the company (“engagement”). Because of its ability to offer a purpose, to treasure corporate ethics and offer a work environment that is worth belonging to, **CSR guarantees effective and responsible people management**.

## Analysis of good practices

We have identified **seven practices in which the value of CSR is evident in responding to and meeting the challenges in talent management**. Four of them are analysed in more detail as examples of **good practices of companies that have taken advantage of synergies between CSR and people management**.

**Practice 1**  
**Reconciliation and flexibility policies**

This responds to the need to generate a more favourable work environment in which flexibility is a value for productivity, as well as to create an attractive employer brand that invites people to come and stay.

**GOOD PRACTICE ANALYSED**

This is **Calidad Pascual**, the first case analysed, in which the advantages and challenges of this type of policies in this company are explored. The path taken by the company in terms of reconciliation and flexibility is a good example of the consideration of employees as a key interest group in the CSR strategy, to ensure that the people management area implements its strategy aligned with more strength and from the cross-cutting framework provided by CSR.

**Practice 2**  
**Incorporation and development of people in vulnerable situations**

The responsible management of people, through the inclusion of groups in vulnerable situations, allows us to take advantage of this practice as a tool for attracting and developing the skills required by the company, while reflecting the company's ethics due to its social commitment.

**GOOD PRACTICE ANALYSED**

In the second case, related to **ISS Facility Services**, a practice for the group of people with different abilities is described. In this example, the principle of transcending the legal minimum in hiring people with disabilities is evidenced in order to achieve their effective integration into the workforce.

**Practice 3**  
**Development of skills to contribute to the common good**

Social commitment acts as the engine of corporate culture and its identity, favours the development of talent through training of skills in different contexts than usual and reinforces the identification with the company's project.

**GOOD PRACTICE ANALYSED**

The third case analysed, **BASF Spain**, presents a specialized corporate volunteering initiative and its benefits with regards to the employee's commitment and motivation, based on a real experience fostered by the company.

**Practice 4**  
**Preventive policies and policies for care of physical and emotional health**

The main objective of this practice is to create a healthy working environment in the company, in its broadest sense, which encompasses both physical and emotional health.

**GOOD PRACTICE ANALYSED**

In the fourth case analysed, **Henkel España**, numerous health initiatives are presented, which are grouped together with the overall objective of consolidating a healthy company culture.

**Practice 5**  
**Diversity promotion policies**

Diversity in the company inspires, as a value, corporate culture and identity, and allows us, in practice, to incorporate and combine different skills by age, gender, culture, abilities or different profiles, with the consequent improvement in productivity.

**Practice 6**  
**Training in personal and professional skills**

Having strategic training plans will be a key factor in attracting and retaining talent, as a compensation tool and due to the intrinsic motivation of seeking development and career paths.

**Practice 7**  
**Responsible dismissal**

The design of succession plans, the accompaniment of people who leave the company (outplacement) and the care of those who remain are inseparably linked to responsibility and ethics. It is a clear proof of the need to go beyond what is required by law and be careful when defining when people management ends.

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The practices that combine CSR and people management can present different **levels of interaction**: operate independently, influence each other (programs that are born from one perspective and have a positive impact on the other) or be strategically aligned (although later their execution corresponds to only one of the two areas). These levels are dynamic and, in the same program, their degree of correlation can rise to the strategic level, provided that specific actions are taken.

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From a more operational level, the area of people management can assume different **roles with respect to CSR**: from the most relevant strategic partner, such as a promoter of CSR programmes or a promoter of the culture of responsible management to the tools of people management, or play a mere supporting role, for example by carrying out measurement and reporting actions.

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## List of conclusions

Our **conclusions for achieving responsible people management** in companies are as follows:

- To incorporate responsible people management into the company's global strategy.
- To promote and consolidate a "responsible leadership" style.
- To learn how to generate and keep alive a culture of responsibility.
- To articulate effective mechanisms for listening to and involving stakeholders.
- Know how to create added value throughout the entire management chain of the company.
- To have an organisational structure that ensures adequate interaction between CSR and people management, and with the other areas of the company.
- To set objectives and goals, in the medium and long term, in terms of responsible people management, accompanied by a system of metrics for monitoring them.
- To make use of the interaction between CSR and people management.
- To define priorities and a sequence for the development of a responsible people management agenda.
- To achieve the crystallization of integration between CSR and people management: **responsible people management.**

ESADE  
Ramon Llull University  
Institute of Social Innovation

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**CAMPUS BARCELONA  
SANT CUGAT**

Av. Torreblanca, 59  
08172 Sant Cugat del Vallès  
Barcelona (Spain)  
Tel. +34 932 806 162

innovacionsocial@esade.edu  
www.innovacionsocial.esade.edu  
www.esade.edu

**ISS FACILITY SERVICES**

MADRID  
C. Obenque, 2  
28042 Madrid (Spain)  
Tel. +34 914 842 400

SANT CUGAT DEL VALLÈS  
C. Jesús Serra Santamans, 7  
08174 Sant Cugat del Vallès (Spain)  
Tel. +34 935 903 060

info@es.issworld.com  
www.es.issworld.com