

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is the New Driver for an Ethical Public Relations Function

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Coombs and Holladay note that “Effective public relations can be a valuable part of strategic Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). However, superficial CSR practice will result in a superficial CSR communication.” (Coombs and Holladay, 2010, 275) These authors further believe that “Public relations can help corporations to identify and promote partnerships with committed publics (typically activist groups).” This study explored the presence of CSR as mentioned on five corporate websites: Coca Cola, Wal-Mart, Pfizer, Nike, and Corona. For the study, an instrument measuring website characteristics was used to provide a benchmark for comparing the five websites. Finally, each website was examined for the CSR’s level of authentic development. The results of the analysis indicated that CSR is frequently mentioned on the websites reviewed. The various forms of CSR mentioned include: media relations, CEO or vice president CSR statement, description of awards section, mission statement, purpose in the community, and projects. CSR is not a well-articulated concept and varies greatly from website to website. Unfortunately, this means that the ability for public relations to use CSR as leverage to assure compliance is not always well articulated or strongly supported.

Information about the Author:

Lilia Cecconi studied sciences of communication in Mexico. She was a communication advisor for corporate and government institutions for three years. Her experience as liaison between the organizational leadership and the public gave her a glimpse of the positive impact that corporations could have in society. She believes that the ethical practice of public relations promotes democracy and facilitates social change. She is a senior communication student, planning to become a public relations practitioner.

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