



Do good deeds and tell others ...

This quote from the German politician Walter Fisch probably best describes the efforts currently being made by many companies to take on board the concept of 'Corporate Social Responsibility' (CSR for short) and to communicate this effectively to the public by means of high-profile campaigns. This model, which rests on the triple pillars of the economy, the environment and society, also demonstrates that any investment in CSR can play a significant role in securing the long-term success of an enterprise.

This can clearly be seen in the social sphere where, in the past, much may have been done on a selective basis but the strategy for sustained action left a lot to be desired. Core issues such as health and safety at work, job security plus social commitment over and above the everyday business routine are now being tackled in a more structured fashion, and there is a general acknowledgement of the necessity for deliberate and sustainable investment in this area.

Many companies are still taking their first faltering steps in this direction but when you look at the latest opinion surveys carried out amongst staff or at stakeholder analyses for companies that have placed CSR at the very core of their business activities over a number of years, it becomes clear that such an investment pays dividends. Results include a significant reduction in the turnover of qualified staff together with a long-term and intensive partnership with stakeholders, all of which not only leads to an enhanced measure of satisfaction and quality at all levels but also impacts positively on a company's performance and balance sheet.

Of course, CSR is frequently used by businesses as a marketing instrument. However, we as staff, consumers, suppliers and customers are probably best placed to judge whether measures to boost a company's social responsibility are really sincere or just a lot of 'hot air'. But it is precisely here that I see great opportunities for the 'Corporate Social Responsibility' model, since voluntary commitment coupled with a frank approach to the public must always be pursued with a high level of seriousness and professionalism.

Any attempt to falsify the facts can have fatal consequences in terms of publicity and most companies who go down the CSR route are fully aware of the implications. In any case, we will all know from personal experience that honesty is the best policy.

Yours
Patrick Umgeher

Patrick Umgeher is a Consultant and Manager of Region South at x|vise innovative logistics GmbH in Kalsdorf near Graz.