

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN THE CASE OF GOOD PRACTICE- CPM d. d. (Road Building Firm Maribor)

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Abstract: Nowadays firms must not only be economically viable and efficient, but also socially responsible. There is a growing awareness that is a strong connection between a successful business and a responsible one. This strategy is pursued by Road Company Maribor - CPM d.d., which recognizes the importance of a responsible and environmentally friendly business. Therefore, it has incorporated this issue into its long-term business strategy and its day to day business processes. It has focused mainly on recycling and separating waste, saving energy and delivering packaging waste to the company SloPak d.o.o.. CSR is a relatively new concept. However, its importance is steadily increasing, because the public is becoming more aware of it. CPM d.d. is aware of that and therefore incorporates all aspects of social responsibility (environmental, social, economic) into its business strategy. **Keywords:** *Corporate Social Responsibility, safe and healthy environment, competitiveness, reputation of the company, sustainable development*

Povzetek: Danes morajo biti podjetja ne samo ekonomsko uspešna in učinkovita, temveč tudi družbeno odgovorna. Vedno bolj se utrjuje zavedanje, da sta dobro in odgovorno poslovanje zelo povezana. To strategijo zasleduje tudi Cestno podjetje Maribor – CPM d.d., ki se zaveda pomena odgovornega in okolju prijaznega poslovanja. V ta namen so skrb za okolje vključili v svojo dolgoročno poslovno strategijo in vsakodnevne poslovne procese. Osredotočili so se predvsem na področje recikliranja in ločevanja odpadkov, varčevanje z energijo in oddajanje odpadne embalaže podjetju SloPak d.o.o. Družbena odgovornost podjetij je relativno nov pojem. Vendar se njegov pomen vztrajno povečuje, saj postaja javnost vse bolj osveščena. Tega se zaveda tudi CPM d.d., ki v svoje poslovne strategije vključuje vse vidike družbene odgovornosti (okoljevarstveni, socialni, ekonomski).

Ključne besede: *družbena odgovornost podjetja, varno in zdravo okolje, konkurenčnost, ugled podjetja, trajnostni razvoj*

1. Introduction

Nowadays firms are expected to run their businesses responsibly and with a detailed insight into it. Consumers, shareholders and financial environment, employees, business partners, government, social community and non-governmental organizations, in short various stakeholders, demand a clear explanation about the firm's impact on its social and natural environment and to report about the effort to reduce it. The number of firms which have used an individual approach of bringing corporate social responsibility (CSR) to effect, by changing their codes, business practices and ethics, is increasing. In this way many firms go beyond merely making profit. They try to put their effort in minimizing negative impacts they have on social and natural environment and to follow the obligatory regulations.

The company CPM d.d. (further mentioned as CPM) is one of the largest civil construction firms in Slovenia, therefore its business efficiency is very important for Slovene economy. As concluded later in the paper, big and successful firms, such as CPM, are more aware of their SR. CPM is aware of its CSR; it puts effort in satisfying the needs of its consumers, employees, suppliers and community. However, conducting business socially responsibly, as a technical term for all activities which ensure a firm's economic efficiency by incorporating social and environmental factors into business practice, is only beginning to be put into force in Slovenia.

In this paper I will briefly describe CSR, which I will furthermore explain with an example of good practice, namely with the example of CPM. I will describe CPM's practice, its past and present activities connected with CSR, as well as the firm's collaboration with its members. I will try to find out, to what extent CPM is seeking solutions for environmental problems and if it collaborates with the local community.

2. The concept of corporate social responsibility

As written on the website of the Center for CSR Nova, the concept of CSR of firms has been developing for over fifty years, but there is still no unified definition to describe it, mostly because it covers three extensive fields: environment, economy and society. The concept of CSR is very broad and a firm cannot dedicate its efforts to all fields. It would be ineffective. Every firm has to concentrate on those fields which are important and crucial for it. Cooper, Vargas (2004) and Brandon, Lombardi (2005) defined CSR, in the broadest sense, as humankind's responsibility to achieve common goals of the society. The European Commission defined the CSR as a concept, which is a jumping board for firms to voluntarily integrate their care for the society and the environment into their daily business practices and cooperation with their members (COM 347 final, Brussels, 2002, page 5).

In general a firm has to know and understand its business environment and has to conduct its business wisely, taking into account all members, not only the owners, which was a common practice in the past. The most important question which consequently arises is, whether a firm merely acts socially responsibly to promote its image or is it in fact aware, that it is a part of its social and natural environment, which cannot be exploited any longer.

2.1. Environmental responsibility as a part of the system of handling with the environment

In recent years the environmental issues have been becoming a burning problem of every developed country, because the society is not aware enough of the importance a clean environment has for human lives.

With the society's development humans have taken nature for granted, as something which was given to us and can be exploited. However, we are gravely mistaken. In the last few decades nature has been giving us signs that our actions are leaving consequences and we have to stop with our doing.

Humans are an important part of nature. Exploitation of nature has a negative effect on our health, our quality of life and the survival of other organisms that the nature needs, and so do we. We exploit nature by using natural resources, polluting the environment, constructing and using new buildings and manufacturing and consuming goods. On the basis of previously mentioned facts the environment is a topic, about which we have a lot to learn, but also a subject of contrary views on how to deal with the current situation.

The environmental politics and legislation have changed in the direction of a long-term development. They demand a firm to change its management method and strategies. The purpose of preserving the environment is to stimulate such forms of social development, which will provide long-term conditions for a good and healthy life. To achieve this goal, first we have to set goals which will help us to bring into effect the environment-preserving-policy. These goals are:

- To prevent and reduce the exploitation of human's natural environment,
- To preserve and constantly improve the quality of the human's natural environment,
- To exploit natural resources slowly and in small amounts,
- To lower the usage of electrical power and simultaneously increase the usage of renewable energy,
- To reduce the consequences of environmental exploitation, to improve the destroyed natural balance and to restore environmental capacities,
- To improve the efficiency of production and consumption, simultaneously also to lower the usage of natural resources and the replacement of natural resources.

To achieve these goals we must stimulate production and consumption with only minimum effects on the natural environment. We also have to use such technology that will reduce or even put an end to environmental exploitation.

The care for her natural environment is task of every country and firm and they have to be aware of it. If a country takes care of the environment and stimulates this care, it is more likely that firms will follow this example and act with SR and take care of their environment (Ploštajner: 2005, 28-31). In recent years the role of standards linked with the environment preservation has received special attention. More and more regulations direct us to fulfill the demands of the standards: that makes the line between the role of standards and the role of legislation a bit blurry.

Standardization and legislation are two different instruments which supplement each other in solving the environmental issues; however, the use of standards is more suitable for solving complicated technical issues. It is important to emphasize that following standards, which are directed by regulations, is optional. Firms are allowed to freely choose among those technical methods which allow them to operate according to basic legislative requirements. The advantage of standards is that they offer technical support and directives, which help a firm to correctly follow requirements of the legislation. The verification of uniformity of standards provides an assurance to firms and to interested public that each individual regulation has been carried out correctly.

Certainly one of the most generally known standards in the field of environment is ISO standard 14001 about the systems of managing the environment. As already the title of the standard tells, this standard offers firms a management scheme which enables them to systematically conduct environmentally friendlier business in accordance with the legislation and supplementary demands of consumers.

Since 1997 there were 351 firms in Slovenia to receive the certificate of fulfilling the ISO standard 14001 requirements. In 2004 the first version of the ISO standard 14001 from 1996 was supplemented. At this moment 305 Slovene firms have a valid certificate, which means that their system of managing the environment is in accordance with the ISO standard 14001:2004.

At the same time as the ISO 14001 was being drafted, the European Commission was pondering over more or less obligatory systems of environmental management in industry. Their final decision was a scheme of voluntary collaboration, which was formally prescribed with the order n.:1836/93. Although the collaboration of firms in this scheme is voluntary, the orders of the scheme for EU members are obligatory and valid in the entire EU region. Just like ISO 14001, the European order was changed and supplemented. Currently valid order EC n.:761/2001 contains 18 articles and 8 annexes. In contrast with other systematic standards, in which annexes are written more or less to inform, the annexes of this order are obligatory.

2.2. The role of corporate social responsibility in Slovenia

A couple of years ago there has not been any talk about CSR in Slovenia. Actually, it was an unknown concept to many people, only a few firms were willing to incorporate CSR into their business practices. In 2001 the European Union, with its Green Paper, stimulated the growing endeavors of EU members to develop CSR. Thus many events have taken place in recent years in Slovenia and also the first Slovene expert, Urška Golob, was granted her doctorate in CSR. In 2005 the Slovene government established a working group, with common resources, active in this field, and at the end of 2005 it has released a report about the policy of CSR in Slovene firms.

Knez-Riedel (2002) summarized the results of her study on CSR in small and medium-sized Slovene firms. Internal members of the firms were not included in her study, only the relations of those firms to their social environment. Out of 1153 firms included in the sample of the study 66.7 % are active concerning CSR which exceeds the European average of 49 %. Among the activities **the preceding is sport, followed by culture, education and professional qualification**. This means that charity has been over-stressed.

The Slovene public, management and state institutions have not managed to unite their contrary views on CSR of firms, although there is a growing interest in it in the written and spoken media. The arising problem is also, that a SR firm is not necessarily awarded for its efforts, because the public is mainly concentrated on the disputable business practices. One of the problems is that voluntariness, as the fundamental principal of CSR, which reaches beyond regulations, is not given enough importance. Many international institutions stress voluntariness and many people contradict the propositions, that a firm is obliged to report about its functions. Thus, they refuse CSR, actually.

2.3. Views on CSR in Slovenia

Based on several cases, Galjot (2004) claims, that Slovenia does not fall behind other European countries. His main source is a research carried out in 19 countries in 2001 with a standardized questionnaire and sent via mail. On the contrary, Kšela (2006) quotes Dušan Semolič who calls our attention to the fact that “CSR” is not present in Slovenia. While the most developed European countries have a rich and long tradition of CSR, we on the other hand do not.

Also Zupan and Jamšek agree with Galjot. They both believe that Slovene firms are as socially responsible as other European firms. At the same time they emphasize the importance of job security and education of employees. Moreover, Jamšek states, that although there are no differences between Slovene and European firms on the level of their mode, there are differences in financial resources, which disable Slovene firms to introduce the necessary measures. Slovene research shows the increase of CSR in Slovene firms. 60 % of small and medium-sized firms carry out different SR projects outside the firm, which is some 50 % more than elsewhere in Europe (Polajnar, 2004, 48).

There are different views on CSR-situation in Slovenia. On one hand there are those who believe that Slovene firms are aware of CSR and carry out successfully suitable projects. On the other side there are those who believe, that Slovene firms are not aware enough of CSR. The fact is, that many Slovene firms devote their resources to donations and sponsorships, which are the most visible and frequent forms of CSR, and some of them are even aware of their environmental responsibility. The public is not familiar with other forms of CSR, the internal forms of CSR. Even the firms themselves are not aware, that some activities are a reflection of CSR. They obviously believe, that taking care of health care and workplace safety as well as assuring other benefits of employees is not necessary, which is probably connected with prejudices about the socialist past of Slovenia.

2.4. Practical aspect

Sponsorship of sports and cultural activities and ecological awareness are the most frequent forms of CSR in practice. Only few firms are concerned with their so called internal CSR, which is their responsibility to the employees (Green paper, 2001, page 8). Nowadays however, only sponsorships and donations are not enough to help the local community (Drevenšek, 2004, page 49).

Consequently the question arises: “Are sponsorships and donations are still a form of CSR?”

It is probably only wishful thinking to believe, that a firm which sponsors or donates to an institution, a person or an activity does not expect something in return, that this is just a way of showing solidarity and kindness. In both cases the truth is, that it is a well considered and planned action, which helps the firm to promote itself in the media as a socially responsible and socially aware firm.

2.5. CSR in the case of financial crisis

Most Slovene firms have never felt the effect of a crisis till now. The first question which arises is: ***Can a firm afford to act socially responsibly?*** Experts claim that we should be asking ourselves: ***Can a firm afford not to act socially responsibly?*** Krajnc Kušlan (2008), from the institute Ekvilib, says, that time will show which firms are socially responsible only to promote themselves and which have incorporated CSR into their strategies. He also believes, that those firms which ask themselves the first question, do not understand the fundamental principle of CSR (Finance, 2008).

Firms that understand CSR as a philanthropic activity and a form of sponsorship, which is the most common but unfortunately false practice of most firms, will most probably be less SR in the future. Those firms which really understand CSR and use it as a part of good business practice, as a part of business strategy and as a part of a plan to establish a good, ethical and long-term successful relationship with their members, have nothing to worry about.

According to the existing mode of firms’ management, which emphasizes knowledge, ability, creativeness, motivation and loyalty of employees, in this critical times the management is expected to retain good relations with its employees and to enforce even more the conclusions of contemporary business sciences which state, that an efficient human capital is a key advantage on the competitive market (Bakovnik, 2009).

Knez Riedl (2008) writes, that the financial crisis and recession also signal something else, namely, that it is not enough to claim only CSR from firms. It is more crucial to claim CSR from others, profitable and non-profitable, governmental and non-governmental organizations and also from other groups (e.g. employees, ...) and educational (*curriculum*) and research (*research methods and project contents*) institutions.

Restraining conditions could help to put the theories about CSR into action. Krajnc Kušlan says, that now, in the time of crisis, the firms will have to reconsider their status and to research the environment again, if they want to become or remain successful.

2.6. CSR in relation with the local community

A good relationship with the local community is closely linked with the CSR of a firm. Related activities are not merely a matter of altruism, but can contribute to mutual benefits for the society as well as the firm. The best example of CSR is a firm which is active in its community and strives not only for its profit, but for a common profit of the society. Collaboration with the community creates trust, support and recognition, which are essential for a successful business practice.

2.7. Inconsistent concept of CSR

The concept of CSR has always been inconsistent. Some firms which deserve recognition for their socially responsible business practices, sometimes do not receive it however on the other hand, the representatives of different public groups sometimes exaggerate with their concerns about disputable business practices of a firm, whose managers do not find anything controversial in their practices. The biggest problem and target of harshest criticism of theories on CSR is:

How to evaluate the CSR? The analysis, from an economic point of view, is hindered by the prevailing so called ‘soft factors’. Criteria for evaluating CSR are currently being formed (Urbanija, 2006).

The main element of CSR is the responsibility of a firm for its actions which affect people, their community and their environment. Therefore the negative effects have to be investigated and defined in order to find the solutions on how to reduce or even stop them. This can also mean, that a firm will have to some extent ignore the loss of profit. Precisely this loss of profit, as a reflection of CSR, is harshly criticized. If a firm decides to invest in environmentally friendly production technologies, to assure benefits for the employees and the local community, this consequently increases the prices of their products or services and that firm is therefore less competitive on the market (Drevenšek, 2005, 5). On the other hand, it prevents health-related expenditures from growing.

2.8. CSR of a firm as a consequence of a successful business practice

Whether CSR is an important factor of a firm’s business efficiency, depends on the nature of that firm, its work characteristics, geographical position and social awareness. CSR is less influential on the business efficiency of a firm, when a firm’s products/services are not directly connected with the consumers. The influence is also smaller, when a firm operates in an environment, where the awareness of CSR is not yet generally accepted. And vice versa, CSR of a firm has a greater effect on the business efficiency in those regions, where its members, mainly non-governmental organizations and consumers, are aware of the effect that a firm has on the society and the environment and expect from the firms to take an active part in solving social and environmental issues.

2.9. The future

In the future firms will not have to differentiate themselves based on the prices or technological innovations, because the rapidity of price and innovation policies is impossible to follow. They will differentiate themselves in the fields such as corporate identity and integrity, corporate impression, ethics and in their relations to the local communities. Firms, which will have the interest to gain competitive advantage, will have to focus on their reputation which consequently leads to permanent consumers (Adkins, 1999, page 26).

The concept of CSR of firms is closely linked with the reputation of a firm, because a good reputation of a firm is a result of pleasing its members, also those, who demand bigger investments in society. A good reputation of a firm enables them to set higher prices, to have a better access to capital markets and to gain interest of investors. A firm’s reputation is linked with the awareness of its own trademark, which helps the firm to make its trademark better than other rival businesses. Therefore, reputation can gain or lose the competitive advantage of a firm. For a good reputation a firm has to strive for several years; however, it can lose it in several seconds.

3. Example of good practice – CPM d.d. Company (further mentioned as CPM)

3.1. Presentation of CPM

CPM a road building firm (table 1) has operated successfully on Slovene and foreign markets for more than 45 years.

Table 1: General data about CPM

Name of the Company	Cestno podjetje Maribor d.d. Company for Building and Maintenance of Roads d.d.
Abbreviated Name	CPM d.d.
Address	Iztok Street 30, 2000 Maribor, Slovenia
Website	www.cpm.si
Organization	Joint-stock Company
Register Number	5143578
Activity Number	45230
Entry in the Court’s Register	County Court Maribor, register number:10018900
Available Capital	2.123.360,04
Company’s Manager	MojcaZapušek, B.A. (law)

Source: www.cpm.si

3.2. Constructional activities

- We construct roads, buildings, bridges, viaducts, tunnels and water plants,
- We perform reconstructions,
- We build railways, parking lots, bike lanes, sports grounds and canalization, and offer sanitation work (e.g. in case of a landslide),
- We take care of the environment around the purifying plants, gas stations, railway-crossings and along the railways,
- We build highways, main roads, regional roads and local roads for different customers, corporations and individuals (Source: www.cpm.si)

3.3. Milestones in development (Source: cpm.si)

- Once ...

CPM was founded on 8 Dec. 1961 in accordance with the Law of Open Roads, but its roots go back in the year 1946, when the Road Administration Board was founded, as a part of the Road Board, with administration boards in Ljubljana, Maribor, Celje and Novo mesto.

- Now ...

With more than 45 years of experience, good quality, recognizable development, constant learning, employee qualification and motivation, contemporary technological equipment, successful business practices, efficient supervision and with taking into account the safety and environment protecting norms, our consumers and users have confirmed us as a trustworthy partner.

3.4. Policy of a well-functioning company (CPM Company)(Source: www.cpm.si)

- *Our mission*

To please our consumers and users with our services and products that consequently leads to satisfied members of our company and our society.

- *Our Goals and Strategies*

We strive for a long-term stability and a profitable business, which enables us to further develop our firm: introduction of new activities, expansion to new markets and satisfaction of employees, consumers and owners. We would like to become number-one-choice of every consumer. We conduct our business processes efficiently and adapt to each project. Efficiency, reliability, adaptation and environmental responsibility are the key values of our company. We achieve our goals, which we set in our annual plan, to master all processes and to follow our strategy.

- *Our Environment*

The management strives to improve technological processes, to decrease the negative effects on the environment, to decrease the usage of energy, to replace dangerous materials with environmentally friendly materials, to properly dispose the waste.

Special attention is given to avoiding the use of health threatening materials and to an effective usage of materials, raw materials and energy.

- *Our Values*

We, the employees and the workers who work for CPM are equally responsible for the efficiency of our work and for a suitable attitude towards our environment. Our value is to satisfy the needs of consumers, employees, business partners, our social environment and owners. We emphasize our care to satisfying the interests of all members of the firm, especially the interests of consumers; the progress of a long-term relationship with our social environment; and environment preservation; properly qualified, motivated and creative employees; constant learning; efficient management and creating profit for the owners. We must follow the legislative and other requirements by all activities.

3.5. Certificates: SIST ISO 9001:2008 and SIST ISO 14001: 2004

CPM was one of the first Slovene companies in the branch of civil engineering to receive the quality certificate (in 1999) and thus proved that we master the whole business system in accordance with the ISO 9001 standard, which includes different phases: the responsibility towards management, development, marketing, procurement, production, supervision, sale and dispatching.

In 2000 we had upgraded our certificated system of quality, in accordance with ISO 9001 standard, with a certified system of environmental responsibility, in accordance with ISO 14001 standard. This proves that we take care of the business and social environments actively. CPM expects every employee to cooperate in carrying out the principles and values of environmental preservation.

3.6. Corporate social responsibility of CPM

We, the employees of CPM, believe that the company's business success is based on a rational management, a constant development and awareness of how important are our natural and social environments. For this reason we follow the principle that a company is more efficient in the long term, if it incorporates environmental awareness, non-polluting technologies and ecologically friendly products into its own development. We also strive to improve our business practices by taking into account the environmental aspects, to improve our rational management and reasonable usage of energy, raw materials and other natural sources.

We strive to create a balanced business environment, satisfied employees and a successful, well-organized working environment. The development of an organized employee-friendly system consequently creates a better relationship with business and social environments. We put special efforts on the development of our local community, in which our company operates and where 42 % of our employees live.

We do not consider our investments as expenses, but as a profit for the local and wider social community. The aim of the company is a balanced development of the local community, the Maribor Commune.

CPM realizes how important are responsible and environmentally friendly business practices are, therefore we have incorporated them into our strategy. We have put special attention to the following social fields:

- Water and electricity usage:
 - Turning off computers and monitors at the end of a working day,
 - Switching off the lights in the offices, if there is no one in them,
 - Taking the mobile-phone charger out of the socket when it is full,
 - Reducing the use of cooling devices,
 - Using the energy-saving electronic devices,
- Amount of paper used, amount of printed promotional material and type of materials used
- Amount of waste
- Separation of waste:
 - In cooperation with our contractual partners, we dispatch every disused product as well as every disused electric and electronic device accordingly with the legislation.

Wasted products contain ingredients which pollute our soil and water, if we do not dispatch them properly.

3.6. 1. Responsibility to the local community

CPM provides many sponsorships and donations for cultural, educational and sports activities. The goal of these projects is to increase the quality of life in general. Every year we take part in different cultural events, one of the most important of them is Festival Lent. The Festival Lent is an international multicultural festival, one of the biggest European festivals in this category. As a part of the festival, more than 400 concerts, plays and shows, performed by popular Slovene and foreign artists, take place in the 14-days period. It is attended annually by 600 000 visitors. CPM, as one of the sponsors of the Festival Lent, enables the town of Maribor to transform the Drava riverbank into a lively social and cultural center, filled with rhythms from around the world, and helps the town to improve its image.

3.6.2. Responsibility towards employees

CPM has adopted a strategy of investing in its development and hence constant educating of its employees. We lay great stress on educating the employees, because it improves their quality of work, products and services and simultaneously improves the employees' standard. During the previous year we were organizing internal educational courses related to fire safety, health safety, safety at work and also environmental safety.

CPM creates an environment encourages its employees to improve their competence and to further build their personal character. We take care of their health, well-being and high level of motivation. More than 76 % of our employees work full-time.

3.6.3. Responsibility towards suppliers

CPM conducts business accordingly with the ISO 9001 quality standard. To check the satisfaction of our consumers and users we check their complaints and on this basis of those complaints we try very hard to improve our work. It would be really beneficial for our firm, if we formed a voluntary team of our employees, who would take an active part in searching innovative solutions, which would enable the whole firm to gradually achieve important changes.

4. Conclusion

While reviewing books and articles, written by critics of CSR and analyzing the temporary situation in firms, I was asking myself, if CSR is indeed only a temporary trend and also yet another instrument in the hands of marketing and public relations. After pondering over it, I can conclude, that a constant development of guidelines, on how to promote and implement the CSR, as well as directives, for a systematical reporting, show an institutionalization of the concept of CSR, which consequently means, that this is not just a case of a temporary trend. **Business successfulness will no longer be merely determined by profit, but also by firm's good relationship with its key members.** If my forecasts are correct and we are indeed witnessing an institutionalization of CSR, those firms which will not realize and incorporate CSR into their strategies in time, will have difficulty adapting to new market conditions and legal regulations.

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