

Working Papers Series on Social Responsibility, Ethics & Sustainable Business

Volume 2, 2013

Media School | Bournemouth University



Editura ASE

2nd International Conference on Social Responsibility, Ethics, and Sustainable Business
Bournemouth, UK, September 5 & 6, 2013

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ISSN: 2285-7222

ISSN-L: 2285-7222

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SENSEMAKING AND SENSEGIVING: CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

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The commitment and enthusiasm of employees are in the development and implementation of a CSR strategy of utmost importance. But in the face of financial and economic crises, permanent restructuring, mergers and acquisitions this enthusiasm is sometimes difficult to ignite. However, the concept of CSR is of increasingly importance to the future viability of businesses. Therefore companies must find ways in which employees are not only informed or formally involved. In order to convey the seriousness and usefulness of corporate direction and associated activities and to build true engagement, employees need to be put in a position to make sense of the actions for themselves. Inevitably this draws attention to the construction and implementation of CSR in internal communications. The presentation will approach the matter in two ways. On the one hand, the field will be addressed with reference to the theory of neo-institutionalism, investigating the connections and dependencies of the various levels of CSR considerations, making the link between macro-meso-micro levels. Much of the research about CSR communications deals with the meso-level of the organization itself and has, primarily, a mediating function. The connections between the macro-level on the meso-level down to effective internal communications on the micro level, is little considered. Hence, on the other hand, processes and structures of that transfer from the macro- to the micro-level are outlined. With reference to ‘sensemaking’, ‘sensegiving’ and ‘organizing’, it is important to examine how communication is able to initiate, to drive and to consolidate the institutionalization of CSR within a company. While the presentation draws on a mix of academic knowledge and industry experience, it presents the framework for a research project that focuses on the combination of neo-institutionalism and literature based on Weick’s work, because ultimately it is the individuals who transform and connect macro-meso-micro levels through processes of sensemaking.