

EXAMPLES OF CSR RELATED ACTIVITIES IN POLISH COMPANIES

Introduction

Polish companies increasingly declare that the concept of *Corporate Social Responsibility* is inherent in their strategies and constitutes a crucial element in their business activities. The rise in the significance of corporate social responsibility is reflected in the growing number of companies publishing their social reports that give detailed descriptions of their social involvement and stress the impact they exert on their numerous stakeholders. Thus, it is worth a thorough consideration whether the involvement in social responsibility results only from their concern for society or manifests the current fashion of being socially responsible or is eventually a form of manipulation to promote the image and build up the brand value. What does corporate social responsibility mean for Polish companies then? Is it their strategy, fashion or a common manipulation? The article presents five examples of involvement in social responsibility on the basis of which the author attempts to answer the aforementioned questions.

1. Ecological shopping bags introduced by Carrefour Poland

On 5 June 2008 the Carrefour Poland hypermarket network withdrew disposable plastic shopping bags from their stores to replace them with **biodegradable** reusables. Network President Gilles Roudy emphasized that the action was an element of the social campaign *Out of Love for the Environment*, begun by Carrefour on 12 May 2008. Its partner was the Ministry of Environment. Poland is the fifth

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country to follow Belgium, France, Italy and Taiwan, where the network decided to withdraw free shopping bags.¹ In the “Report on CSR of Carrefour Poland” published in June 2009, the company described its involvement in the social, ecological and systemic area undertaken in 2008. In the chapter on ecological involvement the company stressed that when making a decision to remove the free shopping bags and replace them with biodegradable ones, it responded to the requests made by the representatives of local governments. In the report Carrefour stated that through its activity it wanted to contribute to the reduction of shopping bags in circulation, improve the ecological awareness of their customers and encourage them to make pro-ecological consumer decisions. One month after the introduction of the paid shopping bags, their use dropped by nearly 80% as recorded by the company, and this action resulted in the reduction in uncontrolled use of bags, which had been the goal set by the company. Carrefour claims that this involvement is favourably perceived by the customers who do understand the need for the change in certain behaviours and habits prevailing in Polish society.

2. On-line statements in the Citi Handlowy Bank

In order to mark the 125 anniversary of Bank Handlowy in Warszawa JSC, Citi Handlowy, as a bank proud of the practical implementation of its corporate social responsibility policy, established the Leopold Kronenberg Bank Foundation, through which it implements national and local programmes to reflect its corporate social responsibility. The foundation supports activities in favour of the public good in the area of education and local development. The Kronenberg Foundation co-ordinated the project *More Trees Thanks to You*, implemented jointly by Citi Handlowy and Our Earth Foundation. The bank undertook to purchase and plant one tree on behalf of every customer who would decide to choose an on-line statement to replace the old paper account statement. On its website Citi Handlowy encourages customers to order on-line statements as follows:

- “reduce the amount of paper lying on your desk,
- generate your statement quickly: anywhere and anytime,
- be a conscious citizen of our Planet – plant your tree!”².

In the spring of 2008 within this initiative 40,000 trees were planted in the Masovian region, which is troubled with the problem of disappearance of the so-called green corridors, i.e. animal migration tracks. This means that 40,000 people resigned from paper account statements in favour of statements sent via the Internet. The tree

¹ <http://wyhacz.gazeta.pl/Wyhacz/1,88542,5207700>

² <http://www.online.citibank.pl/las/>

planting campaign was participated by schools of the Masovian region and Citi Handlowy staff and customers³.

During the second edition of the project *More Trees Thanks to You* in the spring of 2009 in the Olkusz Forest District there were 138,000 trees planted, whereas during the final of the campaign outside Warsaw in the Chojnów Forest District, outside Olsztyn in the Wipsowo Forest District and outside Gdańsk in the Kolbudy Forest District more than 700 bank staff and customers together with their families and friends planted 3,000 trees: oaks, beeches, pines and firs and took part in the Family Ecological Picnic. The afforestation was implemented under the supervision of Lasy Państwowe (the State Forests) and according to its plan to afforest and regenerate the green corridors⁴. The Family Ecological Picnics were accompanied by tree planting trainings, workshops on ecology to improve the knowledge of the impact of forests on the environment and climate protection as well as talks on ecological behaviours, e.g. how to sort waste effectively and properly.

The project *More Trees Thanks to You* organized by Citi Handlowy and Our Earth Foundation represents the joint efforts of the bank and non-governmental organisations in favour of ecological behaviour promotion. In the course of two years over 180,000 trees were planted, which means that the same number of customers resigned from paper accounts statements in favour of on-line statements⁵.

Promoting the shift to the on-line statements, Citi Handlowy has its own business interest. The bank has over a million customers. And the number of customers making use of on-line statements in 2008 amounted to 300 thousand, which accounted for 31% of all personal account and credit card holders⁶. Due to the campaign *More Trees Thanks to You* about 180,000 people resigned from paper accounts statements in favour of the on-line ones. In this way they reduced the costs incurred by the bank every month for the generation of bank statements and their distribution by post. Similarly, the actions undertaken within the Environmental Management Plan bring measurable effects in the form of reduction of energy costs, waste as well as the use of paper and office materials. Thus, the aforementioned activities do not only reflect the idea of social responsibility within the ecological area but, first of all, they are meant to considerably reduce banking costs.

Social involvement is reflected in commercial projects within the social environment, most frequently in the form of the sponsoring of culture, sports or education. By being involved in them the company does not reap any direct benefits. Nevertheless, thanks to the promotion of the image among the stakeholders and building up relations with them, the company is able to develop and its value rises. The growth

³ http://www.citibank.com/poland/kronenberg/polish/6606_9719.htm

⁴ <http://www.citibank.com/poland/kronenberg/polish/6606.htm>

⁵ <http://ekoinfo.pl/art.php?action=more&id=1801&idg=26>

⁶ http://www.odpowiedzialnybiznes.pl/cms_a/upload/file/Raport%202008/FOB_rap2008_ost.pdf

in the so-called relationship capital is, besides the human and structural capital, a significant element of the company's intellectual capital⁷.

3. RWE STOEN in support of Polish football

STOEN SA is a company whose major business is transfer, distribution and turnover of energy. Since 23 December 2002 the company has belonged to the international group RWE and like other group members it supports sports, cultural and social undertakings. In the period of 2003–2006 the company co-operated with Legia Warszawa Football Club, which is a large STOEN corporate customer, e.g. advertising itself on the stadium during the League and National Cup matches. The best fruit borne as a result of this co-operation was the charity match organised by the company in 2005 between Legia Warszawa and Bayer 04 Leverkusen – a team sponsored by the RWE concern. There were 11,000 fans in the stands. The whole income from the tickets amounting to 208,000 zlotys was donated to the programme Orliki STOEN, initiated by the commission established in November 2005 by the RWE Foundation within which the company undertakes charity and social actions⁸. The aim of the Orliki STOEN programme is to fish out, from Warsaw clubs and those outside the city participating in the tournaments organised by the Masovian Football Association, the most talented football players at the very beginning of their careers and to make sure that they are given a chance to develop their potential through access to sport equipment and participation in training camps⁹.

4. PKO Bank Polski SA in support of Polish culture and sport

PKO Bank Polski SA has been active in its sponsoring and charitable activities for years. The Board 2008 Report states that *sponsoring is aimed at the creation of PKO BP SA image as a trustworthy financial institution open to the needs and expectations of customers, and involved in the development of the country and local communities*¹⁰. Sponsoring as a marketing tool is as effective for a bank as advertising. Since 2003 sponsoring has focused on three programmes:

⁷ See more on the intellectual capital in: S. Kasiewicz, W. Rogowski, M. Kicińska, *Kapitał intelektualny – spojrzenie z perspektywy interesariuszy (Intellectual capital from the perspective of stakeholders)*, Oficyna Ekonomiczna, Kraków 2006.

⁸ http://www.bezpiecznaenergia.pl/?d=1&nazwa=fundacja_rwe.html

⁹ <http://www.rwe.pl/index.php?id=567>

¹⁰ http://www.pkobp.pl/index.php/id=rel_raproc/akt_id=7927/source=rel_raproc/section=ri

4.1. PKO Bank Polski in favour of national culture

The programme was inaugurated in 2001 in order to create an image of the bank as a patron of culture and national heritage. The bank co-operates with the National Museum and philharmonic assemblies from all over the country through the sponsoring or financial support of numerous cultural events. In 2008 PKO BP SA sponsored the exhibition *An Expedition to the Interwar Period* organised by the National Museum, with which the bank has been co-operating for several years. Thanks to the patronage of PKO BP, thousands of visitors were able to familiarize themselves with the artistic work of, inter alia, painters Andrzej Wróblewski and Rafał Malczewski or fine art photographer Jan Bułhak.

The projects sponsored by the bank are not only the national campaigns but also numerous local projects, e.g. *The 10th Bydgoszcz Opera Festival* or *The 13th International Theatre Festival* in Toruń.

4.2. PKO Bank Polski Close to You

The idea of the programme is undertakings in the area of economic education as well as social sponsoring. Within the project the bank co-operates with universities all over the country participating in events, co-financing Juvenalia, conferences and scientific seminars.

4.3. PKO Bank Polski: the bank of the Olympic Team

Within this programme PKO BP SA concluded an agreement with the Polish Olympic Committee on the basis of which it patronised the Polish Olympic movement during the Summer Olympic Games in Athens in 2004 and Winter Olympic Games in Turin. The bank also co-operates with the Handball Association and women basketball team LOTOS PKO BP Gdynia. Furthermore, it sponsored the Polish women national foil team¹¹.

Besides sponsoring, PKO Bank Polski SA deals with charity, which develops the image of the bank as an institution aware of the significance of corporate social responsibility, enabling contacts with opinion-forming environments and local authorities. The example of such activities is, for instance, the financing of the monument commemorating the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising or financial support of the restoration of works of art in the Raczyński Library in Poznań.

¹¹ http://www.superbrands.easysite.org/files/PKOBankPolski_1700.pdf

5. Żywiec Zdrój SA educational campaign in favour of drinking water

The social responsibility of Żywiec Zdrój SA is reflected in the care for the people and places where the company does business. It really wants to be perceived by the local community as a good and responsible neighbour. An element of social responsibility in the company is reflected in the campaigns undertaken in order to develop Poles' awareness of the healthy lifestyle¹².

In September 2009 Żywiec Zdrój began its nation-wide campaign *Mum, Dad, I prefer water!* It is aimed at the creation of appropriate nutrition habits among children with special interest in the role of water in their everyday diet. The substantive patronage was taken by the Institute of Food and Nutrition as well as the Institute of Mother and Child and the honorary patronage by the Ministry of Health.

Żywiec Zdrój recognised the problem of children's excessive consumption of sweetened drinks and juices, which may account for 10–20% of their daily energy intake and are the source of unnecessary calories and sugar. Calories consumed in the form of liquid are assimilated more easily, which contributes to the higher risk of obesity among the youngest. In order to change these habits, the company began its educational campaign encouraging people to drink water and pursue a well-balanced diet standards from early childhood¹³.

Żywiec Zdrój encourages parents to develop appropriate behaviours and habits among their children. It points to the role played in this process by educational organisations. In this connection, the major element of the campaign will be a cycle of classes held in 1100 kindergartens, 1100 schools in 40 towns in Poland. Specialists in the fields of nutrition, psychology and ecology having consulted experts from the Institute of Mother and Child and the Institute of Food and Nutrition, prepared educational materials for children, parents and teachers. Classes based on fun and a variety of topical contests will make children familiar with the principles of appropriate nutrition and the impact of water on their life and health¹⁴.

Conclusion

The examples quoted in the article indicate that companies treat corporate responsibility in a different way. Some of them make use of the ecological fashion in the

¹² <http://www.zywiec-zdroj.pl/#/0X4X>

¹³ <http://www.zywiec-zdroj.pl/#/4X0X>

¹⁴ http://www.mamanaczasie.pl/wolewode/o_programie.html

society and under the pretext of care for the good of the environment they promote undertakings whose aim is to reduce costs incurred by the company. They cunningly manipulate the public opinion taking advantage of the idea of corporate social responsibility in order to generate additional economic benefits.

In other companies pro-social activities are part of marketing and serve the purpose of promotion of the brand or firm image as perceived by their customers. They also enhance relations with partners, thanks to which they are an effective tool of the construction of relationship capital value. The company does not gain financial benefits from them directly, however in the long-run these activities contribute to the growth in corporate value.

Social programmes are another form oriented towards solving important social issues. Admittedly, they are similar to the activities described above. However, thanks to the fact that they focus on a definite problem and are frequently of a nationwide scope, the effects related to the corporate image promotion and the development of relations with the environment may be stronger.

References

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Abstract

Polish companies increasingly declare that the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility is inherent in their strategies and constitutes a crucial element in their business activities. The rise in the significance of corporate social responsibility is reflected in the growing number of companies publishing their social reports. It is so deeply consider the conditions that guide the company to take action under corporate social responsibility. The article presents five examples of involvement in social responsibility on the basis of which an attempt was made to identify those conditions.

KEY WORDS: CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY, COST REDUCTION ORIENTED CSR ACTIVITIES, COMPANY PROMOTION, SOCIAL PROGRAMMES

MIEJSCE SPOŁECZNEJ ODPOWIEDZIALNOŚCI W STRATEGIACH PRZEDSIĘBIORSTW

Streszczenie

Polskie przedsiębiorstwa coraz częściej deklarują, że koncepcja społecznej odpowiedzialności biznesu – CSR (*Corporate Social Responsibility*) jest wpisana w ich strategię i stanowi istotny oraz kluczowy element prowadzonej przez nie działalności biznesowej. O wzroście znaczenia społecznej odpowiedzialności biznesu świadczy również wzrost liczby przedsiębiorstw publikujących raporty społeczne. Warto więc głębiej przeanalizować przesłanki, którymi kierują się przedsiębiorstwa, podejmując działania w ramach społecznej odpowiedzialności biznesu. W referacie zaprezentowano przykłady działań pięciu firm z zakresu społecznej odpowiedzialności, w oparciu o które podjęto próbę zidentyfikowania tych przesłanek.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: SPOŁECZNA ODPOWIEDZIALNOŚĆ BIZNESU, DZIAŁANIA SPOŁECZNIE ODPOWIEDZIALNE UKIERUNKOWANE NA OBNIŻENIE KOSZTÓW ORAZ PROMOCJĘ PRZEDSIĘBIORSTWA, PROGRAMY SPOŁECZNE