AOHT Sustainable Tourism

Lesson 9

Corporate Social Responsibility and Commercial Tourism

Student Resources

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Student Resource 9.1

Survey: Who Knows About

Directions: Ask your classmates each of these questions and put their names in the relevant box if they say yes. You can only use the same classmate’s responses twice. Interview as many classmates as possible.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| I have eaten at a local restaurant that recycles. | I know a local business that encourages customers to bring their own bag. | I know a local business that uses reduced or energy efficient lighting. |
| I have eaten at a restaurant that uses some organically-grown ingredients. | I have eaten in a restaurant that only serves water on request. | I have been in a public restroom that uses motion sensors for lights, water faucets, or paper towel dispensers. |
| I know a local restaurant that has changed its take-out packaging so it uses less Styrofoam or plastic. | I know a local building that uses solar panels. | I have seen a sign in a hotel room asking guests to consider reusing their towels. |
| I know a local business that is trying to conserve water. | I know a local business that gives a percentage of its profits to charity. | I know of local transportation options that use electric or alternative fuel vehicles. |

Student Resource 9.2

Taxonomy: Sustainability Initiatives

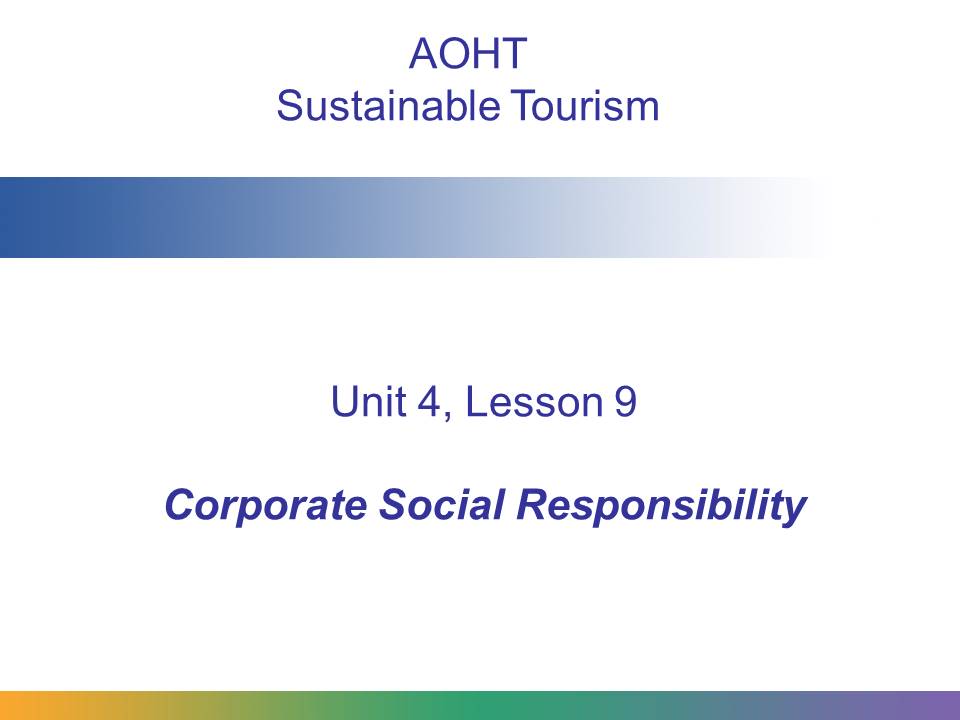
Student Name: Date:

Think of terms related to the topic your teacher gave you. Group them on this list alphabetically

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| **Z** |  |

Student Resource 9.3

Reading: Corporate Social Responsibility



You have already learned how an over-emphasis on tourism profits can result in negative impacts on tourism resources and host communities. More and more, however, commercial hospitality and tourism (HT) businesses are trying to reduce their ecological footprints through sustainability efforts. This is because a growing number of consumers are demanding sustainable products and also because many businesses understand that it is important to be environmentally and socially responsible, as well as profitable.

In this presentation we will explain what *corporate social responsibility* means, how it relates to sustainability, and what steps companies are taking in the commercial hospitality and tourism industry to be more responsible.



Corporate social responsibility (CSR) basically refers to how companies carry out their business to make an overall positive impact on society and the environment while still making a profit. It is a concept that asks corporations to integrate economic priorities with social and environmental ones. Companies that have CSR policies take into account how their services and products might affect people, animals, communities, and the environment, and they work to reduce the negative effects. It means they are trying to hold themselves to higher standards for conducting business than even the law requires.

That is the general definition for CSR, but being responsible can mean different things to different companies. CSR might cover a wide range of issues from animal rights to health and safety. It includes a focus on customer well-being and on benefiting the communities in which the company does business. It usually includes actions the company is making toward environmental sustainability. You might think of it as a company’s pledge to reduce its footprint, just as you thought of ideas to reduce your own footprint in the beginning of this course. We are going to take a look at some examples of how different companies are doing that.



As part of their CSR plans, many large hospitality and tourism companies have specific sustainability initiatives on their websites. A sustainability initiative is a set of policies and procedures a business takes as a first step toward sustainable practices. The word *initiative* comes from “initiate,” or “begin.”

A sustainability initiative is a way for a company to make some kind of change that will be better for the environment. It states certain steps the company is going to take to reduce its negative effects. Most sustainability initiatives address packaging and waste reduction, recycling, energy and water use, and green building.



Many companies reduce packaging and manage waste by creating less of it and implementing recycling wherever possible. When it comes to packaging, examples of sustainability measures include:

* Reducing the amount of packaging and paper used and eliminating plastic and polystyrene (Styrofoam) containers, which take hundreds of years to disintegrate. McDonald’s has replaced its polystyrene “clamshells” with paper-based wraps and reduced paper use in napkins by 21%; Pizza Hut has reduced the amount of paper fiber in pizza boxes by 15% in the last decade; and some companies are switching to biodegradable corn-based plastics.
* Increasing the use of post-consumer recycled materials. *Post-consumer* means it’s made from paper products that have already been used and thrown out, as opposed to *pre-consumer* materials from manufacturing scraps. Bojangles switched to 100% post-consumer recycled bags and the napkins at Quiznos are made from 100% post-consumer recycled materials.
* Implementing in-store recycling. As the Starbucks website explains, recycling seems simple, but it’s very challenging because not all towns and cities have commercial recycling programs in place. Starbucks and Subway have in-store recycling wherever it is possible.
* Encouraging customers to bring their own cups (Starbucks offers a 10-cent discount in the United States and Canada).



Hospitality businesses take huge amounts of energy and water to run, so reducing their use is good both for the environment and for operational costs. Since lighting and HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning) account for most of the power use, the most common sustainability measures are:

* Switching to energy-saving lightbulbs and updating neon signs to LED (“light-emitting diode”) ones. Starbucks found that changing bulbs reduced lighting energy consumption by as much as 80%.
* Using motion sensor lights (some businesses have installed them in restrooms, for example).
* Installing energy-saving appliances.
* Turning off appliances when not in use (one company in Dallas helps restaurants cut their power use by installing sensors that shut down ovens or let employees know when windows or coolers are left open).

Some of the ways businesses conserve water include:

* Low-flow faucets, toilets, and spray heads to wash dishes (they take less water to operate).
* Using products that take less water to make. Subway worked with pickle and pepper suppliers to reduce the amount of brine and saved 739,000 gallons of water.
* Using drought-resistant plants in business landscaping (they take less water).



You will discuss green building practices in more detail later in this course, but it is definitely one of the growing ways companies are reducing their impact on the planet. It basically means designing and building spaces using more environmentally-friendly methods, such as using locally sourced building materials whenever possible and including renewable energy, such as solar panels.

In addition to all of the examples we have discussed, there are many other examples of CSR when it comes to sustainability practices. Some companies are establishing accounts with local growers and suppliers to cut down on their footprints. Some have switched to nontoxic cleaning supplies. Many businesses these days post reminders to customers that read “Take only what you need” near napkins and disposable utensils. From more conservation-minded landscaping to employee sustainability training, there are a number of ways to make a difference.

Of course, many companies have not made any changes at all to become more sustainable. They are generating more pollution and waste than ever. Some businesses take advantage of the going green trend by saying that they’re making changes without really taking action. But every step counts, and we, the customer, can influence all companies to make changes.

Student Resource 9.4

Assignment: CSR Research

Student Names: Date:

Directions: Before you write your own business’s CSR policies, it can be helpful to look at the policies of other similar companies. Use this resource to help you determine which companies to research. You will divide up the research between your group members and take notes on another company’s CSR policies.

Step 1: Choose which companies to research

Using the research you did in Lesson 8, list five to six companies you might want to research. Choose companies that would be in competition with you. If you are starting a B2B business, you can choose five to six companies that would be prospective customers (for example, five to six hotels that might hire your integrated pest management company). Write down the companies in the table below.

| Company Name | Group Member |
| --- | --- |
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Now, pick the top three to four companies from this list that your group is most interested in researching. These companies should be your biggest competition or your most likely potential customers. Assign a group member to each of those companies.

Not every company has a corporate social responsibility policy listed on its website. If one of your group members cannot find a CSR policy, he or she should switch to one of the unassigned companies on your list.

Step 2: Research

Now you need to learn about your assigned company’s corporate social responsibility policies.

How to Find the Information

Information on a company’s corporate social responsibility policies may be listed under the “About Us” section of the website (also sometimes called “About the Company” or “Our Story”).

Some multinational companies list their CSR information on the parent company website. For example, the site for Disneyland says nothing about corporate social responsibility, but if you look for the Walt Disney Company website, there is a lot of information. So you may need to search for a different site.

On the website, look for words like:

* Corporate responsibility
* Sustainability
* Citizenship
* Global leadership
* Vision
* Values

If you’re still not finding anything, try searching the website for “CSR,” “sustainability,” or “corporate responsibility.” You can even try a Google search for the company name and one of those terms (for example, “Hilton CSR.”)

If you find information…

* Complete the rest of this assignment by taking notes on the company’s CSR policies.

If you don’t find information…

* First, discuss your search techniques with your teacher. Maybe your teacher knows how to find the information you need.
* Second, switch to one of the other companies you listed on the first page of this assignment and look for their CSR policies.
* If there aren’t any more companies to research, join another member of your team and help the student take notes. If possible, help out someone who’s working on a large multinational corporation, since those companies tend to have longer and more complex CSR policies.

CSR Notes

The Vision Statement

Most CSR pages include some type of philosophy or vision statement about “why we do this.” Here are some examples:

From the start, we've been committed to doing the right thing. And we've got the policies, programs, and practices in place that allow us to use our size and scope to help make a difference. Because what's good for us, is good for us all.

Our founder saw travel as a tool that could improve the world. Today, more than 140,000 team members and business partners strive to build on this legacy, operating in a responsible manner and making a positive impact on our business and communities where we live and work. Our approach is centered on four areas that guide our business and philanthropy around the world.

Our effort toward sustainability is driven by a global vision we call Living Journey. It’s our commitment to deliver smart mobility and sustainability solutions—at work, in the community, and on the road.

Does this company have a philosophy or vision statement? If so, what does it say? Summarize it in your own words in the space below.

Areas of Focus

Corporate social responsibility doesn’t solely have to focus on environmental sustainability, although that is often one of the key areas companies focus on. What areas does this company’s CSR policies cover? Which of these areas involve sustainable tourism? Write down your notes in the space below the following example:

Example: Disney has an environmental sustainability initiative in its parks (sustainable tourism). The Disney Company also is very active in encouraging healthy eating among children (a positive goal, but not part of sustainable tourism).

Your notes:

Environmental Sustainability

What is the company doing to be environmentally sustainable? Look for the following types of information:

* Recycling and waste/trash reduction programs
* Green building efforts
* Local sourcing of products and materials
* Alternative energy sources (wind, solar, alternative fuels)
* Energy efficiency efforts
* Water conservation
* Use of nontoxic/natural cleaning products
* Consumer education efforts (e.g., hotels putting a sign in the room encouraging guests to reuse towels to reduce laundry)
* Employee education efforts
* Certification efforts (Companies can pursue sustainability certifications, such as LEED, EarthCheck, etc.)

Write your notes here:

Social/Economic Sustainability

What—if anything—is the company doing to be socially/economically sustainable? Look for the following types of information:

* Community involvement programs (charitable giving, volunteer programs, etc.)
* Cultural exchange/cultural preservation programs
* Local business/organization support
* Education/workforce development

Write your notes here:

Your Opinion

Overall, do you think this company is making a good effort in terms of CSR? Why or why not?

Is there anything about this company’s CSR that you might want to borrow for your company’s CSR? If so, what? If not, why not?

Student Resource 9.5

Assignment: Project Business CSR

Student Names: Date:

Directions: Now that you have looked at other companies’ CSR statements, it’s time to write your own. Before you begin, read through all of the instructions on this sheet, and read the assessment criteria at the end of the sheet to make sure you understand how your work will be assessed.

Writing CSR Statements

Your CSR policy needs to include a vision statement as well as specific areas of focus, just like the statements you researched.

The Vision Statement

What is your overall goal or vision for your business’s corporate social responsibility? Why does your business make an effort to be responsible?

For help, go back and look at the vision statement examples in Student Resource 9.4. Then write your business’s vision statement. Also refer to the taxonomy you developed in this lesson for terms you want to include.

Areas of Focus

What specific areas will your business focus on? Remember to consider all elements of sustainable tourism: environmental sustainability, economic sustainability, and social sustainability. Give specific examples of how you will address each area.

For help, look at the information in Student Resource 9.4. Then make notes on how your business will demonstrate its commitment to CSR policies. An example is provided.

| Area of Focus | How Our Company Will Demonstrate That |
| --- | --- |
| Environment | Don’t use aerosols—bad for environment  Limit use of poisons in the environment—focus on building/landscape mgmt. & less toxic pest control options  Use hybrid/electric cars  Use electronic billing to reduce wasted paper |
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Putting it All Together

Now that you’ve drafted a vision statement and made notes on how you will focus your business’s CSR efforts, it’s time to put it all together into a formal CSR message. Use the example below as a guide. Then work with your classmates to write (or type) your business’s CSR on a separate sheet of paper. Remember to check that it meets the assessment criteria.

As company founders, we believe that it is important to manage harmful pests without the use of dangerous chemicals. Using natural pest control methods is safer for humans, animals, and beneficial insects. It is also better for the environment. We believe that the Earth belongs to all of us, and we want a cleaner, safer community for tomorrow’s children to grow up in.

We focus primarily on environmental sustainability, but we also recognize the economic and social impacts of our business.

Environmental Sustainability

We provide effective pest management using the safest and least toxic methods available. We do not use aerosol sprays because they are bad for the environment. We focus on building and landscape management and the use of organic pesticides that are safer for humans, animals, and non-target insects.

Because we want our company’s carbon footprint to be as environmentally sensitive as our pest management techniques, we use only hybrid and electric vehicles for company transportation. We provide billing and pest control information electronically, to reduce paper waste.

Economic/Social Sustainability

We recognize that a well-paying job can make the difference in helping people improve their lives and their communities. We are committed to paying a living wage for all our employees. We also offer a traineeship program to help young people learn integrated pest management. Upon completion of the traineeship program, a graduate can apply for a job with our company or use the training the individual has acquired to start his or her own business. We do require all trainees to have a high school diploma. If someone wants to join the traineeship program and does not have a diploma, we will provide advice to that person on how to obtain his or her GED.

We also believe that our services allow companies to demonstrate an additional level of care and respect for their employees. Housekeeping staff and kitchen staff who clean may be exposed to chemicals left behind by other pest treatments. Using our integrated pest management service is not only better for the environment, but better for your employees!

Make sure your assignment meets or exceeds the following assessment criteria:

* The CSR includes a clear vision statement that explains why this business chooses to be responsible.
* The CSR includes one or more areas of focus within sustainable tourism.
* The CSR provides specific, realistic examples of how the company will put its beliefs into action.
* The completed assignment is neat, legible, and presentable and uses proper spelling and grammar.