

Corporate social responsibility in wartime: transformations and challenges for ukrainian businesses

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In peacetime, corporate social responsibility (CSR) focuses on sustainable development, environmental policies, ethical business practices, community partnerships, and corporate volunteering. However, the war in Ukraine led to a radical shift in CSR priorities. Businesses have found themselves in a situation where fulfilling civic functions has become not merely voluntary but essential for supporting the state and society and ensuring their own resilience.

During wartime, CSR has undergone significant transformation, assuming new forms, the most notable of which include:

1) Urgent Humanitarian Aid: Many companies began providing financial, material, and logistical assistance to the military, healthcare institutions, internally displaced persons, and affected communities;

2) Job Retention and Employee Support: CSR efforts have increasingly focused on safeguarding workers' rights, ensuring workplace safety, implementing flexible work arrangements, and providing psychological support and compensation;

3) Reorientation of Production: Several enterprises have adapted their production lines to meet the needs of the military or humanitarian services (e.g., manufacturing bulletproof vests, first aid kits, generators, and food supplies);

4) Building Partnerships: Businesses have strengthened collaboration with volunteer organizations, municipalities, international donors, and charitable foundations.

The realities of war have compelled companies to reconsider their stakeholder engagement models. Whereas CSR initiatives previously functioned as components of brand image strategies, they are now seen as tools for survival and, importantly, ethical commitment to society. Communication with employees has become regular, transparent, and psychologically supportive. The reputational capital of companies actively supporting the state and communities has significantly increased, fostering

consumer trust and stakeholder confidence in the long term.

Another critical aspect of CSR relevance is “its contribution to achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs). By prioritizing employee well-being and professional growth, CSR contributes to the attainment of SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), SDG 4 (Quality Education), and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth)” [1].

Despite high business engagement in the social sphere, several challenges persist:

1. Limited financial resources due to decreased revenues or halted operations;
2. Physical threats to employee safety and company assets;
3. Lack of unified crisis CSR strategies, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises;
4. Weak institutionalization of partnerships during the initial months of the war.

“Effective corporate communication during wartime must consider society's sensitivities and traumas, adhering to the moral principles of "do no harm," "avoid retraumatization," and "understand and accept” [2].

In conclusion, CSR under wartime conditions serves not only as a manifestation of ethical business conduct but also as a key factor in the resilience of companies and society. Ukrainian businesses have demonstrated a remarkable capacity for adaptation, flexibility, and solidarity. In the long term, effective wartime CSR will become a foundation for restoring trust, enhancing brand reputation, and fostering sustainable economic development, offering a promising outlook for the future.

Keywords: corporate social responsibility, corporate communication, sustainable development goals.

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