

How to be a CSR manager

Although, often, the role of the social responsibility manager coincides with the sustainability manager, it must be kept in mind that there are substantial differences in the performance of these two roles. The responsibility of a CSR manager concerns the way in which companies engage with social issues on a voluntary basis, especially in the relationship with stakeholders. In contrast, the sustainability manager deals with more long-term issues: the core business of the company and the strategies put in place for its innovation. Clearly, the two roles are complementary and sometimes overlap. To be a sustainability manager, one needs to fulfil some basic requirements, albeit basic ones: an understanding of the core business of the organization one is part of, an awareness of what sustainability is and what it means to develop sustainably, an assessment of the current situation of the company and the development trajectory to be taken, and the ability to influence future strategies.

A sustainability manager should ask himself three fundamental questions:

- 1) Whether the company they represent has its own definition of sustainability
- 2) What is the gap between what has been done and what needs to be done in this regard
- 3) How this gap can be bridged

Hence the importance of the ability to influence and motivate the company to move in the right direction.

In order to be a successful social responsibility and sustainability manager, it must be understood that there is no such thing as a sustainable material per se: it is its management during its life cycle that demonstrates its sustainable approach. Furthermore, full sustainability can only be achieved by involving the entire supply chain. Separate challenges, such as carbon emissions, must then be addressed without losing sight of the bigger picture. Gradual processes and teamwork are also crucial.

The most valuable asset for a company that wants to engage in sustainability is in choosing who to hire, this means knowing the market in which you are hiring, starting with the salary levels required. Acre Resources, founded in 2003, was the first recruitment company to have a section dedicated to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). In general, however, CSR encompasses a wide range of sectors, although the financial sector seems to host the largest number of professionals in this field. Moreover, a very interesting fact is the strong presence of women (over 60% of the workforce). However, male roles still dominate the higher salary levels.

The UK appears to be, without doubt, the hub of CSR, with 64% of professionals working in the capital. This reflects the European experience, where CSR roles are predominantly concentrated in industrial centers such as Geneva, Zurich and The Hague. On the other hand, as far as remuneration is concerned, after a period of strong fluctuations, it can now be said that when the corporate brand is very much based on ethics or when a company has very high social and environmental risks, remuneration is higher.

It should not be thought that the altruistic drive that characterizes most workers who want to devote themselves to social responsibility prevents them from being demanding in terms of salary. In general, Acre conducted an analysis in the UK that revealed a median salary in CSR of between £45,000 and £50,000 per year, with some rare cases touching peaks of £100,000 - £150,000. In particular, for CSR managers, the 2008/09 CSR salary survey with partners Acona and Ethical Performance showed that they manage a budget of between £100,000 and £150,000, usually have 10-+15 years of full-time employment and are most likely to have worked in the field for less than five years. They are almost certainly university graduates (with any postgraduate qualifications) and most likely to be female.

While, in the past, many companies focused their social responsibility strategy mainly on their philanthropy, other aspects are now becoming more relevant: the areas of environmental

management, climate change, stakeholder dialogue, reporting and ensuring that the supply chain works within ethical and environmental guidelines.

As a new graduate, passion and dedication seem to be the key to entering this field of work. Usually, companies do not tend to recruit through agencies, to avoid paying commissions to recruitment consultants. Therefore, the solution is to focus on a clear CV and covering letter, seeking internships and other experience whenever possible.

Tasks of the CSR manager

- Creating CSR events

Every event of this kind aims to instruct, educate or motivate participants to do something useful for the company. Three distinct objectives can be pursued at the same time:

- 1) The professional objectives of those working in Human Resources
- 2) The objectives of those working in marketing
- 3) The CSR objectives of the company

Usually in these events one works, as a group, on developing social skills, strengthening identification with the company, improving the working atmosphere, strengthening the team, reducing staff turnover, improving the company's image and so on.

The instruments used to achieve these aims can be varied, including conferences, kick-off meetings, company parties, anniversaries, incentive competitions.

Example:

A good example of a staff event with a CSR commitment is a three-day meeting that took place in a German pharmaceutical company. In one afternoon, 350 members of staff, gathered in small teams, carried out various projects in some 60 social organizations near the company headquarters. The organizations included kindergartens, nursing homes, drug counselling services, shelters for battered women, playgrounds and many others. The project work was recorded by a film crew and then screened in front of the participants and management at a reception that evening. The enthusiasm of the staff was so great (as was the interest of the media) that everyone volunteered to do a similar activity the following year.

The procedure of an event can be standardized with various models and then adapted accordingly. First of all, a coordination of the CSR objectives of the event with the company management or CSR representative is required. Then comes the selection of the most suitable organizations and social projects (usually a cooperation with partners who have good contacts with the organizations and are familiar with their needs is preferred). This is followed by preliminary discussions with the various social organizations for the realization of projects and negotiations with contractors, suppliers, craftsmen... At this point, the agency draws up a preliminary timetable and a budget of costs to be incurred.

Finally, the follow-up includes the compilation of documents on all realised projects, detailed information on the various participants, reference media and a financial comparison between objective and actual results.

- Integrated report

The integrated report (sustainability report) is a concise communication that illustrates how an organisation's corporate strategy, governance, performance and prospects enable it to create value in the short, medium and long term in the context in which it operates. It serves to provide investors

with comprehensive information on financial and non-financial aspects in the medium, short and long term; to integrate corporate information silos, to align internal and external reporting processes. In the integrated report, the annual report and the sustainability report are merged (financial and environmental/social dynamics are combined in a single report).

The father of all Integrated Reports: Terna.

The CSR manager is constantly involved in the implementation process of the integrated report and his central role has been recognised within the organisation over time. In January 2012, an internal team of managers and employees from financial and CSR areas was created to implement this report. In this first phase, the various organisational areas were not involved in order not to interfere with their daily activities. The first integrated report was Terna's, presented by the CSR manager to the Public Affairs manager. It was published in 2012 and served to break the ice and try to involve the other organisational areas as well. Along the way, however, various obstacles were encountered, including the hostility of the finance area, which was worried about losing control over the reporting on the subject: they wanted to be sure that the data were correct, but the area only had control over the balance sheet data and not the sustainability data. Furthermore, there were tensions with the strategic planning area, which was reluctant to disclose sensitive data. Subsequently, the collaboration of other actors was sought, such as the head of investor relations, who immediately welcomed this initiative, due to the possibility of providing complete and concise information on the organisation's performance. This is because investors are not satisfied with reading the balance sheet, as this does not clarify the company's ability to create value, its objectives and all non-financial information. The data reported that if the integrated report is appreciated, the company will most likely be rewarded, for example, by an increase in the share price. When the finance department then realised that the integrated report did not detract from their work in preparing the financial statements, they became more cooperative. This did not, however, prevent further obstacles due to the lengthy presentation of the data, constant conflicts with the finance area, which wanted to supervise the entire drafting process, foreclosing access to information and deciding what to report independently. To overcome these challenges, an external consultant, an expert in web and IT communication, was brought in to improve clarity, content, synthesis and effectiveness. Subsequently, all the various areas (including finance) became more open to collaboration. In this way, the 2015 Integrated Report was no longer a simple collage of information summarising the sustainability report and financial statements, but rather a document in its own right, with a defined structure illustrating business and company organisation, strategic plans, development, objectives, capital, risks and performance.

- Working on the materiality matrix

Materiality analysis is a useful tool for defining what is actually important to the company. To achieve this, companies need to engage with their employees and stakeholders from the outside world' and ask them questions about their frustrations, expectations and priorities. Getting this process right can become a trump card for companies not only from a communication and reporting point of view (medium relevance objectives), but also and above all to create a greater awareness of their role and corporate identity, to structure a bond of trust with stakeholders and, finally, to integrate sustainability into business strategies (the real high relevance objective). The areas are: human rights, environment, governance, nutrition which are positioned on a scale of relevance from low business impact to high business impact. The form of these matrices can be very different: for example, it is different for Eni. Eni lists the most relevant topics and matches each one with an SDG. The matrices change systematically according to new inputs from the company in a wide variety of areas.

Case study → Poste Italiane and CSR

Founded in 1862 as an autonomous company that operated postal and telegraph services under a monopoly, Poste Italiane S.p.A. is an Italian company that provides postal, banking, financial, telecommunications, public telematics, collection/payment and postal savings collection services.

The original structure, 'seniority' and conformation of the company would suggest that, in the area of sustainability, it has not achieved significant goals or goals that would allow it to compete with companies that are more advanced in this regard. However, this one has a strong sustainable matrix and this can be seen from the first impact, through the website, where there is a special section dedicated to the subject, very detailed and easy to access.

In order to be able to define a company as 'sustainable', however, it is necessary for it to achieve relevant and joint results in economic, environmental and social terms. Under this lens, it will be shown how Poste Italiane has grown, adapting to multiple and ever-changing challenges since its founding years.

In terms of the environment, a Green Strategy has been adopted, aimed at the principles of savings, recovery and recycling, as well as innovation and safety. For several years, 100% of the electricity used by Poste Italiane has come from renewable sources. Along these lines, the company is a partner in international programmes aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions, such as EMMS, the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Programme in Europe, and the OSCAR programme. The fleet of vehicles is also increasingly environmentally friendly: there are about 3,000 of them powered by methane or LPG. In addition, to encourage employees to use sustainable transport solutions, agreements have been implemented for annual public transport season tickets in various cities and a carpooling service has been launched in Rome and Milan.

Code of Ethics and social sustainability

Poste Italiane also plays a prominent role in social matters. In this respect, much can be read in the Code of Ethics, adopted in April 2018 by resolution of the Board of Directors of each Group company. Presenting, in the first part, the general values that lead the company, the second part outlines the criteria of conduct for the addressees and the main areas in which it wants to make a difference; for example, it is at the forefront in the fight against corruption and its prevention, in fact, in December 2017 it signed a three-year memorandum of understanding with the Guardia di Finanza, aimed at facilitating the fight against tax evasion and fraud. In addition, the protection of privacy is promoted, guaranteeing the protection of information to recipients and third parties, excluding misuse thanks to increasing database security measures. Particular attention is also paid to transparency: a portal called 'Contratti Aperti & Trasparenti' is available, which can be consulted by everyone and contains the main information on each contract. The company is also committed to regulating a transparent dialogue with suppliers, institutions and the community: with respect to the latter, projects are implemented for categories in situations of hardship; while for suppliers, ethical standards of conduct are adopted in the selection phase, at times urging them to obtain certifications, such as those relating to quality (ISO 9001), the environment (ISO 14001), society (SA 8000), and worker health and safety (OHSAS 18001). In addition to this, the company supports and disseminates respect for human rights, such as dignity, freedom and equality of individuals, as well as the protection of health, safety, the environment and labour. For example, 488,000 hours dedicated to occupational safety are included in employee training activities, which saw more than 72,000 participants in 2016 alone. In the contractual sphere, the National Collective Labour Agreement (CCNL) regulates the operation of national and regional Equal Opportunities Committees aimed at promoting actions and initiatives to remove any obstacles to equal opportunities. Women in the company represent 53 per cent of the total workforce and 58 per cent of the total post office managers (around 13,000). In light of this strong focus, which is evident in the way the company tells its story, I tracked down a group of employees from several post offices between Rome and Milan, to submit them a questionnaire on perceived corporate sustainability, aimed at obtaining practical feedback, however small. Below is the company's impact in some of the fields outlined (Figure 1) and, in footnote 6, some of the most relevant results of the questionnaire.

In addition to the Code of Ethics, in March 2021, the Board of Directors approved the four-year strategic plan '2024 Sustain & Innovate' to grow on the basis of the Deliver Plan22 . This emphasises, among others: the commitment to greater value creation (1.6 billion euros by 2024, +33% compared to 2020), zero net emissions by 2030, digitalisation of 50% of daily interactions (around 11 million), the promotion of innovation with Digital Technology Operations (a new division), and continued investment in innovation and technology (3.1 billion euros between 2021 and 2024, with over 60% having ESG characteristics).

Poste Italiane and sustainability indicators

Poste Italiane uses universally recognised parameters (indicators) to measure its performance. It uses two in particular: the first refers to the GRI Standards that combine environmental, social and economic aspects; the second is the Key Performance Value (KPI) . Initiatives implemented and results achieved can be seen below (Table 1).

INIZIATIVA	RISULTATO (valutato tramite GRI-KPI)	OBIETTIVO
Progetto <i>Green Ticket</i> ¹	Progetto nuovo	100% uffici abilitati entro 2021
Cassette Postali SMART ²	347 nel 2019	10.500 entro il 2025
Transazioni digitali (app/web)	90.3 mln nel 2019	100 mln entro 2025
Download app <i>Postepay</i> e <i>PM</i>	+25% nel 2020 rispetto al 2019	+10% entro il 2022 rispetto al 2019
Pagamenti <i>online</i>	397 mln nel 2020	894 mln entro il 2024
Carte bio-degradabili	Progetto nuovo	16 mln entro 2024

Table 1: Results and objectives of initiatives implemented by Poste Italiane in recent years to improve corporate sustainability. Source: personal reworking of data in the Innovation area of the Poste Italiane website.

¹ A postal service that allows you to book your shift at Post Offices via smartphone: you frame the QR code and are kept informed of your shift via the screen, avoiding unnecessary paper.

² Equipped with a screen, they inform the target population about temperature, humidity and the degree of air pollution (amount of fine dust present). They are also equipped with sensors to detect the presence of mail inside them, optimising the collection phase (allowing for fewer trips and thus reducing the environmental impact of their vehicles). As of 5 May 2021, there were about 40,000 SMART boxes, 800 of which were in the city of Milan..

In 2021 Poste Italiane will boast its presence, for the third year in a row, in the Dow Jones Sustainability Indexes, which are designed to measure the sustainability of listed companies and have become a point of reference for those who want to invest in sustainability.

Among the various actions undertaken by the company and which characterize its commitment to sustainability, attention to some more technical aspects, such as the drafting of the sustainability matrix, the integrated balance sheet and all those additional strategies and initiatives primarily linked to the SDGs, which will be discussed below, is not secondary.

Sustainability matrix

Poste Italiane has developed a materiality analysis process consistent with the provisions of Legislative Decree 254/16. The relevant issues have been identified with the direct involvement of internal and external stakeholders, with listening and engagement initiatives, such as the annual Multistakeholder Forum.

Eighteen issues were identified, described in a clear and comprehensible way for all, which were then used to define 8 pillars of the ESG Strategic Plan. In addition, for each pillar

by the company and stakeholders' specific objectives and targets that contribute to the achievement of the SDGs.

Another positive aspect is the link between the materiality matrix and the company's business and value strategy, as each theme is included in the new four-year strategic plan '2024 Sustain & innovate'. Finally, the interconnections between the material themes and the main measurement metrics adopted are also described. The aim is to always meet and verify the commitments made.

Integrated Report

Poste Italiane's Integrated Report won the Oscar di Bilancio in the large companies category. The decision to produce a summary document allows even non-technical stakeholders to understand the Group's sustainability path. It is interesting, easy to read and understand as well as being pleasing to the eye due to the simple yet creative iconographic choices. It is the result of adopting an integrated approach, perpetrated despite the health emergency, where financial assessments and sustainability impacts coexist in corporate decisions.

On a methodological level, the company has decided to go beyond the current regulatory framework, adhering to the most important international frameworks. This choice stems from the Group's desire for transparency and accountability.

The Financial Statements include, integrated into the Report on Operations, the Consolidated Non-Financial Statement, prepared in accordance with Articles 3 and 4 of Legislative Decree 254/2016 and the "Global Reporting Initiative Sustainability Reporting Standards" defined by GRI.

Poste Italiane's purpose is to grow responsibly thanks to the decisive contribution of people for the sustainable success, innovation, digitalisation and social cohesion of the country. Poste is aware that it is a company set in a context, both national and international, that it can influence and be influenced by.

Poste Italiane's capillary presence in the territory and the resources at its disposal enable the Group to generate economic, environmental and social impacts, assuming a fundamental role in the life and economy of the country.

In 2020, the Group generated impacts in terms of GDP worth EUR 12.2 billion and EUR 2 billion in terms of tax revenues, involving about 191 thousand workers. This resulted in EUR 7.4 billion in income distribution to workers.

The sustainability strategy

The graph shows the path of consolidation of the sustainability strategy oriented towards the creation of shared value and this has led to the achievement of important objectives: the Group turns its declarations into actions and pays attention to the monitoring and verification of the measures taken. In fact, the ESG Strategic Plan includes specific ESG objectives and targets, both quantitative and qualitative, that the company has set itself. For each area, the impactful SDGs are described, the results achieved and the targets still to be achieved, the reference indicators, the stakeholders involved, all included in a timeline that outlines the various stages and the time it will take to reach the goals. For each pillar, Poste's activities and initiatives with other national or international players are also indicated.

In the area of risk management, in addition to the Internal Control and Risk Management System, the 2020 Budget also includes a greater focus on emerging risks, such as pandemic and climate risks.

As evidence of the progress achieved, Poste Italiane requests and obtains evaluations from specialized companies regarding the company's level of reputation and sustainability. In this regard, awards in the area of corporate reputation have come from RepTrak , Top Manager Reputation and many others . In 2020 Poste also confirmed its presence in important sustainability indices, including the Dow Jones Sustainability Europe Index.

Survey's outputs

In the period between April and May '22, a questionnaire was administered to a female under 40 years old CSR manager working for an Italian bank. The aim of this work was to find out what are the necessary tools needed to undertake this type of career. It was addressed an individual working in the field of corporate sustainability who is holding position of CSR manager. The answers to the questionnaire revealed that the selected individual obtained a bachelor's degree in Political Science for Development Cooperation and then went on to obtain a master's degree in sustainability, thanks to which he was able to undertake an internship at the bank where he currently works and within which he was able to advance his career to the position of CSR manager. The education background she received before the master's degree was only partially aligned with what she would be dealing with during her working career, so internships, master's degrees and on-the-job training were crucial to achieve her current career type. For the latter, both soft skills (such as interpersonal, communication, problem-solving, flexibility and the ability to optimize resources) and hard skills (presentation, management and analytical) are required.

On a day-to-day level, the work can change significantly: at some times, the focus is on organizing events to promote corporate sustainability, at others, new partners and collaborations aimed at CSR are sought, and at others, the Integrated Report (mentioned above and an activity that requires the utmost commitment as well as the involvement of all areas of the company) is drawn up. Today, according to the interviewee, the role of CSR manager is fundamental both for stakeholders and investors, who increasingly require information that goes beyond the mere financial field, and for future employees; in fact, the new generations are increasingly interested and expert in sustainability issues and it is therefore becoming increasingly important to work for a company that can make a difference in this field as well.

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