

1. Dominika: Welcome to our podcast: How to learn the truth about a company's CSR - Corporate Social Responsibility commitment?

Our expert will explain the idea of CSR and will share the best practice in Ireland. Welcome our guest, Julia Marcinkowska from EDU SMART Training Centre Limited.

2. Julia: Thank you Domi. Nice to be here. Actually, CSR, ESG and ECOLOGY, smart cities are my best topic and I wish every single company would operate according to world standards by taking responsibility for their impacts on society and the environment in 21st century.

3. Dominika: Thank you, nice to have you too. So Julia, what is CSR?

4. Julia: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) used to be a way for companies to set themselves apart, something that was considered 'nice to have' but not necessarily essential. In recent years, there has been a real shift in the perception of CSR and it's safe to say it's now become part of 'Best Practice' for most companies operating in this part of the world. For this reason, Corporate Social Responsibility is becoming increasingly important in the world of recruitment. The goal is always to attract and recruit the top talent, and the best candidates are often looking for a role in a company whose core values are aligned with theirs. For many people in the job market, a company which operates in an ethical manner and can prove that they 'give back' in meaningful ways is a very attractive proposition. In fact, a study carried out by Cone Communications found that 51% of participants wouldn't work for a company that doesn't have strong social and environmental commitments, and there isn't much doubt that this figure is trending upwards.

The onus is therefore on companies to be able to show potential employees that they are committed to Socially Responsible practices, and there are several ways to do this:

5. Dominika: What does it mean to Make CSR an integral part of the company culture?

6. Julia: To attract and recruit socially conscious talent, Corporate Social Responsibility has to be a theme which runs throughout a company's culture. Potential candidates are increasingly able to distinguish between companies who are just using CSR as a marketing tool, and those which use it to guide all of their practices. Candidates who truly believe the company is serious in its commitments to ethical conduct will become a business' best ambassadors.

7. Dominika: How about the Company Website?

8. **Julia:** The first thing most people do when they're researching a potential new employer is to visit their website. It's really important for companies to show off their CSR practices, perhaps with a separate tab or page dedicated to showing things like volunteer work done by employees, charity initiatives, and company policies outlining CSR COMMITMENTS. Celebrating the good things a company does shows potential employees that they share the same core values and lets the top talent know where the business stands.

9. Dominika: And how would you comment Employee Engagement in CSR?

10. **Julia:** Nowadays, more and more candidates are asking companies about their employee engagement programs and CSR strategies during interviews. Of course, things like the possibility of remote work, reward programs, and training are still important to candidates, but things like designated employee volunteer days and involving employees in choosing causes to support can really boost a candidate's opinion of a company. In fact, the Millennial Impact Report found that 53% of participants had been inspired to work for a company who was committed to making a difference in the world.

The ultimate goal in recruitment is to attract the best talent and to get them in the perfect roles. Matching a candidate who places a lot of importance on social responsibility, with a company who operates in a socially responsible way, is the perfect way to gain an engaged employee who's in it for the long-run. Highlighting the social good an organisation does during the recruitment process simply creates an 'everybody wins' scenario!

11. Dominika: What is the SME (Small and Medium Enterprise) percentage in Ireland? Do you believe that small and medium size enterprises are as capable of engaging in socially responsible business practices as a large corporate?

12. **Julia:** Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) involves conducting business ethically and keeping in mind society and the community in which the business operates. CSR involves companies taking responsibility for their impacts on society and the environment. This can involve good practices that relate to a business' community, workforce, marketplace or environment.

Corporate Social Responsibility is often thought of as only being of relevance to 'big business' and companies that have a vast budget, but this is not the case.



SMEs in Ireland make up over 99% of businesses in the economy and account for almost 70% of people employed and it is therefore vitally important that Irish businesses are aware of what CSR is, the positive impacts it can have on a business, and how to get started on CSR.

Small and medium size enterprises are just as capable of engaging in socially responsible business practices as a large corporate. SMEs stand to benefit greatly from developing a CSR plan and communicating it to stakeholders. The nature of SMEs as belonging to a particular locality and their importance in local economies means that they are often better placed than a larger company to engage in local issues and CSR work within their community. It can also be easier to engage staff in an SME where there are fewer people and all employees can get involved if they so wish. Customer and business expectations around CSR are increasing and now is a great time to get your business involved.

13. Dominika: EDU SMART TRAINING CENTRE is part of one of the biggest clusters in Ireland, IDEAM. Can you share any of the best practice of IDEAM around CSR?

14. Julia: Yes, IDEAM is well known cluster across Ireland. We, as EDU SMART became part of IDEAM because we have values in comment. For example:

- Be Open and Collaborative
- Build Trust & Strong Relationships
- Be the Strategic Voice of your Members
- Be Interconnected Europe-wide & Globally
- Cross-cluster Collaboration
- Entrepreneurial Activity & Investment within the Cluster
- COVID-19: Enhance Digital Capabilities & Close Membership Engagement
- Promote Digital Transformation, Green, Sustainability & Resilience in Society
- Drive Change & Lead R&D Innovation
- Support Skilling & Reskilling of People

We are now seeing increased demands from employees, customers and government bodies for businesses to behave responsibly and transparently about their activities and to reach, and maintain, acceptable standards in their business practice. Engaging in CSR activities can have many positive impacts for a business of any size.

Many SMEs are already engaged in CSR practices unknowingly through their efforts to make a positive impact on their communities and support local causes. In a lot of cases, SMEs that are engaging in socially responsible business practices are not necessarily communicating these activities or aligning them with their core business model.

15. Dominika: It seems CSR is a great way for a business to increase their attractiveness to both employees and consumers, and is a great way to enhance.

16. Julia: Yes, it is. Speaking about the great way for a business to increase their attractiveness I would like to discuss ISO 26000 as the best known and most frequently implemented international CSR standards. I believe it is worth to mention it in this podcast.

ISO 26000 is a Voluntary International Standard. The aim of all norms and standards is an attempt to systematise the concepts and methods of approach and to provide specific tools and ways of implementing the CSR philosophy in companies. Among the best known and most often used standards is ISO 26000. It is also looking at human rights and prevention of modern-day slavery.

The ISO 26000 2010 guidance document constitutes a steppingstone for organizations in both the public and private sectors who want to implement ISO 26000 as a means of achieving the benefits of operating in a socially responsible manner, it constitutes CSR.

The objective of social responsibility is to contribute to sustainable development.

Organizations around the world, and their stakeholders, are becoming increasingly aware of the need for, and benefits of, socially responsible behaviour. The objective of social responsibility is to contribute to sustainable development.

An organization's commitment to the welfare of society and the environment has become a central criterion in measuring its overall performance and its ability to continue operating effectively. This, in part, is a reflection of the growing recognition that we need to ensure healthy ecosystems, social equity and good organizational governance. Ultimately, an organization's activities depend on the health of the world's ecosystems. These days, organizations are subject to greater scrutiny by their various stakeholders.

17. Dominika: What benefits can be achieved by implementing ISO 26000 ?

An organization's performance on social responsibility can influence, among other things:

- Competitive advantage
- Reputation
- The ability to attract and retain workers or members, customers, clients and users
- The maintenance of employee morale, commitment and productivity
- The perception of investors, owners, donors, sponsors and the financial community
- Relationships with companies, governments, the media, suppliers, peers, customers and the com-

Who can benefit from ISO 26000 and how ?

18. Julia: ISO 26000 provides guidance for all types of organization, regardless of their size or location, on :

1. Concepts, terms and definitions related to social responsibility
2. Background, trends and characteristics of social responsibility
3. Principles and practices relating to social responsibility
4. Core subjects and issues of social responsibility
5. Integrating, implementing and promoting socially responsible behaviour throughout the organization and, through its policies and practices, within its sphere of influence
6. Identifying and engaging with stakeholders
7. Communicating commitments, performance and other information related to social responsibility

ISO 26000 is intended to assist organizations in contributing to sustainable development. It encourages them to go beyond legal compliance, recognizing that compliance with the law is a fundamental duty of any organization and an essential part of their social responsibility programme. The standard seeks to promote a common understanding of social responsibility while complementing – but not replacing – other existing tools and initiatives. When applying ISO 26000, organizations should consider societal, environmental, legal, cultural, political and organizational diversity as well as differences in economic conditions, while being consistent with international norms of behaviour.

19. Dominika: Julia, you haven't mention ISO 26000 certification. Does that mean ISO 26000 is not for certification like ISO 9001?

20. Julia: Yes, correct. ISO 26000 is not a management system standard. It does not contain requirements and, as such, cannot be used for certification. Any offer to certify, or claims to be certified, against ISO 26000 would be a misrepresentation of its intent and purpose. **What specifically does ISO 26000 contain ?**

ISO 26000 addresses seven core subjects of social responsibility defined in the standard and portrayed in the following graphic.

21. Dominika: ISO 26000 identifies certain limitations and exclusions then, identifies and provides the definition of key terms that are of fundamental importance for understanding social responsibility, describes the important factors and conditions that have influenced the development of social responsibility and that continue to affect its nature and practice. It also describes the con-

cept of social responsibility itself – what it means and how it applies to organizations. So is there any deatiles guidance for small and medium-sized organizations on the use of ISO 26000 as part of CSR strategy?

22. Julia: Yes, exactly! The ISO 26000 guidance introduces and explains the principles of social responsibility - CSR. ISO 26000 addresses two practices of social responsibility: an organization's recognition of its social responsibility, and its identification of, and engagement with, its stakeholders. It provides guidance on the relationship between an organization, its stakeholders and society, on recognizing the core subjects and issues of social responsibility, and on an organization's sphere of influence. Explains the core subjects and associated issues relating to social responsibility. For each core subject, information has been provided on its scope, its relationship to social responsibility, related principles and considerations, and related actions and expectations. Provides guidance on putting social responsibility into practice in an organization. This includes : understanding the social responsibility of an organization, integrating social responsibility throughout an organization, communication related to social responsibility, improving the credibility of an organization regarding social responsibility, reviewing progress and improving performance and evaluating voluntary initiatives for social responsibility

23. Dominika: **It sound like a complex topic. I am sure there is much more to say about CSR!**

24. Julia: yes! Indeed. There are many questions to be answered especially: Why the social responsibility is important nowadays!

25. Dominika: **I agree, and I believe that the easiest answer to that question will be: Social responsibility empowers employees to leverage the corporate resources at their disposal to do good. Being a socially responsible company can bolster a company's image and build its brand. Social responsibility programs can boost employee morale in the workplace and lead to greater productivity, which has an impact on how profitable the company can be. Businesses that implement social responsibility initiatives can increase customer retention and loyalty.**

26. Julia: Yes. Socially responsible companies have the opportunity to stand out from the competition because they cultivate superior and positive brand recognition.

27. Dominika: **Thank you Julia. It was a very informative discussion**

28. Julia: Thank you Dominika. Goodbye.