

CSR managers in front of the mirror

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Corporate social responsibility has not yet caught on in most corporate structures and many companies do not have a specific department.

According to the European Commission, "corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis." This definition covers aspects as varied as reputation, environmental strategy, social action, employee policies and good governance.

In recent years, CSR has come to define a new form of managing organizations, looking to involve stakeholders and ensure long-term sustainability without sacrificing profit.

However, though the concept is respected in theory, it is difficult to put into practice. In many companies, there is still no name for the managers responsible for this area; most CSR departments consist of only one person.

Who are these professionals? The study, "[El perfil emergente del directivo de RSC](#)" ("The Emerging Profile of the CSR Manager"), aims to improve our understanding of their daily work - what they spend most of their time on and their opinions on how CSR is managed.

A total of 190 questionnaires were sent out and 48 responses were received. A modest number, but sufficiently representative to establish an initial profile of these managers and to determine their concerns, expectations and needs.

Variety of résumés for a vague position

The average age of a Spanish CSR manager is 42, with the largest group being between the ages of 36 and 40. Half of respondents are under 40. They are professionals who are mostly in the middle of their career. There are no significant differences in terms of gender, with the proportion being approximately 50/50. There are more women in the under-40 age group, but the numbers are even in the over-50 age bracket.

University training is highly diverse, with the majority having a degree in economics or business administration (33 percent) and law (19 percent). Other training areas include psychology, biology, medicine, engineering, marketing and journalism. A total of 82 percent of respondents have undertaken postgraduate studies, though these are also highly varied. Only 11 percent have completed some kind of specialized CSR course.

Their professional backgrounds are also diverse: most have worked in human resources and labor relations (18 percent) as well as communications (11.4 percent), while the category of "other" - which accounts for 51 percent - includes management support, general management, analysis and strategy manager, investor relations, legal advisor and area sales director.

This shows that there is not yet a mature labor market for these professionals. In fact, most access the job from within the same company (almost 79 percent), and many of these managers have been devoted to the role for a very short amount of time: 37 percent under two years and 15 percent for less than one.

CSR departments are generally small if they have more than one worker: in 60 percent of cases, the manager has three people or fewer working in the department and 23 percent have no other workers. Only 53 percent of the firms in question have a specific CSR department, and in 85 percent of cases, CSR functions are performed by other departments, generally by the marketing or communications and human resources or labor relations departments.

Nor is there agreement over the name with which to designate the person responsible for CSR. In just over 20 percent of the cases, the name of the position is directly related to the role: CSR manager, CSR coordinator, CSR director, CSR manager, CSR officer, and so on.

Similarly, there are titles related to the specific functions of the post: director of corporate reputation, director of reputation, image and social action, head of corporate reputation.

Others take their cue from their departments (director of communication, director of human resources) and from those alluding to quality, corporate affairs or sustainability (director of social initiative training, director of prevention and CSR, head of sustainability).

Much responsibility, little power

The CSR manager is generally in charge of the firm's social action, community relations and reputation. However, in slightly more than 50 percent of the cases, they are also responsible for the entire process, namely for the design, implementation and monitoring of policies. This situation occurs in 52 percent of cases in the area of social action, 48 percent in community relations and 45 percent in issues related to reputation. Thus, the authors infer that "the CSR department is set up more like a staff department than as an operational unit."

Most of their time is dedicated to drawing up reports and data collection, project design and team meetings. There is a notable lack of training as well as lack of effort to improve CSR training itself.

Those responsible for this area are managers convinced of their company's commitment to corporate responsibility, though they did express a degree of pessimism about the clarity of their role within the company. It is worth mentioning that 17 people - 39 percent of respondents - somewhat agreed or strongly agreed that CSR would be promoted and maintained in their company so long as it was profitable and did not require too many resources.

The study concludes that it is possible to establish a ranking of skills and attitudes that those responsible for CSR consider to be essential or extremely important for carrying out their work, namely:

- being a good motivator;
- having a penchant for negotiation and consensus;
- being able to perceive new trends, needs and opportunities;
- having a strong capacity for innovation and creativity.

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