
EURA Fellowship Case Study



**"Promoting Corporate Social Responsibility:
A Structured Approach for SMEs in the
Relocation Industry"**

MANAGEMENT MOBILITY CONSULTING
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1. Introduction

As the founder of a family run relocation service provider, I deeply believe in putting people first. This conviction mirrors the expectations of our diverse clientele from all around the globe. This guiding principle, together with our motto, "Always one step ahead!", set the trajectory for a journey that started more than two decades ago.

I embarked on this venture in 1996, as an expatriate spouse who had relocated from Germany to France. Recognizing a pressing need for support services for individuals and families undergoing similar life-changing transitions, I was inspired to address this need, establishing a company devoted to providing comprehensive relocation assistance services.

Over the past 20 years, this once individual enterprise has grown into a relocation company with offices not only in France but also in Luxembourg and Singapore. Despite our development, the heart of the company — the personal commitment to each client — remains resolute. I lead a team of twelve dedicated employees and a large pool of consultants and partners, and together we use innovative technological tools to ensure we always stay one step ahead. In my current role, I focus primarily on building relationships with HR clients, partners and prioritizing the wellbeing of our staff.

This journey has been marked by a profound appreciation of our clients' diverse needs, from familiarizing themselves with new locations to settling in comfortably and finding their feet in a new culture. I am immensely proud of our progress and am eager to continue evolving in this dynamic and deeply human industry.

This evolution has not only solidified our standing as a trusted partner in mobility services, but it has also ushered in a new imperative - the need for a structured approach towards Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), which will form the cornerstone of our discussions in the following chapters.

2. Outline of the Purpose: The Evolution of CSR in Our Organization

A few years ago, we embarked on our journey towards CSR by establishing the Green Team, a dedicated group of volunteers within our organization. Initially, we were overwhelmed by the magnitude of the task and unsure of where to begin. However, as we delved deeper into the realm of green initiatives and corporate responsibility, a wealth of ideas started to flow.

The enthusiasm and diversity of perspectives within the Green Team fueled our vision for a more sustainable and socially conscious organization. We quickly realized that to make a meaningful impact, a structured approach was essential. We needed to move beyond mere enthusiasm and channel our efforts in a focused and efficient manner.

Recognizing the need for a comprehensive CSR framework, we transformed the Green Team into a more encompassing CSR Team. This expansion allowed us to address not only environmental concerns but also social and economic responsibilities. While this shift added complexity to our initiatives, it aligned our efforts with our core values and broadened our impact.

As we delved further into the realm of CSR, we encountered a significant challenge. Most existing CSR methods and models were developed by large corporations and did not cater to the unique needs and constraints of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) like ours. These frameworks, while comprehensive, were often intricate and challenging to implement effectively with our limited resources.

Undeterred, we chose to simplify and adapt existing CSR approaches to suit our organization's scale and capabilities. By distilling the core principles and tailoring them to our specific context, we were able to develop a practical and meaningful CSR strategy. This approach allowed us to harness our resources efficiently while staying true to the spirit and intent of CSR principles.

While we have made significant progress on our CSR journey, we acknowledge that we are still in the midst of our evolution. We recognize the continuous need for growth, learning, and improvement as we navigate the complexities of CSR. Our commitment to responsible and sustainable practices remains steadfast, and we eagerly embrace the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

The transformation of our Green Team into a comprehensive CSR Team exemplifies our dedication to making a positive impact on society and the environment. This ongoing evolutionary approach of exploration and adaptation is a testament to our commitment to responsible corporate citizenship and serves as a foundation for our future actions in this field.

3. Theoretical Frameworks

The History and Evolution of CSR

The theories, principles, and origins of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) are deeply embedded in the concept of business ethics and sustainability. Over time, the understanding and implementation of CSR have transformed, adopting different perspectives from various authors and researchers.

Howard R. Bowen is often referred to as the "Father of CSR." In his groundbreaking book, "Social Responsibilities of the Businessman," Bowen postulated that businesses are not isolated entities and must consider the social implications of their actions, effectively laying the foundation for modern CSR (Bowen, 1953).

During the 1960s, the perspective of CSR evolved as Keith Davis proposed the 'Iron Law of Responsibility.' Davis contended that those companies who do not use their power responsibly will eventually lose it. His ideas underlined the essential connection between corporate power and social responsibility, emphasizing the benefits of responsible corporate behavior (Davis, 1960).

In the 1970s, with the growing social and environmental awareness, the Committee for Economic Development (CED) in the USA argued for an expanding role of businesses in society. The CED emphasized that businesses should take a broader perspective of their social responsibilities, highlighting the importance of environmental stewardship and human rights (CED, 1971).

A significant contribution to the understanding of CSR came from Archie Carroll in the late 70s. He proposed a multi-layered model of CSR, dividing corporate responsibilities into economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary categories (Carroll, 1979). This comprehensive framework is still widely acknowledged and used today.

Towards the late 1990s, the strategic aspect of CSR gained momentum. Burke and Logsdon argued that the strategic implementation of CSR could result in identifiable and measurable value creation, leading to economic benefits for firms (Burke and Logsdon, 1996). Their viewpoint emphasized the synergy between social and economic aspects of corporate operations.

Afterwards, the conceptualization and understanding of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) significantly broadened, focusing on the integration of CSR with a company's core strategy and operations.

In 2001, Jeremy Moon argued that CSR encompasses not just the responsibility of corporations to society, but also the ways in which they manage their economic, social, and environmental impacts, as well as their relationships in all key spheres of influence, from the workplace to the marketplace, the supply chain, the community, and public policy (Moon, 2001).

In the early 2000s, the notion of CSR was propelled into the mainstream business strategy, largely due to the works of scholars like Michael Porter and Mark Kramer. They presented the idea of 'shared value', asserting that the competitive positioning of a company and the health of the communities around it are mutually dependent. They proposed that businesses could develop strategies that both increase profits and improve community conditions (Porter & Kramer, 2006).

The period also saw a proliferation of frameworks and standards supporting the operationalization of CSR, such as the UN Global Compact (2000), promoting principles in the areas of human rights, labor, environment, and anti-corruption (UNGC, 2000).

By the 2010s, a shift towards sustainability and sustainable development goals (SDGs) was becoming increasingly prevalent within CSR discourse. Elkington (1998) had already put forth the concept of 'Triple Bottom Line' suggesting that companies should prepare three different bottom lines: profit, people, and planet. This perspective became more embedded in CSR theories and was widely adopted by businesses worldwide. This evolution shows a transition of CSR from a discretionary practice to a critical aspect of businesses' long-term survival and success, acknowledging the intimate interconnectedness between business operations and society's wellbeing.

The Role of CSR and its importance to SMEs

However, CSR isn't a 'one size fits all' solution. SMEs, in particular, face unique challenges in implementing CSR due to their limited resources and capabilities (Lepoutre and Heene, 2006). Therefore, they need a tailored approach that aligns with their business model and capabilities.

While CSR was initially seen as an obligation of large corporations, recent years have seen a shift in this perception. SMEs are increasingly recognizing the role they play in achieving sustainable development (Spence, 2016). SMEs have a profound local impact and hence, their engagement in CSR can significantly contribute to societal and environmental wellbeing.

One of the most compelling reasons for SMEs to adopt CSR is the potential for improved financial performance. Numerous studies have highlighted the positive correlation between CSR and financial performance (Orlitzky et al., 2003). However, it's not just about the bottom line. CSR can also boost a company's reputation, strengthen relationships with stakeholders, and attract and retain talent (Turker, 2009).

However, integrating CSR into SMEs is not without its challenges. Limited resources, lack of expertise, and insufficient awareness of the potential benefits are common hurdles. Implementing CSR may also require a cultural shift within the organization, which can be difficult to achieve. Therefore, it's crucial that SMEs carefully consider these factors and adopt a strategic and realistic approach to CSR.

CSR strategies should be a part of the business model, rather than an add-on. This entails integrating CSR in business strategies, operations, and corporate culture. Furthermore, stakeholders should be actively involved in the process, fostering an open dialogue that benefits both the business and the community at large.

Lastly, SMEs need to measure and communicate their CSR efforts effectively. This not only helps maintain transparency, but it also allows businesses to identify areas of improvement and demonstrate their commitment to CSR.

The principles of CSR offer a framework for businesses to act responsibly and contribute to sustainable development. For SMEs, implementing CSR requires a tailored approach that considers their unique challenges and opportunities. Despite the complexities, the potential benefits of CSR – to businesses, stakeholders, and society at large – make it a worthwhile endeavour.

4. Section Two – Application of the Theory in Our Business Practice

The importance of CSR for us as relocators

In today's globalized world, the relocation industry plays a vital role in facilitating the mobility of individuals and businesses across borders. As the demand for relocation services continues to grow, it becomes increasingly important for us as relocators to embrace Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). This chapter explores the significance of CSR in the context of the relocation industry and highlights its potential benefits for both service providers and stakeholders involved.

Potential benefits and opportunities for our company

Embracing CSR in the relocation business can bring numerous benefits and opportunities.

For our company, as a small relocation company, we saw opportunities for example in improving stakeholder engagement, fostering ethical business practices, promoting social and environmental sustainability, attracting and retaining talent.

By integrating CSR into our operations, we wanted to contribute to the overall well-being of society, support sustainable development, and create long-term value for our business and stakeholders.

Our approach

This chapter highlights the steps taken and planned by MMC to implement CSR initiatives.

1) Establishing the CSR Team:

MMC initiated its CSR journey by forming a dedicated team known as the Green Team, later renamed the CSR Team. Comprising passionate staff members from from our offices in France and Luxembourg, the team was responsible for driving CSR initiatives within the organization.

2) Identifying Core Subjects:

To ensure comprehensive coverage, MMC aimed to identify a large number of potential CSR issues. This brainstorming process involved exploring a wide range of issues, such as staff well-being, diversity & inclusion, combating climate change through company actions, and promoting environmentally responsible actions among expatriate clients. After exhaustive deliberation, MMC selected 12 CSR core issues.

3) Stakeholder Mapping:

Recognizing the importance of engaging various stakeholders, MMC compiled an extensive list of individuals and entities involved in or impacted by its operations. This included employees, consultants, partners, human resources, subcontractors, and local actors. Comprehensive stakeholder involvement is crucial for meaningful CSR implementation.

4) Stakeholder Needs Assessment:

To understand stakeholder perspectives and prioritize CSR efforts, MMC conducted interviews with stakeholders. Using a rating scale of 1-4 (1=none or very little, 2=low, 3=high, 4=very high), stakeholders were asked to assess the impact of each core issue on the environment & society (population), and MMC's long-term success. For each issue the following 3 questions were asked:

In your opinion, what impact does this issue have on the environment and society (population)?
What impact do you think this issue has on MMC's long-term success?
How would you rate MMC's current performance against this issue?

The interviewed stakeholders were asked to do the scoring in relation with the other issues (not in relation with the impact of all the other players at global level).

5) Materiality Matrix:

The materiality matrix is a crucial tool in CSR planning, providing a clear visualization of how core subjects intersect with both stakeholder concerns and their influence on business operations. The matrix is a two-dimensional chart: one axis represents the perceived societal and environmental impact of each core subject, based on stakeholder feedback, and the other axis indicates the impact of these issues on MMC's long-term business success.

The following chart shows an example of a materiality matrix scoring the environmental impact against the impact on company's success for 12 selected CSR issues:

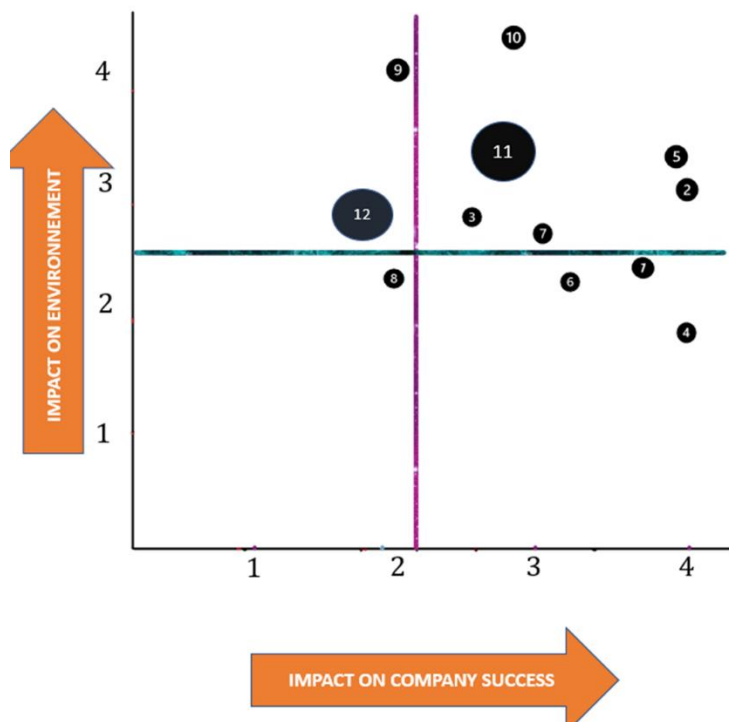


Chart 1: Materiality Matrix

Source of method: *Des Enjeux et des Hommes*, www.desenjeuxetdeshommes.com

By mapping the core subjects with their ratings from the stakeholders' interviews in this way, the materiality matrix allows MMC to clearly identify high-priority areas – those issues that are both of high concern to stakeholders and have a significant impact on the company's success.

Another matrix was drawn with the axes "Impact of each issue on environment & society" and "Current MMC performance in these issues" and a last matrix showed the "impact of each issue on MMC long-term success" on one axis and "MMC current performance related to each of the identified issues" on the second axis.

This prioritization is critical in deciding where resources and efforts need to be focused to address these areas of concern.

The materiality matrix is not just an analytical tool, it's also a strategic guide. The visualization of the core subjects' relative importance can help shape and inform MMC's CSR strategy. Specifically, it can guide MMC to develop and implement initiatives that address those subjects that are of high importance to stakeholders and have a substantial influence on MMC's success.

6) Prioritization of Core Subjects:

Analyzing the materiality matrix, MMC identified the core subjects that fell within the high-impact and high-importance quadrant. A few of these issues were given immediate attention and considered as key focus areas for CSR initiatives.

Example of these issues of immediate initiatives are the development of actions to improve employees' wellbeing and to encourage our clients to act in a more ecofriendly way when relocating to France.

7) Set Goals and Targets & Develop Action Plans:

For each prioritized core subject, MMC established specific goals and targets that aligned with its overall CSR objectives. These goals were measurable, time-bound, and designed to drive positive change in the identified areas.

First action plans were created for each prioritized core subject. These plans outlined specific strategies, activities, and initiatives to address the identified issues effectively. Short-term and long-term actions were incorporated to ensure sustainable progress.

8) Resource Allocation and Implementation:

MMC allocated resources, including budget, personnel, and technology, to support the implementation of the selected actions. Roles and responsibilities were clearly defined within MMC for executing the action plans. Dedicated teams or individuals were assigned to oversee and manage the implementation of each core subject's initiatives.

Some of the priority actions have now been implemented, such as the setting up of a “Guide of Ecofriendly Actions for Expatriates relocating to France” and so called “Ecopoints” which indicate for each proposed property how ecofriendly it is (taking into consideration 10 criteria).

9) Stakeholder Communication:

MMC started to communicate with relevant stakeholders, both internal and external. We sent out email messages and published articles on our website and social media.

10) Evaluation and Continuous Improvement:

Evaluation of each action and continuous improvement will have to take place as a next step.

Afterwards the next high priority core subjects will be analysed and actions in these areas will be started to undergo the same process.

Encountered Challenges

MMC encountered several challenges during the implementation of its CSR initiatives. One significant challenge was the time factor. After initiating the implementation process, the company faced interruptions due to urgent operational tasks required to serve its clients effectively. These unforeseen demands temporarily shifted the focus away from CSR activities, causing delays in the execution of planned initiatives.

Another challenge were related to the interviews of stakeholders. While MMC made efforts to engage various stakeholders, not all of them were readily available. This limited the extent of stakeholder involvement and input in the early stages of the implementation process.

Despite these challenges, MMC persevered and started the implementation in a few core areas. One such area was the development of competences within the organization, ensuring that employees were equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills. Additionally, a sustainability guide for expatriates was created to promote environmentally responsible actions among MMC's clients.

To address these challenges, MMC aims to optimize time management and prioritize CSR activities without compromising the quality of its core services. The company recognizes the importance of continued stakeholder engagement and plans to expand efforts to identify and involve a broader range of stakeholders in future CSR initiatives. By learning from these challenges, MMC remains committed to overcoming obstacles and further advancing its CSR agenda.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this case study has highlighted the significance of CSR in the relocation industry and demonstrated how Management Mobility Consulting, as a small and medium-sized enterprise, has taken steps towards implementing CSR initiatives. Through our journey, we have come to realize that CSR is not a one-time achievement but a continuous process that requires ongoing dedication and adaptation.

The transformation of our Green Team into a comprehensive CSR Team reflects our commitment to responsible corporate citizenship. It is important to note that while we have made progress, we understand that there is still much to learn and improve upon. We embrace the challenges that lie ahead and are open to continuously evolving our CSR strategies.

The theoretical frameworks explored in this study have provided valuable insights into the history and evolution of CSR, underscoring its connection to business ethics and sustainability. By tailoring these frameworks to suit our unique context, we have developed a practical approach that aligns with our capabilities and resources.

We recognize the challenges that SMEs face in implementing CSR, such as limited resources and time constraints. However, we believe that with a strategic and realistic approach, SMEs can still make a meaningful impact. It is crucial to integrate CSR into the business model and involve stakeholders in the process to foster a sense of shared responsibility.

As we continue on our CSR journey, we are eager to share our experiences and insights with our peers in the relocation industry. We believe that collaboration and knowledge sharing are key to driving positive change. By learning from one another, we can collectively advance CSR practices in our industry and contribute to the well-being of society and the environment.

In conclusion, CSR is not a destination but a continuous journey. It is a humbling experience that requires ongoing commitment, learning, and improvement. MMC remains dedicated to embracing CSR, and we invite our peers in the relocation industry to join us on this path. Together, we can make a difference and inspire others to integrate CSR into their own businesses.

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