

Achieving success in Corporate Sustainability and Responsibility



By **Mark Topley**¹

Sustainable jeans - New Look. Sustainable cotton pads - Garnier. Recycled oil to power trucks - McDonalds. Timpson's policy of employing ex-offenders.

BT's work with SOS Children's Villages, and using their skills and technological resources to raise over 85 million pounds in 2020 for good causes.

You can't fail to have noticed that businesses in every sector are switching on to the urgent need to stand out as *responsible*. Whether that's their environmental credentials, the contributions they make to the community, or the benefits and care they show to their employees, every sector has more and more examples.

Dentistry is no different. Already on the supply side we have sustainable bamboo products, cornflour floss and the like. A CSR award has been a part of industry and professional ceremonies for some time now. Companies like Colgate and Align are working hard to find more sustainable ways of operating.

Corporate Sustainability and Responsibility (CSR) is gathering pace and importance. But what exactly is it?

In my experience, CSR has three pillars.

Pillar One - People

Pillar One is all about being a value-driven business that proactively leads, communicates with, and protects the wellbeing of your team. It's about rewarding and remunerating fairly, being transparent in your pricing, and being fair and honest in dealing with your customers, patients or suppliers.

Pillar Two - Environment

Pillar Two means that you must do everything you can to limit your environmental footprint. I am well aware that HTM 01-05 dictates a huge amount of what can and can't be done in surgery. However, you may be surprised to know that almost two thirds of your practice's carbon footprint is due to the travel to and from the practice by patients and staff. There are a multitude of things that you can address to improve your environmental responsibility.

Author information

¹Mark Topley helps business owners and managers to grow their leadership, teams and businesses with purpose.

He is a qualified educator and a Fellow of the Institute of Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability Professionals. Mark's vision is for every business to be purpose-driven and responsibly-led, a place where teams are proud to work and customers love to buy.

Mark helps business leaders to turn Corporate Social Responsibility into a competitive advantage. His structured approach covers the essential aspects of a business' leadership and CSR, generating momentum and establishing a best practice approach to team, ethics, environment and community engagement.

Pillar Three - Community

One of the best things you can do as a business is to form partnerships with charities and good causes. There are many things to be gained from carefully selecting and then making a strategic commitment, however small, to charities and community causes that fit your business. Your team will have the opportunity to get to know the cause, understand its impact, and see the results of their support. The charity benefits in that it can rely on your support, however small it might be financially, and grow its supporter base through association with you and your patient communications.

But where do you start? And even if you're committed as a leader, how can you bring your team with you? How do you organise things effectively so that your intentions turn into results?

One thing I have found is that if you start the process with 'What' you will do, it won't last. For your ideas to bear fruit, they have to be rooted in 'Why'.

- Why is CSR important?
- Why does it matter to patients?
- Why should I get involved and what's in it for me?

must be managed systematically and supported properly like anything else. Without an empowered and supported individual nurturing and implementing the plan, it's likely to fail.

Connection - they fail to explain and reinforce the strategy. All stakeholders in the business need to know why you're committed, what you're committed to, what you're actually doing, and eventually, what are the results. Stakeholders also need to have a clear path to engage - a simple call to action that they can choose to accept.

Ten steps to success

With these pitfalls in mind, here are my ten steps to CSR success:

1. Start with Why - make sure you are clear on the reasons you are doing this. What's the problem you've spotted and why do you feel you need to do something about it?
2. Engage and involve - get the team involved in the discussion. Get your 'Why' clear first, explain it to the team, and then involve them in coming up with ideas of what you need to do
3. Manage change - change is hard! Make sure you take a look at how to successfully

committed, what you're committed to, what you're actually doing, and what are the results. But this isn't a one-off exercise. Rather it's something that should be a regular part of your updates and messages to the team and patients

7. Skin in the game - it's important that the business invests some money, however small, into CSR. It's easier to ask others to engage and support when you lead by example
8. Generate and Celebrate Quick Wins - in the early stages of your plan, the team needs to see success, so it's your responsibility to ensure there are some guaranteed wins
9. Support volunteering - volunteering is great for your team. It connects them to a wider purpose and the 'feel-good' that comes from helping others. Whether you release your team to carry out oral hygiene instructions (OHI) or free treatment to vulnerable groups, or provide a day's paid leave for volunteering each year - support your team's volunteering
10. Invest in management - to ensure you keep going, appoint someone in the team to coordinate CSR. Their role should be to monitor the plan, engage the team and form a support group to do the work. An extra hour a week of overtime is plenty of time for the right individual. Then back them up and support their efforts.

The above steps follow a simple model I have created to help dental practices to meaningfully and successfully engage with their CSR. You can view various free resources at my website - www.marktopley.co.uk.

There are three resources in particular you'll find helpful at www.marktopley.co.uk/start.

- Green Champions of Dentistry - A straightforward online self-learning course to help you become a more sustainable practice
- Sustainability in Sixty Minutes - Create a simple and solid CSR plan without needing to be an expert!
- The CSR Advantage - ebook.

Now is the perfect time to tackle your CSR. Not only is it going to become crucial commercially, it's great for your team engagement, and the right thing to do. Get on board, because the CSR juggernaut is only heading one way.

<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41407-022-0797-y>

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A range of studies point to four reasons why CSR efforts fail:

Fit - the business fails to choose a charity or community partner that makes sense to the team and patients. When this happens, the team tend to see it as an additional burden rather than an opportunity, and patients engage at a lower level.

Commitment - CSR requires 100% commitment over time. When businesses fail to do this, they risk reputational damage because they have 'said one thing, and done another'. They have killed trust.

Management - similarly, CSR initiatives

implement change. My 60 Minute CSR Plan free resource has guidance

4. Provide a variety of options - there are few 'one size fits all' events or schemes that everyone on the team will like, so make sure you vary the types of fundraising events and ideas you choose
5. Little and often - your main focus is running the business. CSR adds spice to the mix. So little and often is much better than 'too much, too soon'. Play the long game
6. Communicate - it's important to make sure that you communicate why you're