

# Corporate Environmental Responsibility

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## Summary

The different climatic changes that are currently occurring have warned man about the impact that business activities bring to the environment. This article was made through an analysis of the approaches of 30 authors, about different alternatives for improvement in companies; the relationship matrix of the state of the art or background, and the design of a mental map that sought to identify the competitive advantages in the markets and the different methodologies that organizations currently implement to mitigate environmental damage and instill a culture of corporate environmental responsibility In man.

**Key Words:** Environment, Corporate Responsibility, Sustainable Development, Business Strategies.

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## Introduction:

Sensing the need to mitigate environmental damage and stay in the market with a seal that guarantees environmental quality, different companies have adopted environmental practices in their strategic direction, providing social, economic and environmental balance through corporate social responsibility. Vilariño (2013) states: “The commitment to eliminate or mitigate environmental impacts and thereby respond positively to the demands of all stakeholders, must be within the most important strategic guidelines of the organizations” (p.41). These guidelines were identified after consulting the material of 30 authors, who visualize environmental sustainability and the implementation of a culture of social responsibility within the criteria to optimize the performance of organizations; therefor, the methodologies that are at the forefront with respect to the care of the environment, among these are the use of lean manufacturing, cleaner production, eco-efficiency criteria and

more, which will serve as a guide for those interested in promote corporate environmental responsibility and at the same time generate a competitive advantage with respect to the competition, marking a new starting point at the cultural and organizational level.

### **Methodology:**

This article is carried out in an analytical way, consulting the writings of authors who talk about Corporate Environmental Responsibility, in repositories through the Francisco de Paula Santander University Library. In addition, the use of tools such as the relationship matrix of the state of the art or background and the design of a mental map, thus relating the points of view of each one of these, identifying the methodologies currently implemented in the organizations with respect to the sustainable development of missionary, strategic and support activities.

### Climate change and industry

Over the years the progress and development of humanity in different aspects is evident, Luceño and Friis (2008), affirm that “the factor that has most influenced the human transformation of the environment has been the technological development that began with the Industrial Revolution “(P.180). Analyzing this phrase, climate changes can be attributed to human beings and their industrialization in search of banal comforts and in order to satisfy their needs, without taking into account the impact of these actions in different periods of time.

Hernandez (2003), comments:

The man, in the quest to satisfy increasingly greater desires and preferences has adopted the “culture” of consumerism and horizontal processes of production and consumption, leading to the generation of greater amounts of waste with characteristics of aggressiveness that compromise the assimilative capacity of the environment. This culture of consumerism is coupled with the development of destructive technologies not friendly to the environment, whose sole objective is the generation of greater volume of production regardless of the negative impact on the quality of life. (p.236)

Vilariño (2013) states:

On a global scale, the planet is suffering the effects inherited from so many years of hegemony of large consortiums and transnationals, which together with the international financial organizations have the responsibility of ensuring neoliberal globalization, whose purpose is enrichment at the expense of producing more with innovative Inalienable technologies, generating high consumption of resources increasingly impoverished and ecologically more unbalanced. (p.32)

Among the main impacts are deforestation, mining, water and air pollution, wastes, the

loss of biodiversity in flora and fauna, global warming, depletion of the ozone layer, among many others; also for the consumerism and eagerness, many companies have left aside the concern for the damage they have caused to the environment and have only focused on generating profits, forgetting their social and ethical work with the land as, Narváez, Fernández, Senior and Revilla (2007) say: “the basic essential function of a company is to create value, if it wastes resources, if it is not efficient or effective, if it does not provide good service, the company is not fulfilling its responsibility, whether public, private or civic “(p.489).

Obregón (2006) assures:

The care and protection of the environmental is one of the global concerns that has evolved in the last four decades to become a policy of conservation, care and protection, both of natural resources, and management of those activities or processes that may affect the environment, and that forces civil society, states, and the private sector to adopt measures designed for this purpose. (p.108)

This arises as a result of climate change and its remarkable imbalance over recent years, evidenced in tsunamis, earthquakes, tornadoes, among others; adding the high rates of population growth and its concentration in large cities, which contributes to ecological damage, which is worsened by the elaboration of some products or services that are commercialized on a large scale in world markets, and it is essential to ensure their long-term sustainability.

However, treaties have been created to lead the control of environmental damage, Luceño and Friis (2008) present them as: the so-called credit market, that is to say, the national and international purchase and sale of emission credits that each country would have distributed among its industries and companies, so that those countries that are less industrialized or with lower emission rates could bear the surpluses of those others that exceeded the agreed limits. (p.188)

The environmental development of countries and companies are linked to industrialization, compliance with organizational legal requirements and treaties that are established on the exploitation of resources, Bernal (2010) states that: “the company is seen as the entity that makes decisions and generates risks as a result of those same decisions, risks that can only be avoided by preventing and properly managing their operations (p.102).

Vilariño (2003) states that:

As concerns grow about continually improving the quality of the environment, organizations of all types and sizes are increasingly focusing on the environmental impacts of their activities, products and services. The environmental performance of an organization is of importance to the interested parties, internal and external. The achievement of a solid environmental performance requires the commitment of the

organization, with a systematic approach and with the continuous improvement of an environmental management system (EMS). (p.50)

It is important to acquire good practices that ensure the future sustainability of all countries in the world, Valderrama and Moreno (2012) state: “The economic development of a nation is determined, among other aspects, in terms of the progress and improvement of companies who are active in it “(p.37).

In developed countries, social pressure on business practices that affect the environment is becoming stronger. Therefore, the companies that operate in these markets have advanced in the implementation of practices that seek to make their economic activity sustainable in environmental terms. (Trujillo and Velez, 2006, p.297).

However, Briseño, Lavín and García (2011) state:

It requires a drastic change, almost unthinkable to a certain extent, so that profits are not the priority in companies, and ensure that for those pursuing a lucrative purpose, their priority is their social and environmental responsibilities; although this scenario is each more questionable given the current global economic debacle and its consequences both socially and environmentally. (p.80)

### **Sustainable development in organizations**

Nowadays, different mechanisms are being adopted to ensure the future of organizations and companies, of man and the environment. One way to give continuity is to implement the culture of sustainable development, Locano (2001) refers that “The elements of sustainable development are: economic, ethical, environmental and social sustainability. These should be evaluated in terms of cost-opportunity, since the survival and success of the company depends on them (p.50).

Therefore, these factors must be integrated into the company and inculcated in each individual, achieving a balance in the development of the different activities that impact them and ensuring an environmental quality in the future, “understanding this as the maintenance, support and enrichment of ecosystems to meet the human needs and preferences of current and future generations “(Hernández, 2003, p, 236).

It is crucial for companies to acquire the methodology of sustainable development within their processes; Alea (2007) states that: “In order to achieve the objective of a true sustainability of the socioeconomic development model, it is essential to act from a systemic perspective, oriented precisely towards the structural and functional change of the current social, economic and political system, which predominates on the planet “(p.7).

This is because beyond the implementation of the Environmental Management System as a new way of acting, it is necessary the commitment of business leaders, who allocate

resources and approve the development of actions, who must be committed to achieving the integral continuous improvement because “the Environmental Management System is an efficient tool that allows the company to be managed from the environmental point of view, which entails an increase in its competitiveness and its responsibility” (Isaac, 2003, p.8) ), however, as Schvarstein (2006) states, “it is important to be aware of the difficulties inherent in a process of this magnitude, and to bear in mind that the efforts must be systematic and structural” (p.63). In addition, Vilariño (2013) comments:

Achieving an effective environmental management is not only about to design a system and then appreciating how it deteriorates in the face of the bureaucratic push of the manuals, procedures and records; but to create the solid bases to advance enough and to be able to exhibit environmental performance at the height of its social responsibility, as a result of strategic thinking demonstrated in practice with relevance. (p.49)

Top management must provide the necessary resources to comply with the requirements according to the organizational mission and thus “ensure compliance with its environmental objectives and goals, through compliance with its legal requirements, in the application of controls to mitigate its environmental impacts and to verify compliance with the provisions “(Cortés, Muñoz, and Quintero, 2014, p.147). Without excluding any entity, regardless of their business name or productive activity, Hunter (2005) states that: “there is no reason to exclude, in the abstract, the civil liability of the employer against the mere act of acting under an administrative authorization and/or complying with environmental regulatory regulations (p.19).

It is important to focus on developing approaches to environmental management, according to Vilariño (2013) “The business environmental management approaches are: the PHVA cycle, systems, integration, being holistic and improvement” (p.42). Contemplating the constant interaction with the elements of the productive systems and the life cycle of the products, analyzing the intervention of the interested parties and evaluating the compliance of the company at the level of objectives, policies, goals and legal requirements that were established when defining an integrated management system. According to Serrano, A., Serrano, E., and Serrano, M. (2015):

It was determined that a coupling scheme should integrate a diagnosis (prior evaluation), management (planning and organization) and implementation (management, application and feedback), in order to know the opportunities for improvement, the necessary communication channels, the benefits obtained and the temporary spaces for its application. (p.144)

### **Corporate social responsibility as a competitive advantage**

Corporate social responsibility is an imperative for modern approaches to organizational management, which seek the incorporation of social elements in high-impact management decisions and their contribution to the development of social groups that are affected by

them, mainly employees. (Vergara and Carbal, 2014, p.105). For which León (2008) states that: “this orientation has gone from being a mere philanthropic inclination to be integrated into business management” (p.93). However, it also represents an economic retribution to the organization, as Guerrero and Rosero (2012) state: “the strategic-instrumental corporate social responsibility, is characterized by the creation of long-term economic value for shareholders, taking into account the restrictions imposed by the practical need to satisfy the “reasonable” demands of the interested parties “(p.71).

It is necessary to consider corporate social responsibility as a competitive strategy and a competitive advantage over other companies, which provides benefits and added value, however, since it is not established as a certifiable standard or a business requirement, the importance of implementation is not given of this methodology and is deposed as an alternative work in an indefinite period of time, Hazudin, Aishah, Azer, Daud, and Paino (2015) state that “the impact on financial performance is not large enough, a limitation that is highlights in this study is the time frame, which has not been standardized “(p.61). Leaving the companies their implementation at free will.

“The competitive advantages of a company represent its capacity to conduct its operations more efficiently, which allows it to obtain lower costs” (Trujillo and Velez, 2006, p.298). Therefore, it is essential to identify and exploit them, making the management of the environment a desirable product for consumers, who must be motivated if they perceive that they contribute to the improvement of the environment, in addition “To assume social responsibility in the improvement of the habitat and the preservation of the environment could represent an ethical question for the manager, but it should also be taken into account as a possible source of competitive advantage “(Trujillo and Velez, 2006, p.307). It is fundamental for organizations “to emphasize the importance of an adequate strategy of environmental marketing in this process, which directs the appropriate messages to the relevant segments, which reflect in a clear, credible and reliable way the environmentally relevant information” (Garcia, 2001, p17). To generate a high impact on the market and competition, and establishing a seal of corporate differentiation, as assured by Senior (2007):

There is a direct circular relationship between reputation, legitimacy and creation of value, which generates an upward spiral, that is, the reputation of the company increases the value and this increase generates wealth while enhancing its reputation and consolidating its legitimacy before society or interested parties. (p.490)

### **RAE business strategies**

Ojeda and Encalada (2015) state that:

The aspects in which most companies work are those that try to minimize the consumption of energy, water and polluting raw materials by improving their production processes, recycling, substitution of inputs, preventive maintenance and the use of other technologies.

(p.48)

Although this helps to mitigate environmental damage, it is important to implement different work methods; Plaza, Burgos, and Belmonte (2011) state that: “managers will be more likely to modify their perception over time and therefore increase their willingness to make improvements in their companies “(p.158). Thus generating a greater long-term impact on the conservation of the environment.

According to different sources, new ways or strategies that companies have acquired to guarantee their contribution to environmental improvement are presented “within this guideline stands out Cleaner Production or P + L, a concept that seeks to establish the explicit responsibility of the industrial sectors (Obregón, 2006, p.108). Understood as the way in which an organization foresees each action within its mission processes, which negatively impact the environment, identifying the sources and opportunities for improvement through the use of sustainable strategies, clean technologies and good business practices, which leads to the environmental Know-How, guided by the cycle “plan, do, verify and act” as a guide to the process and to optimize the results in favor of continuous improvement.

That way, in terms of processes, this tends toward the conservation and saving of raw materials, inputs, water and energy, reduction, minimization or elimination of the quantity and toxicity of emissions, waste or toxic materials; in terms of products, to the reduction of negative impacts throughout their entire life cycle, from their design to their final disposal; in terms of services, delineation and provision thereof, considering their environmental dimension. (Obregón, 2006, p.109)

The design and implementation of integrated management systems provides great help to companies in the development of sustainable business practices. Vilarino (2013) states that: “Strategic design, in its essence, is aimed at improving the global capabilities of an entity so that it manages to maneuver in a vividly competitive and dynamic environment “(p.33); It is also necessary to quantify the data to monitor and measure the results in order to identify opportunities for improvement, Valderrama and Moreno (2012) suggest that : “to achieve optimal levels of measurement of results in the environment, the company must focus its attention on the interpretation of the various environmental indicators, which are the guarantors of providing data for the evaluation of management “(p.44). By quantifying the information, a scale of significance is obtained, classifying according to the priorities that each organization identifies as immediate or pending, according to their impact over the time, as Atienza and Barba (2011) affirm, “The proposed management model is based in a system of self-control that allows to know all the environmental aspects generated by the company in order to be able to assess it according to objective criteria “(p.110).

The implementation of appropriate manufacturing strategies is also a relevant factor in the adoption of business methods for environmental sustainability. Monge, Cruz, López,

(2013) refer that sustainable manufacturing takes sustainability principles and differs from the lean manufacturing that seeks in a process of continuous improvement to reduce or eliminate waste, in the productive processes (energy, water, air emissions, water emissions, irrational use of materials, solid and / or hazardous waste, transportation and damage to biodiversity) thus improving operational performance and competitive advantages.

Another important strategy that has been evaluated lately is the implementation of Green Supply Chains.

The objective of this initiative is to consider that productive pollution is “material that did not manage to become a finished product”. By intervening in inefficiencies, pollution is reduced and competitiveness is gained, activities that, besides being simple and with a lot of common sense, constitute the heart of productive and competitive green chains projects, which from the strategic thought are profitable projects of prevention of the pollution. (Ballesteros, Ballesteros y Duarte, 2009, p.172)

It is also imperative to give relevance to operational control since, as stated by Freitas (2008):

It is essential for the operation in the day to day of the company, each operation must be planned to be carried out within conditions that allow the reduction of the adverse impacts associated with it. It is important not to forget the maintenance operations, since they generally carry many aspects very linked to the environment. (p.112)

Environmental audits are of utmost importance in companies, in addition to being a monitoring and control strategy, Denegri and Peña (2011) state that: “The Environmental Audit allows to examine the environmental situation of SMEs on a voluntary bases, also provides a diagnosis of pollution and environmental compliance of these companies “(p 204).

Eco-efficiency as an organizational strategy is a clear and concise methodology of improvement in companies, as stated by Hernández (2003):

Eco-efficiency goes beyond the efficient use of resources and reduction of pollution, emphasizes the creation of value for companies, competitiveness in markets and benefits for society in general. Seven (7) concrete actions are identified to develop an eco-efficient strategy within a company: reduce the intensive use of materials that make up goods and services, reduce energy consumption, reduce the dispersion of toxic waste, expand recycling and re-use, optimize the use of renewable natural resources, reduce the durability of the materials, increasing their degradability and increasing the intensity of use of goods and services (p, 242)

Therefore, it is essential to “make alliances with academic institutions to develop research projects related to eco-design and alternatives for the use of waste” (Quiñóñez,

2014, p.52). Because of: All companies that adopt production standards and rational environmental strategies, in addition to reducing costs, in the use of raw materials, can also enjoy commercial advantages in national and international markets, since respect for the environment means that they are appreciated and labeled as eco-efficient. (Rodríguez, 2009, p.57)

By converting eco-efficiency into one of the best market strategies and a competitive advantage over other organizations, Garcia (2001) suggests that: “the concept of “brand value” can be an interesting tool for approaching eco-marketing” (p. 17). For which Isaac (2003) states that: “While the company manages to maximize its financial objectives and the client manages to satisfy their needs through the product of the company, the environment benefits through a minimization of the impact caused” (p.6).

## Results

Sensing the current impact that has been generated in the environment by the development of new technologies and industries around the world, man has instituted environmental measures in favor of the conservation of life and ecological sustainability on earth. The notable resource deficits and environmental changes have warned industries about the consequences of exploiting natural resources without committing to biological equilibrium, which is why new work alternatives have been identified that ensure sustainability and social commitment, economic, ethical and cultural, they are: implementation of a cleaner production system, identification of environmental Know How, design and application of integrated management systems, monitoring of activities through the PDSA cycle (Plan, Do, Study and act), sustainable manufacturing, green supply chains, operational control, environmental audit and eco-efficiency; however, all these aspects can only be implemented if there is a commitment from top management, which is why Vilariño’s statement (2013) must be appreciated: “To achieve effectiveness in the implementation of the Environmental Management System, it is necessary conceive it as a process that has its genesis in the strategic vision of the organization” (p.51) and to promote this culture on an individual level at all levels of organizations.

## Conclusions

The action of industrialization has left irreparable damage to the environment, however, the man has identified the impact of their actions and has implemented measures to mitigate them, in addition to changing the perspective of work and focus on the search for social, economic and environmental equilibrium that guarantees sustainability and environmental quality.

“The challenge posed lies in the ability and capacity to rebuild and develop a new relationship between the economic interests of business organizations and the socio-environmental and cultural needs” (Senior et al, 2007, p.493). Which is acquired with enthusiasm, as it brings improvements to organizations and provide competitive

advantages, along with a proactive attitude and a long-term vision, which will achieve the desired change, including factors such as teamwork, adoption of preventive measures and cleaner production; articulating with the implementation of integrated management systems, environmental audits and monitoring of indicators will bring unimaginable benefits, achieving the goal of making all organizations eco-efficient and sustainable.

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