

Security's Role in Corporate Social Responsibility

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If your board of directors and chief executive officer have begun asking you about social responsibility, you're not alone. The Security Executive Council has noticed an uptick in the number of security executives being asked to run corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs for their organizations.

A CSR imposes on the company policies and practices that help create positive social and environmental impacts and that show a commitment to both stakeholders and the community. For those of you being called upon, as well as those who see this as an opportunity to grow or advance your career, keep in mind that CSR programs mean more than reputation management. They can improve business continuity and employee morale as well as expand markets and increase profits. Don't think of CSR programs as just charity events; they should be business-driven strategies that also support social benefits.

Why Security?

Francis D'Addario, emeritus faculty member of the Security Executive Council and former vice president of Partner and Asset Protection for Starbucks Coffee, says that companies have only recently realized that CSR makes good business sense. D'Addario is the author of [Influencing Enterprise Risk Mitigation, 2nd Edition](#), which deals with issues of social responsibility.

I "Now companies, organizations, NGOs and government agencies are realizing that their ability to transparently deal with others advances their mission, and security is a fast follower of executive management strategy. Recognizing risk [to people and communities] and letting people know you intend to do whatever is reasonable to mitigate it really buys you a lot of

trust and confidence,” says D’Addario. “It’s becoming a fast if not well-known differentiator for best-of-class businesses.”

Security acts as an enabler for CSR programs, D’Addario says. “The security of an organization really depends on how it is perceived. To be locally relevant, the company needs to assess local risk—anticipating the needs and dependencies and conditions relevant to the health and well-being of the organization being in that community. And you can do this in such a way that you’re recognizing what opportunities are out there as you’re recognizing the risks.”

What's In It For You?

Of course, participating in a CSR program can bring the satisfaction that comes in doing good for your community and/or environment. However, running a CSR program is a great way to demonstrate your ability to add value to the organization. As stated in a 2009 McKinsey Quarterly article, there are a number of ways that CSR programs can add real value to the organization, and accomplishing any number of these will reflect strongly on your skills as a business leader:

- Gaining access to new markets
- Identifying new products, innovations or increasing differentiation in order to meet social needs
- Improving reputation to increase brand loyalty or ability to implement premium pricing
- Cost savings through environmental operations and practices
- Improving employee morale, lowering costs related to turnover
- Lowering risk through regulatory compliance and NGO demands
- Improving long term supply chain viability

- Reducing local resistance in markets by gaining public support and engaging local communities
- Avoiding negative publicity
- Leadership development through participation in CSR programs

How to Get a CSR Program Started?

Use your existing knowledge of running new risk management programs to guide you. A good starting point is the common risk management program development cycle:

- **Perform Assessment.** Get to know the current situation and what can be improved
- **Define Objectives.** Helping the world is great, but the only sustainable program is one that also provides value to the organization
- **Develop Strategy.** When looking for value, give thought to four possible areas of focus for a CSR program: the workplace, the marketplace, the community, and the environment
- **Implement & Measure Performance.** Don't forget to measure results!
- **Review and Communicate Results.**

About the Security Executive Council

We are a research and advisory firm for security leaders. We have a collective of close to 100 security subject matter experts that have been successful security executives or are recognized industry experts in their field. The resources and tools we develop are constantly evolving to provide maximum value. Some engage with us by way of multi-year “retained” services agreements (Tier 1 Stakeholders). Tier 1 Stakeholders are those that want support on an ongoing basis but also want to have an active role in identifying solutions for the industry. Others come to us seeking a specific solution to a contained issue. In all the ways people engage with the SEC the bottom line goal is to help define and communicate the value of the Security organization.

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