

A 'Priest'ine Leadership A Case study of cultivation of Leadership qualities through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

Wg Cdr Deepak Agte (Retd)¹,

PhD Student

Prof. Dr Pranati Tilak²,

Dean Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth, Pune

Abstract

Leadership required in discharging the responsibility of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is different from other types of leaderships. This is because CSR undertaking is not just a onetime effort. It has to be sustained for a prolonged period of time. The leadership involved should not wane out with the passage of time. At the same time it should create more number of leaders with hands down training so that new generation's leadership qualities may get enhanced. Unless a top leader drives people under him and offers a fair chance to other team members i.e volunteers, it will be futile to expect a proper grooming of future CSR Leaders. The present research paper seeks to focus on a case study of a priest (*Guruji*) who single handedly groomed many persons deftly and cultivated their innate characteristics required for discharging CSR activities. The required factors are elucidated briefly and are summarized at the end

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, sustainability, volunteers, leadership qualities, Ethics and morality

Period of study

The study was made towards the end Dec 2020.

Introduction

Various researchers have rightly brought out that the leadership required in undertaking Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is different from many other types of leaderships. Not only leader may possess passion, compassion, selflessness, morals, ethics and many other qualities of a leader, but should be able offer a chance to others under him to develop similar qualities. In many organizations, CSR responsibility is trusted to a General Manager HR or Finance, without ascertaining the merit for it. In such a case volunteers working under him may not flourish as independent leader. Christopher Wickert et al (Jan 2019) rightly observed that putting CSR into practice requires more than CEO speeches and company policies; managers and

employees have to be on board, so that initiatives can be implemented and momentum for CSR can be sustained. Their research found that CSR managers are critical change agents in leadership. Their inspirational role needs to be recognized and strengthened. (Christopher Wickert et al Jan 2019)

CSR undertaking is not a onetime effort. It carries on and on if strategic goals are to be achieved (Lina Caneva 2014). Effective governance and leadership is a key if companies are to integrate sustainability into their operations for the long term. The author further states that according to sustainability expert Dr Carol Adams., companies who make the most progress towards sustainable practices have leaders who believe that the right thing to do is good for business. If sustainability initiatives are to succeed, the CEO must believe it is the right thing to do and that business should do the right thing. The leadership styles of the executive team are conducive to integrating sustainability. A committed, proactive executive will be needed to make change happen. Competent, committed business leaders will face significant challenges.

Leadership has a vital role in promoting an ethical and moral behavior. Moreover, leaders should be models for the followers and should aim to shape organizations by their own values and characteristics as per Gorski Hortensia (Romanian-German University of Sibiu)(2017).

Although top managers are obviously in the best position to influence strategies and policies , the leader's values , ethics are to be examined (Waldman and Siegel 2008) as quoted by Danijela Sarcevic (Sep 2013) .Leadership has a vital role in promoting an ethical and moral behaviour. Moreover, leaders should be models for the followers and should aim to shape organizations by their own values and characteristics.

Petulia Blake and Bassou El Mansour Associate Professor Fairholm (2010) discusses that leaders perform two types of strategic activities: Strategic thinking, (which Kanji (2008) addresses) and strategic planning as part of the management domain where goals and actions are (Poister, 2010) clearly defined for measuring performance.

A Case Study: This is a classic case of turning of volunteers into CSR leaders by a priest (*Guruji*), who used to perform worship (*puja*) at various places. Due to his nature of duties, he visited people from all the classes for worship (*pujas*). He brought out that persons from high class or middle class or poor class had equal degree of faith in the almighty. Only pomp and show and gaiety would differ as per the class. He was trusted to undertake CSR activities in rural area on a behalf of a big business house. His upright and clean dealings discerned the hallmark of a priest. Due to his profession and impressive talk, he mustered rich as well as the poor youth in his area of operation. Due to his piety, he could walk into any hutment or a even posh bungalow with equal poise.

Although psychology never remained a subject during his studies, he had mastered the art through the practice perhaps! Rich or poor have equal degree of sorrows or happiness and hence he could befriend them equally.

With his passion and acumen, he inspired volunteers with a common goal and who were always ready to devote their time and efforts for CSR activities. He thrived and enjoyed their absolute faith in him. Surprisingly, with his continual guidance, their leadership qualities went on rise with a passage of time. These leadership qualities are discussed below:

Team Building : Being talkative, priest could acquire grip of team members' minds. Thus in short, they would muster their efforts towards CSR. The rich volunteers spend their money in a benevolent manner. volunteers from middle class society spared their time and intellect, and volunteers from poor strata were ready participate in physical labour or services ('sewa') This way he built a small team with which he could undertake social responsibility . Being the Admin of a 'whatsapp group' he used to pass instructions regarding time and venue for congregation. He used to decide upon a remote village for a visit .Thereafter volunteers used to carry on with finding the needs of the people there and help them out to the best of their abilities.

Team Spirit: Volunteers would group themselves at a rendezvous point. From this point, they would decide upon who to tag along with whom etc. Every time the group members used to have a different number. This generated dynamic situation & hence, the team spirit or '*Esprit De Corps*' got built up.

Stage Boldness : Many volunteers taught rural school children. While doing so, a shy or stammering volunteer who otherwise would not have received the opportunity to talk to a congregation of people, now could cultivate stage boldness.

Sportsman Spirit: Some volunteers had no exposure or facilities or for sports activity during their school days. But while doing social responsibility, they could intermingle with rural children during the conduct of sports activities.

Preparedness : The volunteers carried emergency lights, laptops with fully charged batteries and an overnight kit, if they used to make headway to a village in the evening. This was to cater for any unforeseen circumstances where villages used to remain drowned in the darkness at night most of the times. Good leader should anticipate and act accordingly.

Accommodativeness: As a rule, volunteers did not stay in anybody's house for the night. They always headed for a temple for the night shelter. The size of available space and the number of team members invariably had always an askew ratio. But yet nobody retorted.

Selflessness: It is not easy to congregate followers from different strata of the society, with different professions and different mental makeup unless the leader has very good qualities to keep them bound with a common motive and that too selflessly. Why this example is cited is for the precise reason that this is a rare quality of leadership. This kind of leadership is totally different from either which is seen in military or one found in industries. It has no profiteering transactions either and yet it is fortified with a common goal of serving the poor in community beyond the call of their duty.

Patience: The team members were asked to exercise their patience. The team being organized for non-profit service, there was every chance that the team might get disintegrated for no reason. To keep them intact and together, high degree of patience was demanded. Unless dynamism plays its role, patience alone may not succeed. The team members used to be given a chance to become leaders rotationally. Everyone realized the importance of patience with self examples. This way it cultivated the team spirit which kept them intact. As regards to the work they were to carry on as per their capabilities.

Empathy: Compassion for the people, whom one is going to serve as well as the team members, is of primary importance. The requirements of rural community are to be ascertained by the leader for undertaking social development.

Motivation: Leader has to keep the team members well motivated. Whatever work is undertaken by a team member is to be appreciated. Simple words in praise also can do the trick. However, the work undertaken is to be closely monitored so as to find some plus points as well as some grey areas. For the sake of appreciating and motivating a person, falsity in the work must be avoided. This will rejuvenate the team member's mind to undertake the social work more openly.

Dedication: The leader needs to display his grit and dedication in efforts towards social development of community. This will not only motivate team members but inculcate the sense of devotion in their own day-to-day activities.

Ethics and morality Under the guidance of priest (*Guruji*), volunteers followed ethical practices. They were upright in their thinking and delivery of services. They never entered the region of moral turpitude because they were working on their own volition and without any expectation of rewards return.

Thus, under Guruj's guidance and persuasion, perseverance and his stoic approach transformed this youth into unsung heroes. They were always welcomed by the communities they operated in. In return, communities also stood to gain. This was a classic case of cultivation of leadership qualities through social development! A true Priest'ine Leadership!

Importance of this type of leadership:

It is pertinent to note that genial leadership is very important for CSR activities. Today's change agents are the future CSR leaders Most of the times, targets are new and approach in dealings with human beings needs change.

Suggestions: In this case study, an example of priest, although factual, is representative as a leader in CSR. Volunteers who lacked acumen were the 'Change agents' and subsequently got groomed as futuristic CSR leaders. However, everywhere such situation may not exist. Hence, good CSR Leaders, who are identified in accompany , may be given extra responsibility to impart training in others in different companies or undertake workshops for larger groups.

Conclusion : Leadership for CSR activities is bit different from other types of leadership. The grooming of change agents of CSR has to be done in a deft manner. One requires adroit personality to undertake this task. Among many other leadership qualities, Team Building, Team Spirit, Stage Boldness, Sportsman Spirit, Preparedness, Accommodativeness, Selflessness, Selflessness , Patience, Empathy, Motivation, Dedication, Ethics and morality are very important. This way not only the community will stand to gain but it will build good qualities in CSR leaders.

References :

- (i) <https://hbr.org/2019/01/how-csr-managers-can-inspire-other-leaders-to-act-on-sustainability> by Christopher Wickert and Frank G.A. de Bakker January 10, 2019
- (ii) Adams, CA (2013) 'The role of leadership and governance in transformational change towards sustainability' *Global Responsibility*, Issue 9.

- (iii) https://www.researchgate.net/publication/318733712_Leadership_and_Corporate_Social_Responsibility Gorski Hortensia (Romanian-German University of Sibiu -Jan 2017)
- (iv) https://www.researchgate.net/publication/266210256_LEADERSHIP_FOR_CORPORATE_SOCIAL_RESPONSIBILITY_AND_SOCIAL_CHANGE_-_AN_OVERVIEW by Danijela Sarcevic
- (v) <https://www.ufhrd.co.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/UFHRD2012Sust2.pdf> by Petulia Blake and Bassou El Mansour, Associate Professor ,College of Technology Indiana State, University Terre Haute, IN 47809, USA.