

SHERIN ALI - CSR PROFESSIONAL

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CHD Group speaks to Ms. Sherin Ali, – CSR Professional on why brand equity & not branding in corporate social responsibility must be at the heart of human development

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has been practiced by many companies much before this became a mandate. Why do you think companies actually practiced it?

The law of nature- planet earth has established life that will coexist and co create. Human, plant and animal life cannot exist by itself- interdependence is mandatory. With the evolving times, when the livelihood became complex, humans started focusing on selfish means by keeping the benefits primary. The basic rules of sustainability were ignored.

There were companies with consciousness who understood that the results were better when they worked in coexistence. They found long term benefits were outweighing the short term returns. These companies started practicing CSR and understood that they could sustain only in harmony

with life itself.

Corporate Social Responsibility in India was a passion till 2013, it necessarily had to become a practice over the years, it somehow turned out to become a fashionable buzzword. What are your thoughts on how this could be curated into a living example of social impact?

Companies in their own way were conscious of the survival equation. The focus shifted when the mandates were set in. This became the fashion statement and the feel good factor, that a show of care would enhance the visibility of the company. The building of a brand image and to create customer loyalty, companies started to do things which were an extra show of cause.

Any business or company needs to realise the resources that they are utilizing for doing their business. The compensation and the responsibility has to be channelized in that area, so that the depletion is sustained. For E.g. A manufacturing industry is emitting toxic gases, using natural resources. The prime focus has to be to ensure the best practices that keep a balance of the resources utilized. The entire process itself has to be developed in cognizance with the surrounding.

Corporations often focus on branding and profits. What must be done by corporate bodies to focus on brand equity and build cross sectoral social impact in India through CSR?

The shareholder expectations and the profitability curves got the management into a great pressure to deliver on a revenue creation cycle. The high profile designations came with the pressing ability to deliver for the returns. The entire lifecycle of the purpose for setting up a business moved away from sustaining livelihood to becoming a status statement. To increase the profits it became inevitable to make the brand look attractive.

The basic concept of creating any occupation or profession was to create a livelihood that would sustain the individual as well as the environment. Extracting from the resources to survive and maintain the balance with the ecosystem is mandate for existence. Corporations created innovations to make disruptive changes in the lifestyles and comfort in living. They completely ignored the fact that these technologies were creating massive destructive imprints. Some that were a permanent damage. The basic responsibility of any company or corporate is to ensure all the aspects are covered in the process of inclusive consideration.

We at CHD Group see a huge opportunity for corporates to build goodwill and brand equity by practicing CSR as a way of life instead of merely looking at it from a 2 percent standpoint, don't you think doing so, corporate firms will only amplify their business development, productions, and targets as well?

Business that look to create shareholder value and create employability have to begin with a heart. They have to practice the values of coexisting in the ecosystem.

Corporates that have based their products and services with the sole purpose to make profits cannot run the long race.

Any business that has concentrated on building a brand equity, with the aim to benefit all the stakeholders have sustained and achieved way beyond comprehension. The give and take of all natural and manmade resources has to be balanced. A mere 2% duty towards a law or a brand image is only a very short term tactic.

A wise boss once said, make your employees rich and you will be rich. Don't you feel making your communities and brand equity rich, can make corporates richer?

Absolutely true. The survival of any innovation, technology product or service have to be in agreement with the environs. If one product is depleting another resource there will soon be an imbalance. Unless the stakeholders are surviving with equal dignity, the corporate cannot expect to thrive.

A message you would like to provide for blending brand equity with sustainable development goals and re-imagining CSR in a post COVID-19 world?

Awareness of the survival of the smallest living organism to the largest being is an orchestration of the planet Earth.

Innovations of products and services have to be identified and released basis the good and harm that will be created. The 17 sustainable goals have laid down the essential and basic rules for the existence of life on planet earth. When corporates plan a business model on the basis of making profits, the basic goals are ignored.

I strongly feel that licences and product development should be closely monitored and given permission only if it complies to the planet needs. Making blunders and working back to create pathways for sustainable goals can be eliminated.

Thank you very much for your time and patience speaking to CHD Group