

# Corporate Social Responsibility of a Courier Business: A Case Study

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## Abstract:

The purpose of the present research was to identify the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) required of a courier business lacking this vision in its strategic programs in order to facilitate obtaining the certification of Corporate Social Responsibility which would provide competitive advantages such as an improved corporate image and in consequence an increase in organizational earnings. A review of literature in which the context as well as empirical studies of applied CSR in the service sector were carried out. The methodology used for this research was case study in which first the existing level of CSR of the entity was diagnosed and with this in hand a proposal of plans for activities of socially responsible was obtained. The results of this work have contributed to an increase in studies on social responsibility in Mexican organizations in the service sector

**Keywords:** Corporate Social Responsibility, service sector, courier

## 1. Introduction :

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) constitutes a strategic vision which allows for improved relations of an organization with its interest groups, leading to competitive advantages such as the strengthening of a business' image and reputation and the consequential increase in participation in the business market which brings with it an increase in the corresponding financial earnings. The principles of CSR are applicable to entities in any economic sector, among these the tertiary sector, the so-called service sector, made up of all those activities which do not produce or transform goods but which are necessary for the economy to function. Examples of this sector are commerce, restaurants and hotels, transport, financial services, among others (Méndez, 2014).

Included within entities of the tertiary sector we may also find courier services, defined as the industry which attends to the flow of goods between various persons or organization in different locations and whose importance is firstly

that businesses produce and distribute goods and services and secondly, the uniqueness of the services offered by couriers. These services have contributed to businesses reducing their inventories as well as manufacturing costs and distribution of their products while at the same time providing an increase in customer satisfaction for clients requiring fast, timely delivery and the transportation of the right goods to the right places (Dennis, 2011).

It is pertinent to point out that nowadays courier services must take into account the following factors involved in the development of their activities: (1) Casero (2014) states that currently motor vehicles are the most widely used means of transportation used for distributing clients' orders contributing to carbon emissions, a problem which must be addressed; (2) It is necessary for these business to analyze and establish strategies with respect to the pollution generated as a result of the process of packaging which also produces an important amount of residues; (3) The presence of

an increase in consumers who show an interest in complying with environmental, economic and social expectations. That is to say, they are willing to pay more for goods and services of sustainable brands (González, 2016).

These situations support the convenience of courier services' adhering to the CSR approach since its implementation in the strategy of organizations makes for greater productivity, greater competitiveness, improved management, greater client loyalty, greater acceptance by society and improved reputation (Arcas and Briones, 2009). It is important for entities in the XXI century to show a genuine interest in complying with social, economic and environmental consequences of their business since this leads to employee commitment, customer loyalty and investor's trust, conferring CSR the establishment of a business strategy which strengthens the corporate image (Briseño, Lavín and García, 2011).

According to DENUÉ (2016), in Mexico there are 3,671 businesses devoted to courier services. These companies have an operating margin of 18.7%. They carry out around 180 million deliveries a year with a global value of 200,000 million pesos and growing at a rate of between 20 and 30% annually (El Economista América, 2017). This is the reason that incorporating CSR into this kind of business is so important. The business which is the object of this study is a company in the courier field lacking mechanisms for improving its relationship with the groups it serves. This is the reason the management was advised to incorporate the principles of CSR into its strategic plans. For this research the method chosen was case study and as a result a diagnosis of the business with respect to CSR was obtained and a plan for socially responsible activities proposed.

## 2. Review of literature

### 2.1 The Context of CSR

Arias, Domínguez, Docarmo, Raschio, Rojas, Gutiérrez and Condor (2016) refer to Howard Bowen's book *Social Responsibilities of the Businessman* (1953) as the launching point for CSR and the beginning of modern literature on the subject. Molero (2016) states that during the '80s there were two milestones related to this subject. The first was Freeman's proposal of the theory of Stakeholders (1984) which conceived organizations as an open system with a bi-directional relation with society through various interest groups. The second was the appearance in 1987 of the concept of sustainable development, which deals with the

idea that businesses should not negatively impact society with their productive and commercial activities. Bhaduri and Selarka (2016) pointed out that in the late '90s Elkington (1998) formulated the term Triple Bottom Line used to measure and administer the impact of the CSR of a business through its economic, social and environmental performance. Arias, et al. also mention that, in the XXI century Husted (2000) proposed the model of Strategic Corporate Social Responsibility which says that CSR should be designed as a strategy to be incorporated into the strategic plans of an entity.

In specialized literature there is no universally accepted definition of CSR. However, all contributions point towards the intention of a business to attend to the economic, social and environmental aspects related to the development of its working activities. The World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) describes CSR as a commitment made by entities to contribute to sustainable economic development, working with their workers, their families and local community and society in general to improve their quality of life (Trujillo, Trujillo and Guzmán, 2010) while Beal (2014) points to the practical and moral obligation of the participants of the market to consider the effects of their collective actions and regulate their behavior so that the results are congruent with society's expectations. Along the same line of thought Amaeshi, Nnodim and Osuji (2013) indicate that CSR is not against obtaining earnings, but rather insists that the maximization of earnings by organizations should not ignore the basic obligations to society. Moreover, Sigurthorsson (2012) explains that CSR limits businesses' negative impact on society, closing the gap between businesses and social interest and leading to corporate action which favors the interest of society.

The contributions of experts in the field agree that the aim of CSR is to improve the relations of a business with its interest groups, also called stakeholders, defined as a group of individuals with an interest in the businesses' activities (Werther and Chandler, 2011), or also as any individual which can influence or be influenced by the activities of a business (Mullerat, 2010). Along the same line of thought, Rendtorff and Bonnafous-Boucher (2016) explain that they are not necessarily individuals, but may also be groups, an organization, an institution, and association or a thing (for example, an aspect of the environment). Haski-Leventhal (2018) declares that they are

individuals, groups, organizations or countries which affect a business with their activities or which are being affected by the activities of an organization.

## 2.2 Empirical studies of CSR on service companies

Within specialized literature it is possible to find some empirical studies on social responsibility applied to businesses in the service sector, some of which are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Empirical studies of social responsibility in service companies**

Author	Year	Country	Objectives
Torres	2011	Venezuela	To analyze the internal and external dimensions of CSR in a shopping center in order to determine its level of compliance with its stakeholders
Rubio	2016	Colombia	To analyze the behavior of financial institutions in Ibagué, Colombia with respect to CSR and its relation to the aspects of strategy and structure, clients, workers, community and environment
Peña and Serra	2013	Colombia	To elaborate an analysis, discussion and construction of epistemic-practical models of CSR in tourism, by means of studying a business in the hotel sector
Navarro, Tirado, Ruiz and De los Ríos	2015	Spain	To analyze information related to social responsibility provided by local European governments on websites
Rodríguez, Calle, Zöller, Pons, Benavente and Durán	2017	Spain	To analyze information on social responsibility presented by public hospitals in Cataluña on the Web in order to learn of their commitment with interest groups

**Source: My own elaboration**

The results obtained by Torres (2011) in his research conclude that the business he studied lacked formal CSR programs. However, they show commitment towards the principles of the business and values of their employees in among other aspects their attitudes towards the dignity, identity and integrity of the stakeholders. A recommendation was for the organization to incorporate within its culture those elements which assure establishing relations with interested parties based on commitment and social responsibility.

In Rubio's (2016) study the results showed the non-existence, in the institutions studied, of a significant relationship corresponding to the level of association between the strategy dimension of CSR and clients. Besides the failure of these businesses to have a clear conscience of community service, it was also clear that the banks

in Ibagué have no strategic CSR design for attention to environmental issues.

Peña and Serra (2013) made a study in which they suggested classifications for measuring the level of CSR of businesses: Inactive, Reactive Philanthropy, legal Reactive, Active, Proactive and Leader. The business targeted in their study was Active since it was beginning to develop tactic socially responsible activities which were beyond what was legally required. The management also showed leadership in promoting and applying values and good practices of CSR.

Another study carried out by Navarro, Tirado, Ruiz and De los Rios (2015) revealed that the governments studied only publicized a little under half of the contents of the measures of social responsibility recommended by international organizations. Their greatest weakness in dissemination was information related to economic

information while the greatest dissemination was of environmental information. Recommendations were made in relation to more team work in order to improve the coordination of dissemination of information. It was also recommended they analyze stakeholders' demands for information related to CSR. They should also create and publish information aimed at specifically covering their needs.

Finally, the study carried out by Rodriquez, Calle, Zöller, Pons, Benavente and Durán (2017) showed how the results that the corporate website of the hospitals studied proved to be an important source of information, but how it did not offer the possibility of any interaction with the stakeholders. It was perceived that these businesses were in the initial phase of disseminating information on Social Responsibility and that the websites are not used to its full potential, focusing mainly on providing information on good practices the hospitals carry out, the plans of equality, memory of sustainability, the policies of social responsibility and the social activities which they have carried out.

### 2.3 Sectorization of CSR in Mexico

In Mexico there are 871 businesses recognized as Socially Responsible Companies (SRC) of which 767 (88%) belong to the service sector. Of these, 343 are large businesses, 136 mid-size and 288 are classified as small or micro-businesses. It is also important to point out that in Sonora there are 104 businesses classified as CSR of which 28 (27%) are businesses in the service sector: 4 large businesses, 3 mid-size and 21 small or micro-businesses (Cemefi, 2018).

The service sector is especially important for the Mexican economy and is expanding at a rapid rate, presenting an increase of 3.2% in the second bimester of 2017, contributing to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) which rose 1.8% over the same period (ANTAD, 2017). Amador (2017) points out that the courier service sector grew 6.2% in 2016, with operations producing 24,733 million pesos. Along the same line of thought Nava (2017) explains that the main courier services in Mexico are Estafeta (with coverage in 230 countries), DHL (with coverage in 220 countries), FedEx (with coverage in 220 countries and UPS (with coverage in 220 countries).

### 3. Method: Case study:

The present study used as methodology the case study, defined by Yin (1994) as empirical research

which studies a phenomenon within the context of real life and in which there are more variables of interest than observational data (Jiménez and Comet, 2016). Here "the case" of the study is determined as an integral system which interacts within a specific context with specific characteristics, that is studied by way of information provided by people or documentation relative to the subject (Bernal, 2010).

It is necessary to point out that CSR in Organizations may be analyzed using various research methodologies, case studies being one of those which provides qualitative information with the aim of facilitating the processes related to decision making and implementation within businesses. However, the generalization of results obtained from statistically non-significant samples of cases studied has continuously been pointed out in specialized literature (Bonache, 1999, cited in Dopico, Rodríguez and González, 2012).

It should be mentioned that in this study we only analyzed a case study of one business which had not been integrated into CSR approach in matters of strategic planning. Notwithstanding the fact that experts in the matter have pointed out that using only one case study is not recommended, Flyvbjerg (2006) affirms that it is incorrect to consider that generalizations based on individual cases or that propositions and theories cannot be developed taking as a basis specific case studies since the problems presented in the summary of case studies are a consequence of studies of reality and not the use of case studies as a method of investigation.

### 3.1 Object of the study

The present study was carried out in a Mexican company whose line of business consists of providing courier service. It is located in Ciudad Obregón, Sonora and employs 30 people, making it a mid-sized business. It began operating in 2005 and covers services in Mexico and the United States. In its organizational mission it presents its intention of being a business leader in the northwest region of Mexico.

However, this organization has not integrated the CSR approach within its strategy and thus lacks mechanisms for improving its relationship with its stakeholders and obtaining important competitive advantages for the present-day business world. In talks carried out with the board of this business they showed interest in acquiring the certification for a CSR. That was the motive for developing this



study. Initially a diagnosis to determine the level of social responsibility present in the business was made and the areas of opportunity for CSR were identified. Later a plan of socially responsible practices was drawn up in order to facilitate the company's obtaining the certification for social responsibility.

### 3.2 Procedure

We worked in conjunction with the business' 30 employees (two managers, six administrative employees and 22 drivers) for a period of two months with the aim of diagnosing the situation of social responsibility related to their interest groups. Taking as a point of reference the ISO 26000 norm of social responsibility, an instrument was adapted, organized in keeping with the seven areas which make up said norm. These areas refer to the governance of the organization, human rights, environment, working practices, fair operating practices, consumer affairs and active participation and community development. The items of each area which were not related to the line of business of the company were excluded and with the remaining reactive a survey of 180 questions was drawn up. The questions were codified on the Likert Scale of five points (in which 1 is completely disagree and 5 is completely agree).

The dimensions of the survey were conformed in the following way: organizational governance (12 questions), human rights (20 questions), environment (39 questions), working practices (24 questions), fair operating practices (22 questions), consumer affairs (34 questions) and active participation and community development (29 questions). A sample of the questions follows. Does the organization show commitment and accountability by its leaders? Does the organization examine its own operations in order to determine whether there is discrimination against its employees, associates, clients or other interested parties? Does the organization measure, register and make known information about its sources of significant pollution? Does the business register and investigate all the health and safety incidents and problems in order to minimize or eliminate them? Does the business encourage its employees, associates and representatives to report violations in policies of the organization of immoral or unfair treatment? Is the company open to improvements, practices and policies related to personal data? Does the company keep transparent relationships with local government employees and political

representative without bribes or improper influence?

The personnel were given surveys and were explained the objective of obtaining information about the possible work-related activities which could be catalogued as socially responsible and which allowed for attending to the requirements of the interested parties. It was decided that they begin with the survey on September 1, 2018 and after two weeks the surveys were collected. When the employees turned in their surveys, they were given the opportunity to provide complimentary comments and opinions which could add to the information collected in our study.

### 3.3 Data Analysis

To analyze the information that had been collected the technique of content analysis was used. First categories formed and the codified answers by personnel were placed within the categories. It is important to mention that to this end the same dimensions established in the surveys were used, in order to facilitate the analysis process and the corresponding interpretation. Said categories were organizational governance, human rights, environment, working practices, fair operating practices, consumer affairs and active participation and community development.

## 4. Results:

### 4.1 Results of the diagnosis

In relation to the subject of organizational governance, the respondents said the business lacked commitment and accountability by its leaders, besides having a deficient system of economic and non-economic incentives associated with socially responsible performance. The company does not promote fair opportunities for minority groups to ascend to managerial level jobs. They fail to establish processes of bi-directional communication with the parties in order to solve possible conflicts. Moreover, the entity does not promote effective participation of the employees in activities related to social responsibility, nor do they periodically review or evaluate the processes of governance.

With respect to human rights, the personnel said that the company had no policy on human rights which guides all interested parties, such as means to evaluate the way in which their activities and proposals affect the workers' human rights. Similarly, there are no indicators for monitoring the performance of their activities and decisions in

relation to human rights, nor for examining their own operations in order to determine whether there is any discrimination present. The following shortcomings are also present in the company: there are no policies nor activities that promote the equal treatment of men and women within the organization, nor are there policies and/or programs of protection for minors involving any kind of exploitation. Management does not contribute to promoting a climate of respect of human rights of migrants, migrant workers and their families. Freedom of speech among all the employees is not fostered. There are no fair and appropriate internal hearings to deal with errors made and that are in keeping with the seriousness of the error. Access to education and permanent learning by members of the community are not facilitated. There is no support for the respect of economic, social and cultural rights, through unifying forces with other organizations. Goods and services are not adapted in keeping with the buying power of people with lower incomes and all forms of forced, obligatory labor have not been eliminated.

In the questions related to the environment, the respondents mention that the organization has not developed strategies, objectives and goals which reflect their commitment to social responsibility. They do not carry out measurements, registries of reports on the sources of significant pollution and do nothing to reduce pollution, the use of water, the generation of residues and energy consumption. Along the same line, they have not implemented measures to prevent and reduce pollution and residues, nor are they involved in the local communities with respect to contaminating emissions and residues, either real or potential, health-related risks and present and proposed measures of control. Besides, the organization does not make information available on the amount and kind of toxic and dangerous materials they use and liberate into the air, nor do they avoid the use of chemical products identified by scientific organizations as worrisome. The company does not implement measures of efficient use of resources in order to reduce the use of energy, water and other resources, nor does it use recycled materials or water where possible.

With respect to working practices, the personnel's opinions mention that the organization does not register nor investigate all health-related incidents and problems in order to minimize or eliminate them. It does not try to eliminate psycho-social

risks in the workplace which contribute to or cause stress and illness. They do not help workers who have been fired to find new jobs, training or counseling.

In relation to fair operational practices, the personnel indicated that the entity does not encourage its employees, partners, representatives and suppliers to report violations of the organization's policies and immoral and unfair treatment and does not encourage its stakeholders to adopt similar anticorruption practices. The organization is not transparent with respect to its policies and activities related to lobbying, political contributions and political participation. It does not support anti-monopoly and anti-dumping practices and does not implement policies and practices which promote respect for property rights and traditional knowledge.

With respect to consumer affairs, the personnel explain that the company is not open to modernization of practices and policies related to personal data. Besides, this entity does not offer or permit, when allowed, a fee which provides subsidies for the needy when setting prices and fees.

Lastly, related to active participation and community development, the personnel stated that the company does not acknowledge nor pay enough attention to the rights of the members of the community in order to maximize its resources and opportunities, such as cultural, religious, traditional and historical features of the community while interacting with the community. It does not have transparent relationships with local government workers and political representatives nor does it encourage the incorporation of children into formal education. In addition, the organization does not promote cultural activities nor help to conserve and protect the cultural heritage, especially in those places where the company could have an impact. It does not pay special attention to vulnerable groups in relation to employment and training and it does not consider contributing to the development of innovative technologies to solve social and environmental problems. It does not support programs or alliances which aide vulnerable or socially impoverished members of society.

## 4.2 CSR practices proposed for the courier company

With the information from the diagnosis based on the survey and working in collaboration with the board of the company which is the subject of our study, the areas of opportunity for implementing

the best socially responsible actions were identified. This with the aim of facilitating the organizations' obtaining the certification of social responsibility. The CSR activities proposed are found in Table 2.

**Table 2. Proposed CSR Practices**

Subject	Activity	Person in charge	Follow-up
Governance of the organization	Draw up reports on the impact of its decisions, as well as activities in society, environment and economy	General Manager	Semi-annually
	Draw up semi-annual reports which evaluate the impact of its policies and activities on the promotion of equal opportunities	General Director	Semi-annually
	Organize public hearings in the conference room to reconcile conflict which involve its interests, those of the interested parties and society's expectations	General Director	Semi-annually
	Create forums for the participation of all employees in which subjects related to CSR activities are dealt with	General Director	Quarterly
	Draw up a code of corporate government	General Director	Annually
Human Rights	Create a policy which defends human rights	General Manager	Monthly
	Create indicators for monitoring the performance of activities and decision making related to human rights	General Manager	Monthly
	Make public statements on the company's position on human rights abuses	General Manager	Semi-annually
	Examine its operations to determine whether discrimination exists	General Manager	Monthly
	Organize internal fair and appropriate hearing dealing with mistakes which have been made	General Manager	When necessary
	Create programs for supporting low income clients in need of our service	General Manager	Monthly
	Create programs to eliminate forced or obligatory labor	General Manager	Bi-annually
Environment	Implement a system of environmental administration	Directive team	Annually
	Create a program for the prevention of and preparation for accidents	Directive Team	Annually
	Report of toxic materials and shelf life of the same	Director General	Bi-annually
	Implement programs of risk-based sustainability	Director General	Bi-annually

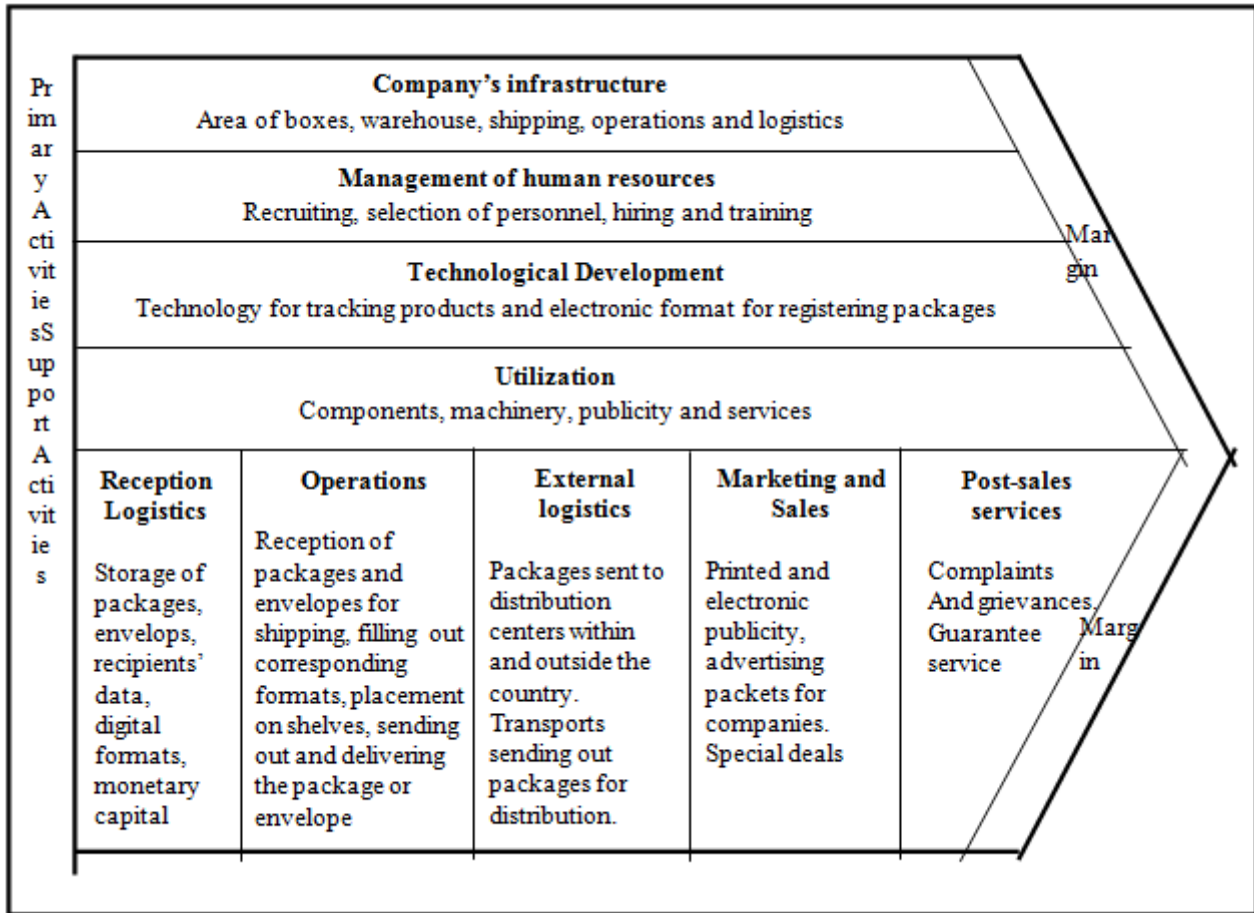
	Carry out a workshop for developing activities to raise awareness and respond to emergencies	Director General	Bi-annually
	Implement programs of efficiency to reduce environmental deterioration	General Director	Annually
	Give preference to products with minimum environmental impact	General Director	Annually
Working Practices	Create programs which give workers the ability to create their own organizations	General Manager	Annually
	Create programs to buffer or eliminate incidents which put safety, physical and mental health at risk	General Manager	Monthly
	Create programs for support and advising of workers who have been fired, when applicable	General Manager	Bi-annually
Fair Practices of Operation	Create reports of transparency to avoid violations of the company's policies	General Manager	Bi-annually
	Create anti-corruption programs, encouraging other organizations to adopt similar measures	General Manger	Bi-annually
	Create reports on the transparency of policies and activities	General Manager	Annually
	Create forums to promote employee's awareness of the importance of fair competition	General Manager	Annually
	Create anti-monopoly and anti-dumpling policies as well as policies which promote competition	General Manager	Annually
Consumer Affairs	Create policies to avoid inappropriate use of personal data	General Manager	Monthly
Active Participation and Community Development	Create opinion forums with members of the community to maximize resources and opportunities	General Manager	Annually
	Create cultural programs about the history and traditions of the community.	General Manager	Annually
	Create reports on the transparency of relations with government workers and political representatives	General Manager	Bi-annually
	Create programs on the incorporation of children into formal education	General Manager	Annually
	Create programs for the conservation and protection of the cultural heritage	General Manager	Annually
	Create programs on the creation of new jobs aimed at vulnerable groups	General Manager	Annually
	Create programs on the incorporation of innovative technology which contributes to solving social and environmental issues	General Manager	Bi-annually
	Establish constant ties with the township so that the company always has up-dated information on community planning.	General Manager	Bi-monthly



**Source: My own with information on ISO 26000**

If the courier company which is the object of the present study decides to implement these activities in strategic planning, it is recommended that to this end they use Porter and Kramer's value chain model (2006). Thus, they could avoid the CSR

activities which were proposed from becoming mere cosmetic, isolated actions, creating unnecessary expenses for the company. In Figure 1 we may observe the value chain for the company studied.



**Figure 1. Chain of value for the courier business**

Source: My own elaboration with information from Porter and Kramer (2006)

CSR activities influence all the company's activities -primary and support- of this company's value chain thus determining the justification for forming part of the company's strategic plan. They would prove to be in the benefit of improved relations with the interest groups, thus increasing the image, reputation and organizational earnings.

**5. Conclusions:**

There are an increasing number of companies which have added CSR to their planning in order to improve their relationships with their stakeholders and which show a genuine interest in taking responsibility for the consequences of their work. Embracing this strategic approach allows entities to identify and implement actions which improve their social, economic and environmental environs, contributing to the development of a healthy and fair society. In turn this benefits their effort by

guaranteeing the operation of this business thanks to the preference for the products it provides.

This study analyzed an organization whose line of business is providing courier service, and which does not yet have CSR certification. It was made in order to help the company obtain its certification of social responsibility for the following reasons: primarily to obtain competitive advantages which strengthen its business image and reputation, thus improving its financial earnings; secondly, its main competitors (Estafeta, DHL, FedEx and UPS) are already certified as socially responsible companies and are potentially able to attract those clients who identify with this certification, showing their commitment to society and the environment.

The results obtained in the present study support empirical evidence of the application of social responsibility in strategies of the organizations of

the country with developing markets. We recommend carrying out a number of studies on CSR in Mexican businesses in order to convince more companies that integrating the context of social responsibility which constitutes a differentiating element in organization of the present century is to their advantage.

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