

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN COMPANY'S CSR STRATEGY

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Abstract

The purpose of the paper is to analyze and investigate the level of employees' participation in socially responsible activities in one of the automotive factories located in Toruń, Poland. The company conducts many socially responsible initiatives; however, it cannot realize its CSR programs without engagement of its employees. The company is medium-sized enterprise, that is why every CSR activity and program can be realized by many managers and workers. One of the main reasons of conducting the study is a desire of verification if employees participate in CSR programs before the research was conducted, as also to measure if they are ready to take a part in socially responsible programs in the future. In order to achieve the aim of the research, the following objectives have been set: (1) to present the main assumptions of the corporate social responsibility concept; (2) to describe company's stakeholders and to show the potential benefits they can achieve thanks to CSR strategy; (3) to measure and analyze employees' participation in CSR programs conducted in the company and to check their readiness to engage in socially responsible activities in the future. The main limitations of the research are focus on one company and small research sample. The findings and their presentation are achieved based on the questionnaire survey described in the paper.

Keywords: corporate social responsibility, CSR, employees' CSR activity, corporate social responsibility strategy realization, employees' engagement, good practices.

Paper type: Research paper

1. Outcomes of CSR

The idea that business today have a role in society, different than just making money for shareholders is not a new one. Primary goal is to make return on investments but organizations might also want to be considered as a good employer, or want to behave responsibly, to deal fairly with suppliers and customers, etc. Some however, strongly suggest that since business benefits from the support of society

they might have a responsibility to return something back to the society. This idea directly falls into the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility of business.

There is a wide range of initiatives that are designed to benefit society. Those CSR initiatives generally include a range of community activities, including donating money to charities, helping non-governmental organizations, perhaps with the donation of staff time or excess inventory, providing staff expertise to local good causes, allowing a range of stakeholders to have input into key strategic decisions, social and environmental impact management and similar other initiatives. In the literature the effectiveness of CSR is often discussed as well as priorities which need to be taken into account.

One of the most often referenced models is a Pyramid of Corporate Responsibility created by A.B. Carroll. In this model there are four categories of liability distinguished with respect to social expectations. The bottom of pyramid starts with economic responsibility of enterprise (profitability), above there is legal liability and followed by ethics (expected by society). At the top of the hierarchy Carroll has placed the responsibility of philanthropy, which brings a new quality to society, e.g. donating part of the resources to solve social problems (Carroll, 1991). The philanthropic responsibility also called as voluntary responsibility, is very much desired by the society which can include different programs supporting the society (education), commitment to the local community, various improvements, and the benefits of volunteering (Skrzypczyńska, Gulak-Lipka, 2016).

These days CSR can have an important role in how a business is positioned in its environment. However, CSR just like other strategies of a company must be planned preconceived and deliberated. It has to clearly define particular outcomes or strategic end. Of course, there might be a case when a company does not have a CSR strategy but might still appoint someone to achieve CSR outcomes as part of their job. When a company decides to implement a CSR strategy it needs to decide which activities and causes to pursue and which not. Once these preliminary decisions have been made, the person or people responsible for implementing CSR strategy will have a basis for CSR decisions, which specifies a CSR strategy (Hohnen, 2007).

For a business, something that is strategic is normally concerned with the long-term success of the business and its strategic positioning with regard to a range of environmental variables. So, in strategy, people might talk about strategically important customers, suppliers, employees, networks, culture, etc. In a business reality, different stakeholders can find different benefits of implementing a CSR strategy. The division of stakeholders into internal (Table 1) and external (Table 2) reflects the classical approach of a company's environment. All resources that exist and constitute an enterprise are its internal environment, however all elements affecting and influencing a company that is not its internal structure at

the same time are an external environment. It is the simplest of the division of stakeholders in the literature, enabling the initial identification of the stakeholders' environment and their location in relation to the enterprise (Sznajder, 2013).

There is undoubtedly a huge amount of benefits to CSR activities. Some of them are reflected in measurable economic indicators, some as the customer, employee and society satisfaction are difficult to measure, which does not mean that they are less important. Therefore, any enterprise looking to the future and

Table 1.
The benefits of the CSR concept based on internal company's stakeholders

Source: own analysis based on: Gadomska-Lila, K. (2012); Leśna-Wierszołowicz, E. (2016); Skrzypek, E. and Saadi, N. (2014), Wołoszyn, J. and Ratajczak, M. (2010); Zieliński, M. (2014).

	STAKEHOLDER GROUPS	EXAMPLES OF BENEFITS	DESCRIPTION
INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS	Owners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • building a competitive advantage; • cost reduction; • improve a company's image; • improve organizational culture and communication; • increase interest investors; • increase knowledge about environment. 	The reasons for more positive social identification and increased profit are numerous, all thanks to innovation, competitive advantage, forward-thinking ideologies and general commitment that ensures strong Corporate Social Responsibility. The ways in which Corporate Social Responsibility brings benefits to an enterprise can attract the attention of many business owners (Skrzypek and Saadi, 2014).
	Shareholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • financial advantage; • implementing innovation; • maximizing a company's value; • minimize the risk; • penetration of new markets. 	CSR activities with holders are financially valuable when complemented by higher marketing capabilities that can certainly focus on the right types of CSR activities, knowing well that it will both improve social well-being and bring benefits to shareholders (Wołoszyn and Ratajczak, 2010).
	Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • decrease staff turnover; • increase motivation; • increase trust and satisfaction; • increase workplace safety; • sense of employment security; • the possibility to self-development. 	Employees are one of the key groups of stakeholders and their competences, experience, commitment, and innovation are a decisive impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of an organization. Employees want to work for a company with good reputation (Gadomska-Lila, 2012). Involvement of employees increase as a result of reforming labor practices and increasing of the protection of human rights (Zieliński, 2014). The numbers of sick days are reduced, and due to training programs, the rate of work mistakes is reduced resulting in less waste. The employees' turnover is also decreased, which leads to savings in constant recruitment and training for new employees (Leśna-Wierszołowicz, 2016).

	STAKE-HOLDER GROUPS	EXAMPLES OF BENEFITS	DESCRIPTION
EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS	Customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enhance the quality product/service; • improve communication; • professionalism; • reduction in the price product/service; • safety and reliability product/service. 	The corporation's efforts to comply with CSR principles mean that they eliminate all defects at the production stage, which results in a reduction in the number of complaints and increase customer satisfaction. CSR change in a company can lead to a reduction of costs that customers can also take advantage if it causes a drop-in price. In this way, more products can be available to people who could not afford them before, so that a company can stand out from the crowd (Flammer, 2014).
	Suppliers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • culture of business activities; • fair trade rules; • improve communication; • interaction; • stable supply chain. 	Suppliers and other strategic alliances are interdependent, where the success of one will impact the success of another. As a result, suppliers are closely related to organizations as key external stakeholders. Timely payments, shipments, communication, and operational processes are key to maintaining a strong relationship with this stakeholder group and at the same time improve their position on the market by meeting a company's requirements (Zuzek, 2012).
	Competition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clear and transparent competitive action; • culture of business activities; • fair competition; • respect human rights. 	The concept of CSR consistently implemented by enterprises; however, contribute to improving competitiveness and building a lasting advantage over competitors. It seems that the main reason why it starts to bring specific benefits to a company are changing social expectations (Wołkowicka and Dąbrowski, 2012).
	Creditors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attracting investors; • culture of business activities; • higher level of investments; • making profits; • providing security. 	Generally, creditors expect responsible and consistently meet deadlines for the payment by a company. Thanks to this, the business will maintain good relations with creditors and will also increase the probability of obtaining high quality financing in the future (Mishra and Modi, 2016).
	Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • economic development; • education; • higher standard of living; • improve communication; • increase health; • job creation; • natural environment protection; • sense of security. 	A company's involvement in the problems of the local community creates a better atmosphere in the environment. People who helped the company's activities are happier and enjoy a higher standard of living. Knowing that companies are concerned for the good of the community, everyone feels safer and significantly decreases corruption in society. The company's philanthropic activities generate benefit for the least advantaged, helping the needy, increase trust and also inspire fair competition (Książak, 2016).

Table 2.
The benefits of the CSR concept based on external company's stakeholder

Source: own analysis based on: Bachnik, K. (2017); Bem-Kozieł, K. (2008); Bitcha, C. (2003); Flammer, C. (2014); Książak, P. (2016); Mishra, S. and Modi, S.B. (2016); Nogieć, J. (2013); Rudnicka, A. (2012); Sznajder M. (2013); Wołkowicka, A. and Dąbrowski, S. (2012).

Table 2.
Continued

	STAKE- HOLDER GROUPS	EXAMPLES OF BENE- FITS	DESCRIPTION
EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS	Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • financial outlays for environmental protection; • greater loyalty; • increase credibility; • rational exploitation of natural resources; • reduction of pollution; • stimulation of development. 	Governments tax businesses, and therefore have a firm stake in their success. Furthermore, some governments offer tax benefits for companies that behave in a socially responsible way, which also helps save money. Therefore, it can be stated that CSR policy considering the profit motive involved. Governments also provide regulatory oversight, ensuring that accounting procedures, ethical practices, and legal concerns are being handled responsibly by business representatives and also enabling to take root in the community and gaining the favor of its inhabitants (Bitcha, 2003).
	Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cooperation; • greater loyalty; • improve communication and relationships with a local community; • increase customer confidence; • professionalism. 	The media play an important role in disseminating information about socio-economic life. They have a strong influence on the behavior or decisions made by customers for its content, so that they can induce positive social changes. They often create a climate conducive to the development of certain attitudes and behaviors, and they can cause real resistance to actions that are disadvantageous from the point of view of public interest. The media guard the principles of social order. They react to unethical and unwarranted behaviors of business entities, forcing them to discuss and deeper analysis of the existing reality (Rudnicka, 2012).

striving to be permanently included in the economic landscape should consider the activities of social responsibility when drawing up its strategy. In particular, that CSR contributes to the growth of competitiveness and to improve the relationship of a company with the changing environment. CSR is a process of gradual improvement, within which an enterprise can better manage relations with stakeholders. This strategy should be seen as an investment and not just as a cost for a company.

In this paper authors focused on the role of employees in the process of fulfilling the objectives of the CSR strategy. Since it is a very common way of involving the employees in their choices of how to support charities and communities. The idea behind this might be also to increase the support and loyalty of employees by asking them to suggest and support initiatives that a company might support. If a company supports causes that are important to employees, the effect may be to

encourage the loyalty and participation of employees and this, in turn, can increase the productivity of the workforce.

In many cases, the Corporate Social Responsibility activities are defined as company's response to the needs of company's external stakeholders. Meanwhile, the strategic role of employees in CSR strategy realization makes them one of the most important stakeholders. It means the needs and expectations of employees should be realized primarily. Employees' efficiency, a degree of their engagement and level of identification with a company depend mostly on a company's approach to the employees: how they are treated and whether their rights are respected (Gadomska-Lila, 2012). The rapid increase of CSR activities and programs in companies determine that the employees' behaviors and attitudes are crucial factors which decide about a company's success, also CSR projects realization. This situation is a consequence of employees' direct involvement to CSR programs (Farooq, Farooq and Jasimuddin, 2014). Corporate volunteering is one of the most popular form of employees' answer to increasing role of corporate responsibility in terms of society. Volunteering initiatives develop new interpersonal skills, which influence quality of employees' teamwork in a company. It increases also work satisfaction, improves company's image and is a very important factor that helps to build the permanent relationships with shareholders, customers and environment.

To improve employees' CSR awareness human resources departments, need to be actively engaged in initiatives promoting CSR in the companies. Many socially responsible companies have programs to support employees in conducting CSR actions. They learn about benefits of being socially responsible for environment and society in everyday lifestyle. This phenomenon is usually called as "CSR engagement at the most engaged level", where employees use their skills and knowledge to improve local community, and they become more motivated and loyal employees (Strandberg, 2009).

Corporate volunteering does not only develop employees, but also it improves a local environment of a company. This form of employee activity is a conscious step of developing socially responsible company (Kaźmierczak, 2016). CSR objectives of a company can be reached only thanks to the proper human resources planning. Employee involvement is a factor which decides about CSR strategy realization. Human resources managers know the methods and tools to create opportunities for increase employees' commitment and engagement in realization of company's CSR strategy (Strandberg, 2009). Corporate volunteering is one of the methods where the employees can show their socially responsible approach. Many companies use corporate volunteering for declaring their responsibility for local communities and society (Lorenz, Gentile and Wehner, 2011; Kaźmierczak, 2016).

The first corporate volunteering initiatives were used at the beginning of the XX century in the USA. The United States is also a country with the longest

corporate volunteering tradition. Entrepreneurs see that financial success of their companies depends on employees' engagement, their teamwork, but mainly positive relations with local communities. Corporate volunteering is more and more common philosophy in other countries, including European countries like Great Britain, Norway, Sweden or Germany (Herzig, 2006). The first corporate volunteering initiatives in Poland are recorded in 90's of XX century (Kaźmierczak, 2016).

Corporate volunteering is defined as a voluntary and free work for a welfare of other employees or a whole society. In this special case, satisfaction and opportunity of doing good things can be treated as a form of salary (Kaźmierczak, 2016). Moreover, volunteering increases organizational identification with a company, develops employees' engagement to work and it has a positive impact on employees and their awareness by improving social capital (Glavas, 2016). The conclusion is, there is a link between a company and its environment. Employees' participation in society's life is necessary to create positive relations between a company and its environment. Employees can influence on social community. The positive information for a company is a possibility for making many benefits from employees' everyday participation in CSR strategy realization in many ways. Their commitment and loyalty develop productivity and create strong image of a company (Johansdottir and Olafsson, 2015). CSR activities are not only a single action, but they should be used every day in many forms. Dialogue, cooperation and honesty can help in introducing the socially responsible rules to practical part of a business conducting (Gadomska-Lila, 2012).

Employees are one of the most important stakeholders, because of their key role in developing and realizing CSR strategy. That is why companies more willingly consult and create strategies together with employees to engage them into the charity programs (Strandberg, 2009, p. 18). Every year volunteer initiatives are more important and they are the crucial parts of general CSR strategy of companies (Kaźmierczak, 2016). Volunteers using their skills and knowledge offer a help to local communities or support them by transferring collected donations (Forum Odpowiedzialnego Biznesu, 2009). The other examples of corporate volunteering are: blood donation campaigns; participation in national charity campaigns or collecting necessary items for the neediest people (Leoński, 2015). The forms and amounts of socially responsible initiatives depend mostly on company's financial abilities, needs of a society and creativity of employees.

The researches show there are a lot of different motivations which decide about employees' engagement in CSR strategy realization. For example, in the USA, 24% of employees-volunteers say they willingly take a part in volunteer initiatives, because their engagement is supported by employer (Global trends, 2007). The other research shows that the Netherlands, Denmark and Finland are the countries where the number of engaged employees is the biggest in Europe in

2011 (Netherlands – 57%; Denmark – 43% and Finland – 39%). The same report presents that the smallest percentage of volunteers is among Polish employees and reaches only 9% of total number of employees (Voluntary Work, 2011). Moreover, World Giving Index 2014 placed Polish employees at 115th position in “volunteering category” (Kaźmierczak, 2016).

Since, these reports were published, Corporate Social Responsibility became more and more popular in Polish business. There are institutions which monitor and analyze the number and frequency of CSR initiatives of Polish companies. The number of CSR initiatives increase because the companies see benefits of conducting socially responsible business (Gadomska-Lila, 2012). However, a very important is that volunteering gives benefits not only for the companies.

Volunteering has a positive impact on a company, employees and local communities. Thanks to socially responsible initiatives a company can better meet the needs and expectations of local environment, it helps a company to get new business contacts or even develops company's image which influences directly to company's financial results. Volunteering programs help company to appear in local media and get local communities' trust. Moreover, it encourages new clients to buy company's products and increases customers' loyalty (Leoński, 2015). Volunteering has also a positive impact on increasing organizational culture, getting and carrying employees in a company, it increases managers' and employees' motivation and it develops quality of management processes (Gadomska-Lila, 2012).

The most important benefits of corporate volunteering for employees are: increased motivation, satisfaction and integration with a company; better opinion about a company (the organization is a place where employees can earn money but also, they can improve their competences and skills); developed emotional relations between company and its employees. These aspects can be crucial in creating competitive advantage of a company (Białasiewicz, 2012). The employees represent a company, so their integration with a company is very important. That is why, volunteering and socially responsible initiatives help in effective human resources management (Leoński, 2015). Moreover, corporate volunteering positively influences on employees' labor market competitiveness. It helps employees to expand their horizons and get new knowledge and experiences.

Corporate volunteering is still a field that continuously develops in Polish business. The breakthrough is 2008, when corporate volunteering become popular among small and medium sized enterprises sector (39% in 2008 and 75% in 2012) (Drugie Ogólnopolskie Badania, 2013). The same research shows the most common form of corporate volunteering in Polish companies is helping non-profit organizations (67%) (Kaźmierczak, 2016).

The research conducted by Gadomska-Lila (2012) shows that the Polish employees more willingly look for deeper sense of work and abilities of meeting

the higher-level needs. That is why they more willingly and more often participate in corporate volunteering programs. The key role in motivating the employees has a leader here. Leader is a person who can give a good example for other employees how to be socially responsible (Gadomska-Lila, 2012). However, it is still necessary to spread knowledge about Corporate Social Responsibility, mainly its influence on market success and possibilities it gives for company's strategy realization (Gadomska-Lila, 2012). As it was mentioned, the factors which decide about possibilities of implementing CSR strategy are internal capabilities and resources a company has (Leoński, 2015).

The most important barriers, which minimize the employees' activities in CSR projects are: financial barriers; lack of knowledge about volunteering and ways of its implementation to a company; small awareness of owners about the benefits of corporate volunteering. Moreover, problems with implementation of corporate volunteering can be due to many work duties the employees have and their afraid of additional tasks to do during working hours, including overtime (Kaźmierczak, 2016).

The next section describes how corporate social initiatives are perceived by employees of one of the automotive companies located in Poland and presents their engagement to previous CSR projects and their declaration to participate in CSR projects in the future.

2. Context and research method

The research was conducted in one of the Polish automotive company with foreign capital in its financial structure. This company is a leader in the sector it is involved in, however due to the fact that authors did not receive the full consent from the management full details of the company will not be disclosed in this paper. Although, the company is located in Poland it should be noticed the impact of West Europe management style, standards and culture, especially among top level management, can be a critical factor concerning the approach to socially responsible problems.

The aim of the research was to analyze the employees' engagement to socially responsible activities in the company. In effect, it is possible to verify the employees' attitude to CSR projects that the company conducts. The interviews conducted with the employees should educate them and describe the most important benefits of CSR to encourage them to participate in the next socially responsible projects in the company.

Data were collected through questionnaires consisting of 17 closed questions. The employees participating in the survey received a short description of the main ideas of CSR and the conditions which defined the company as socially responsible. The questionnaire survey was conducted in 2016. Questionnaires were sent via e-mail (to administrative employees) or filled by paper and pencil

method (by production workers). All the employees, regardless of the job position, received the same questionnaires. The total amount of received questionnaires is 67 (35 from administration and 32 from production areas).

3. Research results

This part of the article presents the results of the survey related to employees' engagement to corporate socially responsible activities. These results should be helpful in describing the willingness of employees for taking a part in socially responsible programs in the company. The first question the employees are asked refers to their attitude to CSR activities the company conducted in the past. The employees are divided into two groups (administration employees and production employees) but graphs present also the total percentage of collected answers. Employees' activities in previous CSR programs are presented in Figure 1.

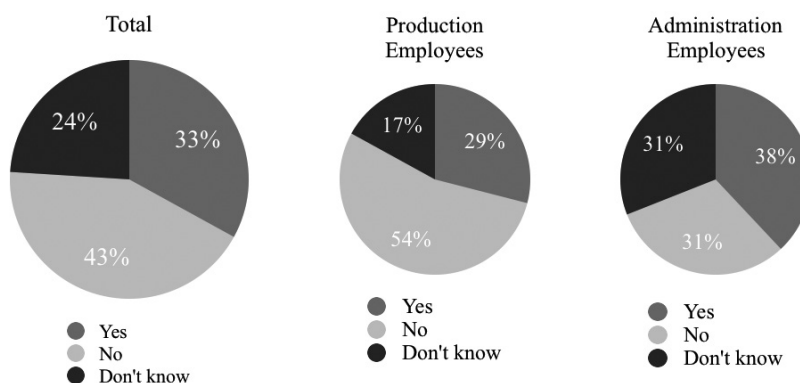


Figure 1.
Employees' engagement to socially responsible activities in the company in the past
Source: own work.

The findings presented in Figure 1 indicate that the employees admit they do not participate in socially responsible activities in the past (43%). Moreover, only 33% of them answer they engage in CSR project in the company, and 24% of total amount of employees answer they do not know if they have ever been engaged in socially responsible activities in the company.

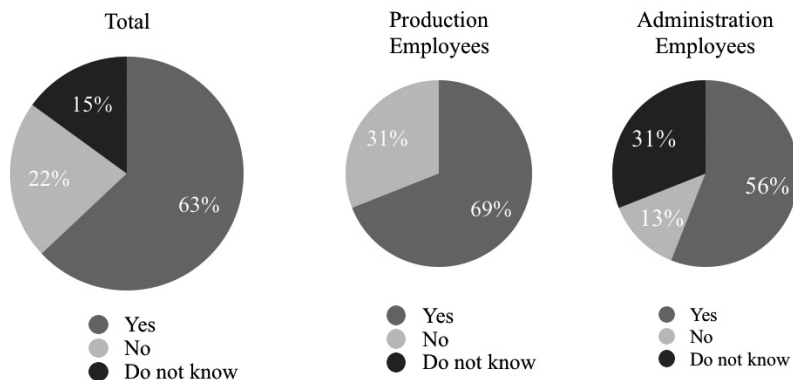
38% of administration employees answer they were engaged in CSR activities in the company. 31% of them answered they do not participate in CSR programs or they do not know if they were engaged in these activities in the past.

The differences in answers are clearer in case of production employees. 29% of them claim they were engaged in CSR projects in the company, but most of them (54%) did not participate in socially responsible activities in the company in previous years. 17% of blue collars were not able to define if they had taken a part in socially responsible activities or not.

The next question verifies if the employees are willingly to participate in socially responsible projects in the company after they know the concept of CSR. The respondents' answers are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2.
Employees' declaration for engaging to socially responsible activities in the company in the future

Source: own work.



Most of employees (63%) declared they want to take a part in the socially responsible activities in the company in the future, and only 22% of them have a different statement. 15% of the total amount of the employees do not know if they want to be engaged in next company's socially responsible activities.

These results are made by individual answers of administration and production employees. Most employees of both groups want to be engaged in next CSR projects in the company – administration (56%) and production (69%). Moreover, only 13% of administration and 31% of production employees do not want to participate in the next socially responsible projects conducted in the company. 31% of the administration employees answered “do not know” if they want to be engaged in the next socially responsible projects conducted in the company.

4. Conclusions

Summing up, the survey and its analysis show the employees' willingness to engagement in the socially responsible activities in the company depends on the position they occupy. Moreover, the most important conclusions made on the research refer to the issues presented below.

More than 60% of the employees claim that they have not ever participate in socially responsible projects, although the company realizes much intensified CSR strategy. Moreover, the administration employees more willingly participate in corporate social responsibility projects than production workers. The optimistic signals are declarations of employees, mainly blue collars, who answered they want to be more engaged in next socially responsible activities of the company. These declarations are more intensive after presenting the CSR concept to the

employees. It shows how important is to present all of the activities the company conducts in a proper way to reach a success. It is also an evidence that the company has a potential for efficient CSR projects realization in the future.

A significant part of the employees is still not decided if they want to take a part in next socially responsible activities in the company or they do not want to. This part of the employees is also a potential addressee of the next CSR campaigns. The main goal of the managers responsible for corporate social responsibility issues in the company is to encourage the employees to engage to CSR projects.

The most significant barriers, which employees define as a crucial and which reduce their engagement in CSR projects are: lack of free time; other duties after work and possibility of spending a free time with their families instead of taking a part in voluntary projects.

Doubtless, the communication and proper presentation of the CSR concept can be the most important factors, which can decide about improving employees' activities in CSR projects in the company. The employees' awareness in this area increases and it should constantly raise if managers use the techniques and tools for presenting the benefits of corporate volunteering for all of the groups: the employees, local community and company. Moreover, the managers should focus its activities not only to production employees, but also administration employees, because their participation is also very important for effective CSR strategy realization.

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