

Procurement's role in furthering corporate social responsibility



Today's consumers and buyers are looking for businesses that offer more than the right products at fair prices and exceptional service. They often seek out companies with corporate missions and policies that align with their own. In other words, companies with a robust, active and transparent corporate social responsibility (CSR) program are more likely to get long-term business from customers, whether consumers or corporate buyers. And procurement's key function of supplier management can play a central role in supporting and expanding a company's CSR program.

According to an IBM white paper called "Procurement: Leading the Way in Corporate Social Responsibility," 97 percent of high-performing procurement organizations "are significantly involved in sustainable and environmentally responsible business initiatives; versus only 61 percent of all companies."

Here are some of the most important touchpoints to keep in mind as a procurement professional.

ENSURING SUPPLIER STRATEGIES STEM FROM CSR

Forward-thinking procurement leaders consider CSR from the beginning of the procurement process. Is environmental sustainability important when selecting your suppliers? How important is supplier diversity to your company's CSR? Have any of your suppliers violated labor practices that are outlined in your CSR? Your sourcing and supplier strategies should mirror your organization's most critical CSR objectives.

INVOLVING THE CSR TEAM DURING SELECTION AND ONBOARDING

Rather than make a best guess, procurement teams must seek the advice of internal (and even external) CSR experts at every crucial step in the selection and onboarding process. Many industries utilize outside advocacy groups to help them evaluate potential suppliers that align with their corporate values.

"Taking an active role in CSR is part of redefining procurement's role and value proposition in a new era of business. It is a vehicle which procurement can leverage to move from the traditional 'back-office' role to being perceived as a modern, strategic asset for the business."

—"Procurement: Leading the Way in Corporate Social Responsibility,"
IBM, 2014

MONITORING ALONG THE WAY TO MINIMIZE RISK

Monitoring suppliers to ensure they align with your CSR goals requires an investment, but many procurement departments believe it's well worth the added cost and effort. A supplier scandal such as violating labor laws could damage your brand quickly. Ensuring your tier 1, 2 and 3 suppliers comply with your CSR policy is essential.

MONITORING SUPPLIERS THROUGH INTELLIGENCE SYSTEMS

Being a good corporate citizen includes financial, supply chain and many other aspects. That's why procurement departments want to be as smart as possible about their suppliers.

More and more, they're investing in the right supplier information management solutions and services that can provide them with a 360-degree global view of their suppliers.

From supplier identification to onboarding to risk management and more, procurement's role is essential to solidifying an organization's CSR ideals both internally and in the minds of customers.

To learn more about Staples and how we can help you reach your CSR goals, give us a call at **1-844-243-8645** or visit **[StaplesAdvantage.com](https://www.staples.com/advantage)**.

