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UNIVERSITY OF LÜNEBURG

 **Steinbeis Innovation Center**
Logistics and Sustainability

“CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR)” LEARNING MODULE

**NOTES FOR
TRAINEES/STUDENTS**



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NOTES FOR TRAINEES/STUDENTS

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"RESPONSIBILITY – FROM THE WORKPLACE AND OUT INTO SOCIETY"

LEARNING SUB-MODULE

Prevailing ways of working and doing business are taking on questionable forms in some cases. In the past, for example, some companies were shown to be providing precarious working conditions, engaging in illegal waste disposal strategies or applying morally dubious tax avoidance tricks. For this reason, societal demands have been increasing for some years for companies to voluntarily assume greater responsibility for their economic practices, so that profits or sales figures can no longer be the be-all and end-all of their business activities. Rather, companies currently need to be examining varying social values. Against this background, there is one particular term that is gaining in significance as companies seek to live up to the responsibilities they bear towards society. This term is Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

But when does a company take on social responsibility? Can a company actually bear responsibility vis-à-vis the whole of society? Does your training company assume social responsibility?



What does responsibility really mean? How can companies assume responsibility vis-à-vis society? Before you can examine the contents of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) concept in more detail, it is necessary to start by thinking about these fundamental questions relating to the social responsibility of companies.

TASKS:

1. Describe what you associate with the term "responsibility".
2. Explain towards whom you assume responsibility during your everyday work at the training company.



*Tasks to
complete
individually*



TIP FOR SELF-REFLECTION:

It may be useful to reconstruct a usual work process (e.g. processing a customer combined shipment order) and note down when and for whom you assume responsibility during this procedure. The following areas and stakeholders may play a part in this work process:



Once you have considered your own understanding of responsibility, start to think about what social responsibility could mean from a company's point of view.

TASKS:

1. Describe what could be understood as social responsibility from a company perspective.
2. Explain in which areas you believe that companies should assume social responsibility.
3. Identify and explain in the scope of which measures or projects as well as for whom or what your company assumes social responsibility. Use the table to complete this task ([see Material 1](#)).



Tasks to
complete
individually



TIPS ON RESEARCHING THE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF YOUR TRAINING COMPANY

At this point, it may be useful to find out once more in detail about the activities relating to assumption of social responsibility undertaken by your training company. You could, for example, conduct internal research by looking for data relating to the assumption of corporate responsibility at your own company on company drives or on the company intranet. You could also pursue external research by using the Internet to shed light on the public image of your company with regard to the assumption of corporate responsibility. Alternatively, you might turn to company brochures, which may supply indications of the assumption of corporate responsibility by your training company.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF MY TRAINING COMPANY			
MEASURE/PROJECT	RESPONSIBILITY IS ASSUMED TOWARDS ...	RESPONSIBILITY IS ASSUMED BECAUSE ...	



Note: The fourth column of the table will only become relevant as the learning module progresses.

In the last task, you looked at your personal ideal of the assumption of social responsibility by companies and investigated the extent to which your company takes on social responsibility. But how could your company externally communicate its own objectives with regard to the assumption of social responsibility?

TASKS:

1. Start by developing a claim for your company based on the understanding of responsibility you have researched.
2. Build on your claim to produce an advertising slogan, which can be used for the external communication of the understanding of social responsibility at your training company.



Tasks to complete individually

TIPS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CLAIM AND AN ADVERTISING SLOGAN:

“A claim is not a finished piece of advertising copy, but merely a central and objective statement that is designed to transport the advertising message. Nevertheless, a claim is frequently formulated as a slogan (e.g. “[...] – We have understood”). A slogan should be a compact and highly memorable vehicle for the central advertising message, meaning that it should be catchy, figurative if possible, distinctive, and short. Above all, it should be easily understandable. A slogan is an important component for the recognition and positioning of a brand (e.g. “[...] – pleasure of driving’).” (Brüne et al., 2008, p. 32).



“CSR (MEASURES) IN THE TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS SECTOR” LEARNING SUB-MODULE

Even though the idea of CSR has its basis in the social components of company responsibility, current definitions are now set out more broadly. The expectation is that responsibility should be shown to society as a whole as well as to employees, shareholders, and financiers. This is expressed by calling upon decision-makers in the economy to take an increased account of societal needs. CSR may accordingly be viewed as the responsibility a company takes for the impacts of its activities on society and nature. The main emphasis is on two specific demands:

1. Companies should avoid all actions that bear a risk of causing corporate damage. Or, to put this the other way around, one of the tasks of trade and industry is to protect society.
2. The economy should serve the common good. Rather than merely seeking to avoid creating negative effects from their actions, companies are additionally encouraged to make a positive contribution to societal well-being.

But how exactly can companies contribute towards assuming this social responsibility?



Tasks to
complete
individually

So far you have been predominantly considering your own ideas regarding the assumption of social responsibility by companies, but now you will address the CSR concept. The initial focus is on CSR measures with which the company seeks to fulfil its social responsibility.

TASKS:

1. Read the text “CSR measures as a focus of company practice” ([see Material 1](#)).
2. Give an account of the most important requirements for CSR measures using keywords.
3. Compare the information you entered into the table “Social responsibility of my training company” ([see Material 1 in “Responsibility – from the workplace and out into society”](#)) with your newly acquired insights about CSR measures. Note the correlations and differences in the fourth column of the table.



CSR MEASURES AS A FOCUS OF COMPANY PRACTICE



If a company decides to enshrine its assumption of social responsibility within corporate practice, it will initially be faced with the following question:

- Which guidelines need to be observed and pursued so that the expectations in respect of the topic of social responsibility that are directed at the company by policymakers and the public can be fulfilled?

There is no lack of guidelines and assistance for companies in the area of corporate social responsibility. Examples at an international level include the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and the Global Compact of the United Nations. Specific guidelines for the implementation of a holistic CSR approach at companies have also emerged over recent years. In its capacity as a "Guide for the social responsibility of organisations", the DIN ISO 26000 standard plays an important role in this regard.

The individual measures that lend expression to social responsibility represent a key component of CSR within company practice. When planning and implementing their CSR measures, most companies set main focuses which can be divided into three groups:

- Measures with regard to the staff
- Measures with regard to the customers
- Measures with regard to the environment

A large overlap between the issue of CSR and the idea of sustainability is revealed at this point. Through the "Sustainable development" learning module, you already know that the concept of sustainability can be classified in the dimensions economy, ecology, and social aspects. These three dimensions are also encapsulated within the CSR concept and thus need to be taken into account when CSR measures are being planned. If a company is planning a measure that is primarily designed to benefit its employees, for example, then the social dimension of sustainability is predominantly being addressed. Measures aimed at customers relate to the economic dimension and those aimed at the environment to the ecological dimension.

It is important when implementing a CSR measure that it always bears a clear reference to the company's own business activities. Companies that merely view their CSR measures as additional services that are unrelated to their economic model and core business processes are therefore acting short-sightedly. If the three dimensions of sustainability are linked with the core business processes, this results for example in the following CSR measures, which are already being implemented in practice by various companies:





GENERAL CSR MEASURES

Economic dimension

Effectiveness of products and efficiency of processes

- Sustainability reporting
- Quality management in accordance with ISO certification
- Organisational structure/resources in sustainability management
- Passing on of sustainability requirements to sub-contractors
- ...

Ecological dimension

Responsibility for environmental impacts of economic actions

- Introduction of an environmental management system (certification)
- Employee training on resources and environmental protection
- Paper-free administration
- Emissions measurement and offsetting of emissions
- ...

Social dimension

Responsibility for employees and for society

- Healthcare programme for staff
- Provision of continuing training measures
- Support for and integration of disadvantaged people in the company
- Programmes aimed at raising staff satisfaction
- ...

As the figure makes clear, CSR focuses on how companies make their profits. In the world of CSR, companies see themselves not just as economic, but also as moral actors. The emphasis is not, therefore, on the question of how companies use their profits. "Prettifying" the company in brochures or the sponsorship of a local sports club would not succeed in bringing about systemic changes. When developing CSR measures, therefore, consideration needs to be accorded to the fact that responsibility for humans and nature is not only assumed at a company, product or services level. Instead, the perspective adopted must be extended further to encompass the company location, the added value chain, and society itself. Against this background, CSR and sustainability need to be perceived as a learning process both within a company and within corporate networks.



TIPS FOR A MORE PRECISE ANALYSIS OF VARIOUS GUIDELINES FOR CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Companies find it hard to find appropriate and helpful organisational support because there is such a vast amount of standards, guidelines, instructions, and recommendations. The following table provides a short summary of international standards and norms. A good overview of CSR (in German) is also available on the website of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs at <http://www.csr-in-deutschland.de>.

STANDARDS, NORMS, AND GUIDELINES RELATING TO THE CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF COMPANIES	SOURCE
Declarations and agreements of the International Labour Organisation	www.ilo.org
Guidelines for multinational enterprises by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development	www.oecd.org
DIN ISO 26000	www.bmas.de/DE/Service/Medien/Publicationen/a395-csr-din-26000.html
Global Compact of the United Nations	www.globalcompact.de/
GRI Sustainability Reporting Framework	www.globalreporting.org



Now that you have looked at the general requirements for CSR measures, the question arises as to how concrete CSR measures could be designed and implemented at your training company. You have already familiarised yourself with examples of general CSR measures. But what about the specific measures in your sector? This is a field in which your training company can set certain focuses. Example areas include transport, transshipment, and warehousing. Below you will look at opportunities to shape CSR measures in the area of transport.

TASKS:

1. Identify possible CSR measures in the area of transport *(see Material 2)*.
2. Outline design and implementation proposals for one of the identified CSR measures.



Tasks to
complete
individually

CSR MEASURES IN THE AREA OF TRANSPORT



Economic dimension <i>Effectiveness of products and efficiency of processes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Optimisation of fleet management (more efficient route planning) - - -
Ecological dimension <i>Responsibility for environmental impacts of economic actions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provision of intermodal transport - -
Social dimension <i>Responsibility for employees and for the society</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ergonomic and health-friendly equipping of vehicles - - -



TIPS FOR THE IDENTIFICATION AND DESIGN OF CSR MEASURES:

To identify CSR measures in a specific area of your training company, it is helpful to look at your company's fields of activity. To do so, analyse how the specific business sector affects the three dimensions of sustainability (e.g. CO₂ emissions in relation to ecological dimension, dependence on oil price in relation to ecological dimension, low wages in relation to social dimension)

Once you have thought about the ecological, social, and economic impacts for the area of transport, you should consider which CSR measures could mitigate or prevent the individual effects.

In order to design a CSR measure it is appropriate to select one of the identified measures for which you believe that very urgent action is required at your training company and which you assess as being a good match for the prevailing circumstances of your company – and is thus also possible to implement.

In order to be able to present your CSR measure to your colleagues during the further course of the learning sub-module, it will be helpful to consider the following questions in advance and to collect your written responses:

- Why is there a need to act by introducing the CSR measure in the area of transport at your training company?
- Which problems could the CSR measure resolve?
- What are the aims of the CSR measure?
- Who benefits from the implementation of this CSR measure?
- What is required for implementation of the CSR measure? (e.g. specialist knowledge, external partners, financial resources)?



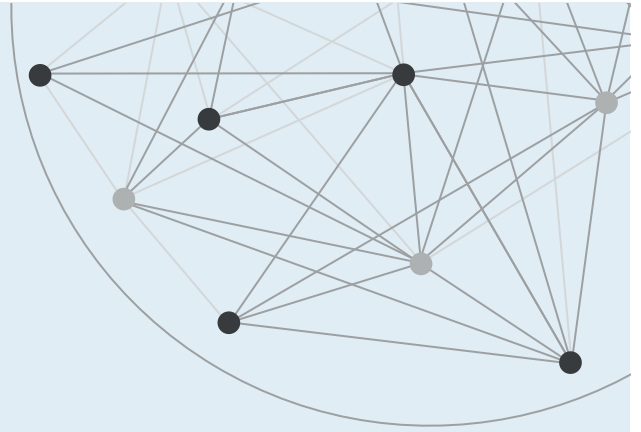
Once you have considered your own understanding of the corporate social responsibility of companies in detail and reflected upon this against the background of the requirements of CSR measures, you now meet with other trainees from your company in order to present your individual results to one another and to engage in joint discussion or to specify the outcomes in more detail.



Tasks to be completed in pairs or groups

TASKS:

1. Present one another with the results you recorded in the table "Social responsibility of my training company" (see Material 1 in the "Responsibility – from the workplace and out into society" learning sub-module).
2. Compare the collected differences between the requirements for CSR measures and the way in which measures have been implemented at your company thus far (column 4) (see Material 1 in the "Responsibility – from the workplace and out into society" learning sub-module).
3. Present one another with your ideas for the design of a possible CSR measure for the area of transport at your training company. Select an idea together and pursue the further development of this CSR measure as a group.
4. Develop one of the presented ideas further together.
5. On the basis of the advertising slogan you drafted earlier (see "Responsibility – from the workplace and out into society" learning sub-module), work together to create an advertising slogan to accompany the CSR measure.
6. Write the advertising slogan you have developed on the white space on the side of the lorry (see Material 3).



TIPS FOR JOINT FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE CSR MEASURE SELECTED:



In order to be able to jointly develop your ideas for a CSR measure, it will be useful to work with an action plan. This links in with the design tips ([see Note 2](#)), and the aim is that it will help you structure the essential characteristics of the CSR measure and to record the relevant details in precise terms.

MEASURE	SUSTAINABILITY DIMENSION	DESCRIPTION	OBJECTIVES	TARGET GROUPS	REQUIREMENTS	COMMUNICATION
<i>Name of your CSR measure</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Economic dimension - Ecological dimension - Social dimension 	<i>- What precisely will be done?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Specific description of the objective - Which dimension(s) will be addressed? - ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Customers - General public - Staff members - Policymakers - ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What resources are required for the implementation? - Which general statutory conditions need to be taken into account? - ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How will the public learn about the CSR measure? (marketing measures) - ...

“CSR COMMUNICATION AT THE TRAINING COMPANY”

LEARNING SUB-MODULE

CSR is a highly significant part of today's company practice. Many companies issue their own reports, in which they address the ways in which they are assuming social responsibility (you will find detailed information about this in the “EU disclosure requirements” learning module). CSR is also becoming increasingly important for companies in the transport and logistics sector. Particularly as a result of the EU disclosure requirements, customers are increasingly insisting on the contractual stipulation of certain CSR characteristics. In order to retain existing customers and attract new ones, transport and logistics companies are therefore dependent on presenting their CSR measures to the public. This is where CSR communication comes into play with which companies impart information about certain CSR measures to external groups (e.g. customers).

Within this communication process, however, contradictions can give rise to problems, which may ultimately lead to a loss of credibility for the company. Yet how can companies be spared from these problems?

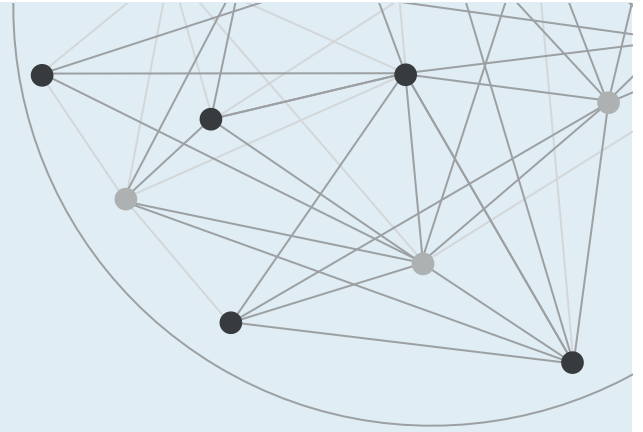


*Tasks to be
completed
in pairs
or groups*

Now that you have already developed a claim as part of the “Responsibility – from the workplace and out into society” learning sub-module, via which your training company can communicate its sense of responsibility externally, take a closer look at CSR communication and its possible problems.

TASKS:

1. Analyse the caricature shown ([see Material 1](#)).
2. Interpret the message of the caricature with regard to the increasing importance of CSR measures.



TIPS FOR ANALYSING THE CARICATURE:

Before analysing the caricature together, you should first take a quiet moment to each individually allow the drawing to sink in. For the subsequent analysis, the following questions can help you:

- What does the drawing help to depict? (message or topic of the caricature)
- How and via which means (figures, objects, symbols) is the topic or statement portrayed?
- Can a certain message or interpretation on the part of the cartoonist be discerned?



TIPS FOR INTERPRETING THE CARICATURE:

When interpreting the caricature, it makes sense to use a similar approach as when adopting the analysis. The following question can help you in the process:

- What possible problems in the communication of CSR measures does the caricature present?
- Have you ever experienced a situation in the workplace that is comparable to that shown in the caricature?
Alternatively, think about whether you have observed similar situations (e.g. when shopping or in advertising) in your everyday life.
- What consequences could there be for a company, if it has been caught red-handed in the act of so-called greenwashing?





Tasks to be
completed
in pairs
or groups



The intention of the caricature in the previous task is to draw attention to the problem of so-called greenwashing. Before thinking about how falling into the “greenwashing trap” can be avoided, it will be necessary to analyse the problem of “greenwashing”. A key factor in this regard are the company interests, which are often in conflict with the objectives of other groups (e.g. customers, suppliers, or associations). You will now explore this problem within the context of a role play.

TASKS:

1. Distribute the role cards ([see Material 2](#)).
2. Work individually and familiarise yourself with the role you will play.
3. Explore the initial situation together ([see Material 2](#)).
4. Perform the role play as a group.
5. Evaluate the role play activity together at the end.



TIPS FOR THE DISTRIBUTION OF ROLES:

The role play scenario can be performed by groups of different sizes. The minimum number of participants needed is three. The table shows recommendations for the distribution of roles depending on the group size.

GROUP SIZE	COMPANY OWNER	TRAINEE	CUSTOMER	REPRESENTATIVE OF NGO	OBSERVER
Three people	One person	Unallocated	One person	Unallocated	One person
Four people	One person	Unallocated	One person	Unallocated	Two people
Five people	One person	One person	One person	One person	One person
Six people and more	One person	One person	One person	One person	Two people and more

→ Roles may also be allocated more than once in the case of a large group. The customer may, for example, be assisted in the discussion by an advisor.

TIPS FOR EVALUATING THE ROLE PLAY SCENARIO TOGETHER



A joint evaluation should take place immediately upon completion of the role play. The best method is to stay in the same room and record your findings by using flip chart paper or a poster. The following approach will be useful for joint evaluation of and reflection on the role play scenario:

1. The players give their views

- Creation of a distance to the game (respective roles are abandoned, and participants reflect upon their own behaviour and feelings during the role play).
- Did I feel comfortable in my role? Was I able to identify with the role?
- Where did I meet limitations in my line of argument?
- What would I do differently next time?
- ...

2. The observers give their views

- Explanation of the observation assignment
- Reporting on the observations made

3. Questions to the players

- Are the observations in line with their own assessments?
- ...

4. New findings for CSR communication

- Which objectives is the company pursuing via its CSR communication?
- What objectives and expectations do other stakeholder groups (in this case customers and NGOs) have with regard to the CSR communication of the company?
- Which conflicting objectives may arise between the company and the other stakeholder groups within the scope of CSR communication?
- What characteristics make it possible to recognise greenwashing?
- ...



“ROLE PLAY” METHOD CARDS

(“CSR COMMUNICATION AT THE TRAINING COMPANY” LEARNING SUB-MODULE)

INITIAL SITUATION:

Various stakeholders come together at the stand of a medium-sized transport and logistics company at the “trans-port-logistic” trade fair in Munich. Unlike at the stands of many other companies, the main focus here is on the topic of CSR. The company owner is delighted at so much public interest and invites the different stakeholders into the coffee lounge to present the CSR commitment of his/her firm in greater detail.



**Conducting the role play:**

The role play should be carried out in a quiet room. There should be enough space to allow the observers to remain in the background and maintain their distance – the separation of observers and the scenario is very important. You should ensure that you are undisturbed so as to enable this fictitious situation to be played out as realistically as possible.

Getting into the role:

The success of the role play and its fun factor depend on the active shaping of the different roles. It is therefore important to read through your role description carefully and get into the role properly. You should pay particular attention to studying the objectives and motivations of the role you are playing and collecting possible arguments. Note that the more specialist information you have, the more effective you will be in your role. Effective reflection upon the role play is also important so that you are able to use the findings you have gained to design a precise guide to CSR communication at your company in the next stage. For this reason, the observers should stipulate targeted tasks in advance.

Start of the role play:

Once you have explored the initial situation together, the company owner should begin by presenting the CSR measure – using the advertising slogan and visualised label if necessary. The other stakeholders can then create a discussion by posing questions on the CSR measure.



COMPANY OWNER:

You are the managing director of a medium-sized transport and logistics company. The assumption of responsibility vis-à-vis your employees, but also for nature, is something that is very close to your heart. You have understood the significance of CSR and have therefore now decided to introduce CSR measures into the company process. For reasons of time and cost, it has not yet been possible to develop a holistic CSR concept for your firm. However, an action plan for a CSR measure in the area of transport within your company has already been prepared ([see learning sub-module “CSR \(measures\) in the transport and logistics sector”](#)).

It is important to you that the public learns of your CSR endeavours as quickly as possible. The upcoming “trans-port-logistic” trade fair in Munich will provide a perfect presentation platform in this respect. You hope that communicating your CSR measure in this way will lead to the acquisition of new customers. For this reason, the aim now is to concentrate on driving forward CSR communication. The following points are very important to you:

- **Image cultivation:** You hope that your commitment to CSR will hone your image and enable new customers to be acquired. The aim, therefore, is to convince customers that you are carrying out your CSR measure for social and ecological reasons rather than being motivated by the economic aspect. Your CSR communication should therefore emphasise your selfless assumption of responsibility.
- **Low costs:** You are prepared to invest a significant sum of money in your CSR concept in principle. But you are just starting out at this point and cannot as yet obtain any certification for your CSR measure. You are also of the view that it is much more honest to use your own name to guarantee the quality and credibility of your CSR measure. After all, this will allow you to save money that would otherwise have to be paid to external certifying institutions. This will ultimately enable you to offer your customers better service provision. For this reason, you are developing your own label for the CSR measure.

Tips for getting into the role:

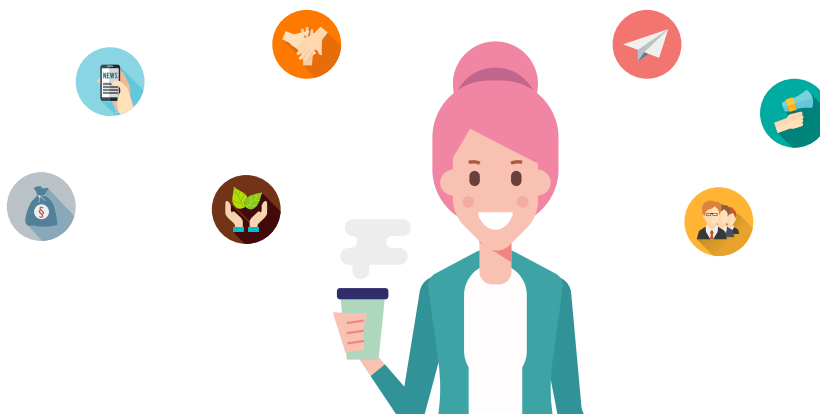


- You represent your company and wish to convince the other stakeholders of your CSR measure. Your focus is on the customer. You attempt to allay any accusations of greenwashing.
- The CSR measure from the previous learning sub-module is an important prerequisite. For this CSR measure, you develop communication strategies.
- Work closely together if the role of “trainee” is taken!

Specialist information and Internet research tips:



- There are no limits to your creativity when it comes to the development of labels and advertising slogans. Nevertheless, remember the caricature and your discussion about greenwashing!
- Internet research is a useful way of finding ideas for advertising slogans and labels. The recommended approach would be to investigate how other transport and logistics companies communicate their commitment to CSR.



TRAINEE:

You are a trainee at a medium-sized transport and logistics company. You are currently employed in the firm's marketing department. To your great delight, you will be permitted to accompany the managing director to this year's "transport-logistic" trade fair in Munich, where you will look after the company's stand. At the event, your firm's primary objective will be to report on its commitment to CSR. The main focus in this regard will be the communication of a certain CSR measure. The managing director has requested you to develop the following aspects:

- **Advertising slogan and outward appearance:** Everyone needs to know that your company acts in an environmentally aware and responsible manner. Your advertising slogan should clearly indicate just this. Management would like to have motifs that are closely related to nature.
- **Information text on the CSR measure:** The primary emphasis here should be on the benefits that humans and the environment will derive from the CSR measure. Attention should also be drawn to possible areas of potential for making savings, if the CSR measure is able to deliver these.

You should talk to your managing director to discuss the precise details of the CSR measure and the further approach you should take.

Tips for getting into the role:



- You represent your company and wish to convince the other stakeholders of your CSR measure. Your focus is on the customer. You attempt to allay any accusations of greenwashing.
- The CSR measure from the previous learning sub-module is an important prerequisite. You develop communication strategies for this.
- Work closely with the company owner and support him/her in the discussion!

Specialist information and Internet research tips:



- There are no limits to your creativity when it comes to the development of labels and advertising slogans. Nevertheless, remember the caricature and your discussion about greenwashing!
- Internet research is a useful way of finding ideas for advertising slogans and labels. The recommended approach would be to investigate how other transport and logistics companies communicate their commitment to CSR.



CUSTOMER (FORWARDER):

You work for a leading manufacturing company. Management has given you the task of finding new logistics partners who can transport your products within Europe. In order to pursue this objective, you make your way to the "trans-port-logistic" trade fair in Munich. Because a requirement for your company to produce a CSR report has recently been introduced, you need to pay particular attention to sustainable factors within your added value process. You are therefore seeking a haulier that sets particular store by sustainability and that can provide evidence of the endeavours you are undertaking in this area (e.g. via certificates and seals of quality).

However, you have many years of experience in business and are well aware that companies mainly direct their activities towards the realisation of economic objectives. Your suspicions are aroused if a company states that it is undertaking certain CSR measures because of a selfless consciousness of its responsibility. Ultimately, all companies wish and need to earn money. Transparency is particularly important to you in terms of knowing where you stand and what you can rely on. Your wish is for the forwarding company you engage to disclose its company processes and results. This means that not only the positive aspects should be communicated. Areas in which the company is lagging behind also need to be revealed.

Your expectations of the forwarding company are therefore as follows:

- **Recognised certificates and quality seals:** You require these in order to allow a credibly sustainable added value process to take place at your company and to be able to demonstrate this as such in your CSR report. For this reason, you attach no value to a company's own proprietary labels.
- **Transparency:** Honest cooperation as part of an equal partnership is very important to you. You thus demand credible CSR communication that does not attempt to gloss over anything.

Tips for getting into the role:



- You are seeking a credible and reliable co-operation partner. For this reason, you want to know whether the company really takes its CSR commitment seriously and whether you can benefit from that.

Specialist information and Internet research tips:



- There are two types of certificates and seals of quality: management systems and product labels. Management systems that stipulate binding rules and require a process of continual improvement are of primary relevance to the value-added process (e.g. European Environmental Management System: www.emas.de; Environmental Management System ISO 14001).
- Further information on certificates and seals of quality is available at: <http://www.csr-in-deutschland.de/DE/Unternehmen/CSR-Berichterstattung/Zertifikate-und-Siegel/zertifikate-und-siegel.html>



REPRESENTATIVE OF A SUSTAINABILITY NGO:

You work for a well-known and influential sustainability NGO. Of course, you welcome any endeavours companies make to do business in accordance with sustainable principles. Nevertheless, many major scandals have occurred recently. These have shown that many companies only pay lip service to these principles. This represents an enormous problem for you. Firstly, customers, policymakers and society are all having the wool pulled over their eyes. Secondly, such a state of affairs means that the sustainable changes you have been struggling to achieve over many years cannot be implemented. At the “trans-port-logistic” trade fair in Munich, you are seeking to track down the “black sheep” and to publicly expose the greenwashing that these companies engage in. You become particularly sceptical whenever you notice the following characteristics, among others, within a firm’s CSR communications:

- **Adoption of ecological language:** Frequent attempts are made to live up to public expectations in rhetorical terms by including terms such as “sustainability”, “green”, “environmentally friendly”, or “fair”. However, these often bear no relation at all to the actual product or service offered and are therefore out of place and devoid of meaning.
- **Green and positive imagery:** A situation similar to the use of ecological language also pertains here. Symbols from the world of nature (e.g. trees, blue skies, or the sun) are deployed despite the absence of any direct reference to the product or service on offer.
- **Unclear and confusing statements:** This is another area in which various opportunities for trickery exist. Among other things, unclear statements are made regarding the characteristics of the product (e.g. “recyclable”, despite the fact that this only applies to the packaging). Statements are frequently also couched in impenetrable jargon which is not accessible to the “average” customer and can only be understood and checked by experts.
- **The stressing of standards:** Compliance with statutory standards does not constitute sustainable practice – these are simply mandatory requirements that a company must meet (e.g. acquisition of new vehicles in line with the Euro 6 standard).

Tips for getting into the role:



- You adopt a critical stance towards the company and are stubborn in your demands for figures, data, and facts to back up possible assertions.
- Should you develop any suspicion that the company is involved in greenwashing, you confront the firm with it and threaten it to go public.

Specialist information and Internet research tips:



- The four characteristics listed in the column on the left by which greenwashing may be recognised, link in with the DIN EN ISO 14020 and 14021 standards, which are consistent with the German Act Against Unfair Competition (UWG). This is intended to help companies avoid providing dubious or confusing information and statements about the environment. Detailed information and a guide on environmental statements is available as from page 34 at: https://www.bmub.bund.de/fileadmin/Daten_BMU/Pool/Broschueren/umweltinfos_produkte_dilei_broschuere_bf.pdf



OBSERVER:

As an independent observer, you are not actively involved in the discussion. Your role is nevertheless of utmost importance. As a “neutral person”, you can carefully observe the various stakeholders’ behaviour and lines of argument and take notes in the background. These will form the basis of the reflection about the role play afterwards. It is helpful to think about what exactly you want to be observing before the role play begins.

Formulating an observation task is suitable for this purpose.

Tips for getting into the role:

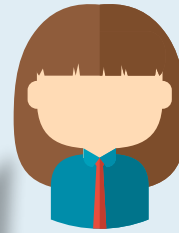


- As an observer, you act independently and do not take part in the role play.
- You use a pre-stipulated observation remit to follow the role play carefully whilst making written notes on an observation form.
- You should complete the observation form clearly and in detail since it will be required in the follow-up to the role play.

Specialist information and Internet research tips:



- The role play centres on CSR communication, and your observation remit should take this into account. For instance, you might observe which arguments presented by the company to support its own CSR measure succeed in convincing the other stakeholders. The weak points of the company’s CSR communication could provide a further focus. In which areas do accusations of greenwashing arise, and how are these substantiated?
- If there are two or more observers, it will make sense to divide up the role observation (e.g. observation of the company side, observation of the further stakeholders).



Once you have carefully considered the objectives, requirements and possible problems of CSR communication, use these findings to draw up a guide for CSR communication at your training company.

TASKS:

1. Discuss the structure and essential contents of your CSR guide in the group.
2. Work together to develop a CSR guide for your training company.
3. Present the CSR guide to your trainer or to the marketing department. Alternatively, analyse existing CSR communication measures using your guide and develop proposals for possible improvements on this basis.



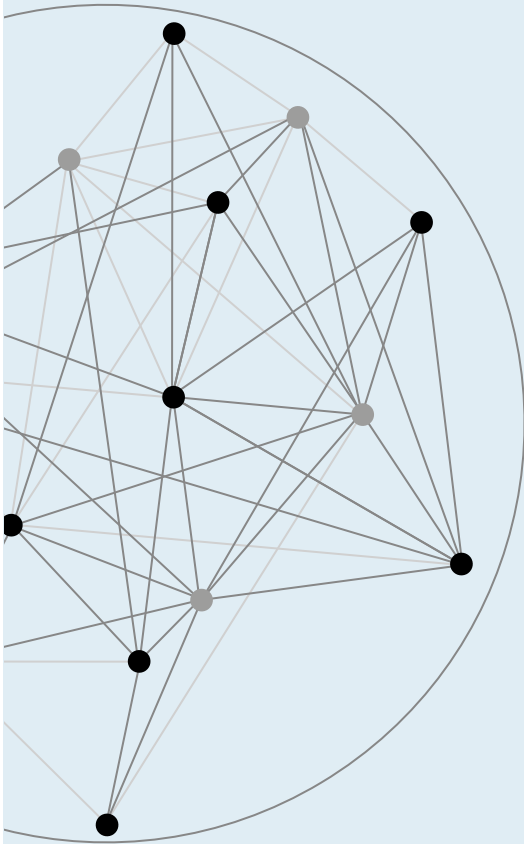
Tasks to be completed in groups

TIPS FOR THE JOINT DISCUSSION:

The following questions may assist you in the discussion:

1. Which form of presentation do you wish to use (e.g. handout, PowerPoint presentation, poster)?
2. How should the guide be structured?
3. Which characteristics of CSR communication would you like to address in the guide? Possible thematic areas include greenwashing, transparency, and the differing needs of the stakeholder groups of your training company.
4. Which standards, guidelines, etc. do you wish to address or indicate?





SOURCES:

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IMPRINT

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Steinbeis Innovation Center Logistics and Sustainability (SLN), Dresdener Straße 17, 74889 Sinsheim, Germany

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Design and print setting: Anke Sudfeld

Photos/Illustrations: Fotolia and pixabay

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