10 Costly Mistakes of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Reporting
Network for Business Sustainability
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Mistakes

Weak Goals:
- Sustainability reports built around weak organizational goals are doomed to fail.
- Know what success looks like for your company and build your CSR reporting around that.

Mismanaged Data:
- Good data collection is essential to gaining meaningful results from initiatives like auditing or footprinting.
- Assign data collection responsibilities to trained people - either inside or outside your company - and continuously check the numbers for accuracy.

Disordered Priorities:
- Recognize that the pillars of the triple bottom line (TBL) are interconnected, and that long-term sustainability goes beyond shareholder profits.
- A good manager will prioritise sustainability in their CSR reports by weighting it equal to financial performance.

Discounting Feedback:
- Reporting shouldn't be a one-way endeavour.
- Take the advice of third parties such as auditors and stakeholder panels, who can comment on your report and help verify data accuracy.

Breaking the Rules:
- Good reporting should follow a trusted framework or guideline.
- The Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) is an excellent example.

Tenuous Comparisons:
- Companies are inclined to track their progress internally. Accept the fact that you're one fish in a large sea.
- Stakeholders will want to know how sustainable you are compared to your industry peers, not necessarily your own benchmarks.

Unreachable Targets:
- Targets in CSR reporting should be linked to corporate priorities.
- Make them relevant and aggressive but still achievable.

Underreporting:
- Don't limit communication of your sustainability performance to the CSR report.
- Use a variety of media to communicate your progress and challenges. Ensure your message is consistent across media.

Thinking Short-Term:
- Don't turn down a sustainable opportunity simply because it has a higher price tag or longer payback period.
- Yes, quarterly results are important, but keeping your eye on the prize will pay off in the long run.

Inadvertently Greenwashing:
- While it's important to convey your environmental and social progress, it's a mistake to focus solely on the positives or on programs that are immaterial to your organization.
- Make reporting meaningful by acknowledging the areas where you still have room for improvement and tying your CSR goals back to your company mission.

Your choice:
- Done correctly, CSR reporting increases share price and bolsters stakeholder confidence in your firm.
- Done poorly, CSR reporting opens your company up to consumer derision and stakeholder criticism.