



Leading Organisational Growth, Driving Community Development
And Building Business Sustainability Through CSR
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Dr. R. L. Bhatia, Founder, World CSR Day

Luisa Gentile, Head of Sustainable Development, Vodafone Italy brings with her over seventeen years of experience in the international telecom industry. Luisa has achieved success in prominent Marketing, HR, Customer Care and Programme Management positions. After challenging roles in Egypt, United Kingdom and Qatar is Luisa is currently Head of Sustainable Development in Vodafone Italy. The highlight of Luisa's career was the launch Vodafone Qatar's award-winning CSR initiative, "Better World: Make the world a better place with everything we do", thanks to which she has been selected in the 2011's "Top 100 Thought Leaders in Trustworthy Business Behavior in Europe and the Middle East". Luisa was also the founder of the "CSR Majlis in Qatar" an informal network of Qatar-based companies and organisations that serves as a platform for networking, sharing and partnering with the goal of strengthening and increasing CSR awareness and practice in Qatar. She recently presented on "Sustainable Leadership: The Role of the Leader in Guiding Business towards Sustainable Social Responsibility" at the 9th CSR Summit 2012 at Dubai. Dr R L Bhatia, Founder, World CSR Day posted a few questions to her.

Questions for World CSR Day

1. Are Great CSR Practices Sustainable? If so, why...?

Let us say that a CSR practice in order to be great has to be sustainable. It is about transforming all the nice talk into concrete action that will translate into a permanent and positive long term change into the society and the environment around us. It should create a vision for legacy, instead of vision for activity. It's the difference between a quick-fix and a cure.

2. Why do CSR efforts fail to make an impact at times? And what is it that organizations or individuals could do to make these efforts successful and sustainable?

It really depends on the definition you give to Corporate Social Responsibility. In my opinion, become a sustainable company implies that the whole company should behave in an ethical, responsible and sustainable manner. It impacts each single department and each single employee through everything they do, every day. It is a journey, and mistakes and failures are part of the journey, as long as you have the right vision and you know what is the destination you'd want your company to reach.

3. What should be the constituents of a good CSR Practice?

Clear vision, values and goals; credibility and honesty; simplicity; value creation.

4. How according to you can the impact of a great CSR Practice is majored?

At times, we believe that in order to do better we should do more. In my experience, we should do less and focus more. Especially small organizations, or those that are just starting the sustainability journey, should concentrate on the main sustainable issue the organization is facing and put all the resources to get it sorted out. Once the basics are solved, then you can move forward.

5. Organizations with Conscience VS Organization for Profit - how will they impact the business strategy and vision?

This is a complex question. Any organization in order to survive has to stay financially fit and profitable, this for the sake of its customers, employees, stakeholders and shareholders. The problem is how many boundaries an organization will voluntary or involuntary break in order to maintain or increase its position in the market. This is the break point where you will see whether an organization is truly sustainable or it is just a façade.

6. CSR is not a marketing tool, but yet organizations are using as a marketing tool - Your suggestion and comments.

As long as a company lives up to its sustainable image, there is no real harm in promoting its initiatives also for marketing purposes. On the other side, it is highly counterproductive if consumers perceive its intents to be manipulative. Again, credibility comes first.

7. How can organization define the vision for CSR?

Sustainability is not a stand-alone function within the organization, therefore the starting point for drafting a vision for CSR should be the organization vision, mission, values and goals.

8. What is the role of sustainability leaders today?

Today, sustainability is a growing and still emerging profession that requires a quite broad range of skills and abilities. It cuts across almost all business functions and requires an enormous variability in the job responsibilities, ranging from the art of communications, to the technically demanding field of environmental management and so on. The role also requires builds credibility and trust through a walk the talk by acting in a way that is consistent with his/her values and what he/she says. It is a critical role instrumental to get a sustainability strategy implemented and shared within an organization, yet still underestimated. I really wish that our community will talk less about sustainability reporting and little more of sustainability leadership.



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