

# Magdalena Bielenia-Grajewska

---

## Corporate Social Responsibility and Communication with Stakeholders

---

Studia Germanica Gedanensia 23, 171-185

---

2010

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej [bazhum.muzhp.pl](http://bazhum.muzhp.pl), gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

Magdalena Bielenia-Grajewska

## Corporate Social Responsibility and Communication with Stakeholders

### Modern companies – introduction

The power of business organizations is very strong since they “control vast resources, cross national borders, and affect every human life” (Philips 2003: 1). Organizations do not exist thanks to themselves and for themselves. Consequently, they are obliged to take part in the life of “the communities on which they rely so heavily for employees and financial or other resources” (Werther and Chandler 2006: 50). What is more, “organizational lives” (May 2006: 3) are part of our everyday existence since they “operate in an increasingly boundaryless world in which information and relationships are both important and more fluid” (Svendsen 1998:47). These two notions, namely information and relationships, are both related to communication, with the first notion, information, being even treated as a synonym for communication (Schement 1993). Consequently, the communicative aspect of a company’s performance will be discussed in greater detail in the coming section.

### Modern companies and communication

The discussion of the second element constituting the above-mentioned contemporary postmodern world, relationships, should begin with a quote: “if you want to build a relationship, start a conversation” (Foley and Kendrick 2006: 127). Thus, interacting with people is an indispensable element in forging bonds with others, be they of a personal or societal type. Consequently, discourse can be treated as a part of social activity (Chiapello and Fairclough 2008) since “it is through discourse that individuals develop their own views of morality; through discourse that organizations develop and through discourse that organizations inculcate core values and ethical codes; and through discourse that incongruities within individual and organizational value sets of different persons are negotiated” (Conrad 1993 quoted in McMillan 2007: 24). Language is also visible in such notions as

public relations, marketing communication, reputation management, and branding, which are used by enterprises to differentiate themselves from others. The above-mentioned domains are not only used to promote products or services, but they also reflect corporate identity and values (Clegg, Kornberger and Pitsis 2005). Without suggesting that social discourse is univocal or ignoring competing and conflicting positions within discursive domains, Livesey and Graham make the case that the talk of large corporations has the potential to transform not only the perceptions, but also the actual practices of different social actors, including themselves (quoted in Christensen 2007). Companies have to praise themselves because “if the organization does not “toot its own horn,” who will? Horn tooting (or positive identity creation), either loudly rendered or in hushed, subtle tones is the stuff of legitimation” (Cheney and Christensen 2001 quoted in Christensen 2007: 22). What is more, by discourse companies establish the relation with their environment which will be discussed in the coming sections.

## Stakeholders

My discussion of corporate social responsibility cannot take place without stakeholders since an organization can be treated as “a constellation of stakeholder groups” (Ford 1999: 387). Organizations depend on constituency groups which determine their success (Philips 2003). This trend in corporate behavior, that is, “this widespread adoption of the stakeholder perspective in business marks a move away from the neo-classical economic theory of organizations to a socio-economic theory, within which the stakeholder perspective is embedded” (Cornelissen 2008: 38). To be competitive in a changing and dynamic economy, companies have to find new ways of fighting for stakeholders’ consent (Lauring and Thomsen 2008). Economic entities should also take into consideration that the satisfaction of different groups is necessary for company’s success (Carroll and Buchholtz 2008). Consequently, modern ventures show an interest in moral principles by starting ethics programs, values initiatives and other issues stressing the company-stakeholder relation (Paine 2003), such as human rights, work-family balance, corporate volunteerism, community assistance, product safety, customer service and philanthropy, among others (May 2006). The above-mentioned plethora of actions taken by companies to meet the needs of different interest groups suggests that there are many entities which can be described as stakeholders. In this article stakeholders are understood as “the individuals and groups who can affect, and are affected by the strategic outcomes achieved and who have enforceable claims on a firm’s performance” (Hitt et al. 2008: 20). A similar definition is presented by Weintraub Austin and Pinkleton (2006: 64) who claim that “stakeholders are those who should care and be involved or those who can be affected by or who can affect your program”. Since I am discussing organizations the aim of which is to gain profit, the role of

stakeholder-company cooperation has also to deal with cooperative ties that lead to competitive advantage (Heugens, van den Bosch and van Riel 2002). Stakeholders are classified in different ways. Let me provide some typologies: shareholders, customers, suppliers and distributors, employees, local communities (Friedman and Miles 2006: 13), and company, customers, competitors, suppliers, influencers and facilitators (Manning 2002: 29). Cornellisen (2008: 43) divides shareholders into contractual shareholders (customers, employees, distributors, suppliers, shareholders, lenders) and community stakeholders (consumers, regulators, government, media, local communities, pressure groups). Other notions such as region (community, city, state and nation), ethnic or racial identification, as well as political orientation, can also determine the classification of stakeholders (Ferguson 1999). What is more, some authors (e.g. Starik) go even further and state that non-living entities can be treated as stakeholders (those who have died or have not been born yet) or even such concepts as love, honesty or community (Friedman and Miles 2006: 9). However, the non-living entity is, in a way, in a less privileged position since, with the natural environment being one example, it is “without a voice of its own” (Sama, Welcomer and Gerde 2004: 149–150). Consequently, more interaction is required from the active participant in the communication process. To show the importance of communication in the stakeholder-organization relation, I quote Caywood (1997: 56) who states that “the public relations/corporate communications managers of the future not only have a finger on the pulse of their stakeholders, they have an intravenous tube connected to the stakeholders inserted into them”.

## Stakeholders and communication

As I have already stated, companies depend on how the public views them. It is not enough for them to produce products and offer services. They must also “produce talk” which explains their corporate behavior (Brunsson 2007: 70). As Lydenberg (2005) claims, the way a company communicates with stakeholders mirrors the social expectation that a company cares for social issues. Those responsible for interaction with stakeholders should remember that “they should communicate for the sake of communication” (Freeman, Harrison and Wicks 2007: 128) since without on-going communication among all stakeholders, people cannot control the project completely (Verzuh 2003). What is more, it is also important for a company that is interested in effective communication with stakeholders to set up its own common starting points (CSPs). These can include such notions as innovativeness, quality or shareholder value (van Riel 2000: 163) and take into consideration such important notions for a company as strategy, identity and image (Balmer and Greyser 2003: 143). I should also stress that this type of communication involves treating both partners equally. Thus, “even if we speak about the powerful and the powerless, a relatively neutral language is used”

(Mraović 2004: 71). Since “discourse is not simply the imposition of one ideology onto subordinate groups” (Laclau and Mouffe in Spence 2007: 865), both sides should have a possibility to express their views. What is more, CSR rhetoric should show that corporate profit, success and stakeholders’ benefit can be achieved simultaneously (Morsing 2006).

The importance of stakeholder communication is also stressed by Martin (2003: 43) who states that “the stakeholder vocabulary is common currency in developed and developing countries (often disseminated by the activities of management consultants and international institutions)”. Shareholder communicative participation is especially important in a risky situation when the stakeholders can see “what is known about the risk, how the risk will be managed, and how decisions are reached” (Lundgren and McMakin 2009: 122). For example, effective internal communication helps to convince the stakeholders that a particular change is necessary (Smith and Moutner 2008).

A company should also remember that it may take a lot of effort to inform a stakeholder since one or two information sources may not be enough (Sellnow et al. 2008). That is why some companies use different communicative channels, such as annual reports, sustainability reports, press releases, consumer information channels, intranet, open days, shows for investors, specialist publications (e.g. Henkel).

Moreover, any message should be coherent and should never irritate the listener (van Riel 2000). A good way to avoid misunderstanding is to apply the strategy of active listening, which encompasses rephrasing the speech or text produced by the conversation participant (Hemmati 2002). Other features of effective stakeholder communication include the possibility of an organization to respond to pressure from the stakeholder’s side (Butterfield, Reed, and Lemak 2004). It should be also stressed that the image of a responsible company is not fixed among stakeholders and changes with the flow of time (Morsing 2006). Stakeholders, depending on the interests they represent, can have different opinions on key features of corporate responsibility. Consequently, if the company wants to be viewed as reliable on the market, it has to pay careful attention to communication with every stakeholder group (Keyton 2005). This is also stressed in Schultz and Kitchen’s metaphor of the “corporate umbrella,” in which the ribs of the umbrella signify different communication strategies to be employed in interacting with stakeholders (quoted in Ahlering 2008). Since a stakeholder group can act collectively if group members communicate effectively (Laplume, Sonpar and Litz 2008; Rowley and Moldoveanu 2003), the idea of multi-stakeholder processes (MSPs) is often applied to study the stakeholder communication which allows for effective decision making processes, taking into consideration a stakeholder’s opinion. The important aspect of this approach is that significance is placed on “achieving equity and accountability in communication between stakeholders, involving equitable representation of three or more stakeholder groups and their views”

(<http://www.stakeholderforum.org/index.php?id=multistake>).

## Corporate Social Responsibility

The relation between an organization and its stakeholders can be studied in various ways. The one presented in this paper highlights the issue of responsibility and mutual trust. The above-mentioned link between a company and society is stressed by different notions in professional literature, including “corporate citizenship, strategic philanthropy, corporate social responsiveness, and latterly good governance, environmentalism and sustainability” (Hazlett, McAdam and Murray 2007: 670). Although the terms corporate responsibility and ethics cannot be used interchangeably, since “the discourse of CSR is constructed around the nodal point of the “business case”, whereby notions of responsibility are married to commercial concerns, where ethics are confated with reputational issues” (Spence 2007: 865), for the sake of clarity, I will use the term Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) throughout my discussion to denote all the activities performed by company which aims at good contacts with the corporate environment, as well as sustainable development of the company itself. The company is pictured as a responsible organization since Corporate Social Responsibility “means that a corporation should be held accountable for any of its actions that affect people, their communities and their environment” (Patton 2006: 448). Let me discuss the most important notions connected with corporate social responsibility. CSR is especially important when an applicable policy is not completely developed or when corresponding legislation is still missing (Wolff et al. 2009). Thus, it can be useful during moments of change and implementation of new strategies. As far as its application is concerned, CSR should not be exercised just from time to time, but it should constitute the fixed basis of corporate communication. For example, as far as production is concerned, “the extent to which CSR activities cover a product’s life cycle influences how deep sustainability impact will be” (Wolff et al. 2009: 296). What is more, Corporate Social Responsibility influences the profitability of a given company. The way a company is viewed by others determines its financial outcome since “the projection of a positive reputation can lower the cost of capital and attract trading partners because these inimitable, intangible resources serve as signals about firms’ present and future action” (Teece et al. 1997 quoted in Kuhn 2008: 1230).

A discussion of the issue of corporate social responsibility should not ignore skeptical voices on the subject of CSR. Some say that ventures rather talk about CSR than implement real sustainable action (Roberston and Nicholson 1996 quoted in Abreu and David 2004: 112). Some have even suggested that “corporate social responsibility is little more than rhetoric, issued for public relations motives” (Frederick 2006: 32). There are also opinions that CSR is used by some “unscrupulous companies to legitimate shady practice, adopted as a soft substitute and in place of regulation, as in the Enron case” (Shaw 2006: 115). Consequently, the language of CSR is viewed by some as “earnest and dull” (Grayson and Hodges 2004: 9). For those remembering

communist times in Central Europe “this distrust is also reinforced by the CSR rhetoric, which appeals to blurry and general goals that are set far into the future, as well as some abstract expressions, such as common good, sustainable development. These phrases seem to recall the propaganda of the times of planned economy – the propaganda which nobody took seriously – and as a result many managers and employees regard the CSR declarations as a sort of smokescreen, devoid of practical meaning” (Lewicka- Strzalecka 2006: 444). However, no matter whether the attitude to CSR is positive or negative, both sides stress the immense role of communication and language in corporate social responsibility. Since “research on CSR communication is in its infancy” (Ihlen 2009: 370), in the coming section a detailed analysis of CSR discursive patterns will be provided.

### CRS and its communicative aspect

Let me first outline the importance of the discursive side of CSR. As Moskowitz states, CSR is composed in 95% of rhetoric and only in 5% of actions (Steiner 2005). The communicative aspect is also stressed in the definition of CSR since “to be responsible is to be answerable” (Lukas 1993), “to be able and willing to answer” (den Hond, de Bakker and Neergaard 2007: 2). Thus, the issue of CSR rhetoric is worth a more detailed consideration. CSR communication can be defined as “using promotional techniques that are directed at informing about a company’s CSR and supporting CSR-based identity and relational as well as behavioral loyalties or switching behavior” (Kitchen 1999 quoted in Bueble 2009: 18). There are several notions which underline effective CSR communication. For example, realism, relevance, responsiveness, and sustainability should determine how social issues are handled (Martin and Hetrick 2006). Other important notions are creativity, convergence and transparency (Bessire 2008). Different types of CSR strategies are provided by Doorley and Garcia (2007 quoted in Ihlen 2009: 365–366). They are as follows: accuracy, transparency and credibility. The principle of accuracy stresses the importance of information on any current situation. The notion of transparency underlines such features of information as sufficiency and relevance. The last item, namely credibility, draws our attention to the importance of third parties which verify the proper conduct of shareholders’ interests and rights. Another typology of CSR communicative strategy encompasses reactive rhetorical strategy and proactive rhetoric strategy (Windell 2007). The first rhetorical strategy is that of minimalizing risk. If a company does not introduce CSR, then this behavior leads to financial losses and a loss of trust among stakeholders. The second strategy, namely a proactive rhetorical strategy, underlines that incorporating CSR into a company makes it able to meet its customers’ expectations. The other popular strategies in CSR communication are: informing strategy, interacting strategy, and process strategy. The informing strategy reflects

the one-way communication process and encompasses the issues which the company thinks should be communicated to the stakeholders. The interaction strategy, on the other hand, is a two-way communicative process. Hence, it involves active participation from the stakeholders, which results in a better understanding of stakeholders' needs and expectations. The process of going from one strategy to another is connected with effective strategic management (Morsing 2006). Taking the temporal aspect into consideration, leading performance indicators, discussing how business action can be improved, are more important than lagging performance indicators picturing what has been already done by the company (Gillis 2006). As far as communication channels used in CSR communication are concerned, I can enumerate, among others, annual reports (den Hond et al. 2007), newsletters (e.g. Grayson and Hodges 2004), and company websites (e.g. Hopkins 2007). Apart from the above-mentioned modes of direct communication, there are also indirect channels, represented by journalists from the local newspaper or participants in direct oral communication (Nielsen and Thomsen 2009). Of course, the channels described in the section on stakeholder communication also apply in CSR discourse. As Gillis (2006) states, content message should be focused rather on impacts (what is the outcome of company's actions) than on outputs (how much money it costs). As far as topics are concerned, CSR communication includes mission, vision, values, corporate climate, social dialogue, human rights, community involvement, local economy development, environment, and ethical issues, etc (Birth et al. 2007). All the above-mentioned elements shape corporate identity. An example of such a company is Shell, which, by using the rhetoric of sustainable development, both "served its own identity needs and contributed to revising the progress myth that underpins modern corporations and a capitalist economy" (Peterson and Norton 2007: 364). Following this line of reasoning, the corporate image has a direct influence on profits since "the projection of a positive reputation can lower the cost of capital and attract trading partners because these inimitable, intangible resources serve as signals about firms' present and future action" (Teece et al. 1997 quoted in Kuhn 2008: 1230). These signals, mainly of a verbal type, will be given a more detailed examination in the coming sections.

## Symbolism in CSR

Symbols are part of our everyday existence. Since a person is an "animal symbolicum" (Cassirer 1995), a company, consisting of various individuals, can be treated as a symbolic entity, being itself a symbol-processing social system (Boulding quoted in Weick 2001:71). What is more, discussing the communicative aspect of CSR cannot be realized without taking into consideration such notions as symbolism, since communication, as such, can be described as a process of exchanging symbols (Kuhn 2008). Moreover, communication with stakeholders should rely on well-known concepts and notions



since “people trust others who share their own symbols and interpretative frames” (Zucker 1986 quoted in Puncheva 2008: 279). In our case, “the social reality of the organization is created and maintained through language and symbolic interaction” (Cheney and Christiansen 2000 quoted in Peterson and Norton 2007: 364). The used imagery “serves to focus on warm and fuzzy themes of human protection and comfort” (Meister 1999 quoted in Ganesh 2007: 382). As far as images in CSR are concerned, they are used to “the construction of a speaker’s ethos as well as a construction of a dwelling place (ethos) for collaborative and moral deliberation” (Hyde 2004: xviii). Not only visual but also verbal symbolism plays a crucial role in CSR communication, thus the coming section will be devoted to linguistic symbols.

## Metaphors in CSR

The symbolic function of language should be stressed since “of all forms of symbolism, language is the most developed and subtle” (Viviers and Van Schalkwyk 1992: 22).

As Edelman (quoted in Mio 1996: 130) states, metaphors, symbols and other linguistic cues are employed to make people behave or think in a particular way. Let me discuss one of these symbolic tropes, namely metaphors, and their implication for CSR communication. There are different reasons why metaphors are used in CSR rhetoric. One of them is the feature that metaphor can stress certain features while hiding others (Mc Millan 2007), having “a dual nature and a sort of mystery embodied in it” (Bielenia-Grajewska 2009a: 4). To digress, the duality is also stressed by Yasukawa (2008: 7) during an interview on the concept of CSR itself, since he states that if people “borrow a baseball metaphor, CSR has two facets – one is being in the outfield and the other is being in the batter’s box”. Secondly, metaphors are used to picture new concepts by using well-known ideas (e.g., Brown 1994; Mladenov 2006). Thirdly, metaphors are used to discuss socially difficult matters since a friendly concept from a fairytale or the animal world calms down a tense situation (Bielenia-Grajewska 2009b). What is more, metaphors are useful when people have to present complicated issues in as few words as possible (Tilley 1999). Since the aim is to make readers understand the message and behave in a given way, sesquipedalian vocabulary (long words) should be avoided, both in speech and in texts (Bell and Smith 2005). A short metaphorical name serves best its purpose, but “many companies rather meaninglessly state that they ‘strive for excellence’ or aim to be a ‘world leader’. Such (often) pious, smug and even arrogant statements add little” (Stittle 2003: 10).

To digress, the concept of CSR itself can be described by using the mash-up metaphor since, comparably to music, its sources are used simultaneously, in various combinations (Mc Manus 2008). There are of course other metaphors which can be used in the discussion on CSR. One of them is the

open systems metaphor which pictures an organization as a structural entity, constituting of diverse elements, being “separated from its environment by a boundary” (Taber 2007: 543). This metaphor is very useful in management since it shows that “the environment dictates the changes an organization has to implement in order to survive in the given environmental circumstances. Whatever steps managers and/or owners deem necessary to undertake (for downsizing, developing new products, or finding new markets) can be justified and legitimized within the open systems metaphor as necessary and unavoidable” (Tietze, Cohen and Musson 2003: 42). The other metaphor describing the company-environment relation is the metaphor of a lens which is used to “examine one-way (inside –outside) and two-way (inside-outside, outside-inside) dissemination between organizations and stakeholders” (Putman, Phillips and Chapman 1999: 131).

The metaphor of family (Ganesh 2007: 382) is also popular in the discussion on CSR. Since families “create their own unique culture and personal symbols” (Socha 1999: 481), they (or rather their connotations) are used, for example, to show how all people work together for common aims. This trope can be used in ecological communication which stresses that since people share one Earth, they should take care of it as much as they can (Ihlen 2009).

It also implies that you can rely on the organization as you can on family members. On the other hand, I can say that this family trope can evoke some negative connotations since family involves hierarchy and a generation gap. Thus, symbolic communication with stakeholders on CSR issues can be very effective, but cultural differences have to be taken into consideration when the symbolic linguistic tools are chosen.

## Conclusion

As has been discussed in this article, companies have to respect their stakeholders if they not only want to survive in the economic jungle, but also belong to the top ventures in their league. To cooperate means to communicate; thus effective communicative strategies are indispensable if a company wants to be perceived as a reliable partner. It is especially CSR discourse which has to be handled with great effort and scope in order to meet the needs of diverse and dispersed stakeholders. It can be also estimated that more and more companies will adopt successful CSR rhetoric strategies since “organizations imitate organizations that they perceive as successful” (Göthberg 2007: 94–95). Thus, in the future it can be expected that even more companies will be using well-known CSR discursive strategies, but maybe also new verbal methods to conduct effective communication with stakeholders.

## Bibliography:

- Abreu, R. and David, F. (2004): Corporate Social Responsibility: Exploration Inside Experience and Practice at the European Level. In: Crowther, D. and Rayman-Bacchus, L. (eds.). *Perspectives in Corporate Social Responsibility*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, pp. 109–139.
- Ahlering, J. (2008): The Face of the Firm: Articulating Identity through CSR-Related Diversity Rhetoric. In: *Proceedings of the 2008 Association for Business Communication Annual Convention*. <http://www.businesscommunication.org/conventionsNew/proceedingsNew/2009New/JaneAhlering.pdf>
- Balmer, J.M.T. and Greyser, S.A. (2003): *Revealing the corporation: perspectives on identity, image, reputation, corporate branding, and corporate-level marketing*. London: Routledge.
- Bell, A.H. and Smith, D.M. (2005): *Management communication*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons.
- Bessire, D. (2008): Corporate Social Responsibility: From Transparency to ‘Constructive Conflict’. In: Crowther, D. and Capaldi, N. (eds). *The Ashgate Research Companion to Corporate Social Responsibility*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, pp.65- 86.
- Bielenia-Grajewska, M. (2009a): A Rhetorical Approach to Analyzing Turbulent Environments. The Role of Symbolism in Communicating Global Financial Crisis. In: *IACCM Online Proceedings*. <http://www.wu.ac.at/iaccm/conferproc09>
- Bielenia-Grajewska, M. (2009b): The role of metaphors in the language of investment banking. *Special Issue of Iberica 2009*. [www.aelfe.org/documents/09\\_17\\_Bielenia.pdf](http://www.aelfe.org/documents/09_17_Bielenia.pdf)
- Birth, G., Illia, L., Lurati, F. and Zamparini, A. (2007): Communicating CSR: practices among Switzerland’s top 300 companies. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 13/2, pp. 182 – 196.
- Brown, V. (1994): The economy as text. In: R. Backhouse (ed.). *New Directions in Economic Methodology*. London: Routledge, pp. 368–382.
- Brunsson, N. (2007): *The consequences of decision-making*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bueble, I. (2009): *Corporate Social Responsibility: CSR Communication as an Instrument to Consumer- Relationship Marketing*. Norderstedt: GRIN Verlag.
- Butterfield, K.D., Reed, R. and Lemak, D. J. (2004): An Inductive Model of Collaboration From the Stakeholder’s Perspective. *Business Society*, 43/2, pp. 162–195.
- Carroll, A.B. and Buchholtz, A. K. (2008): *Business & Society. Ethics and Stakeholder Management*. Mason: OH, South-Western Cengage Learning.
- Cassirer, E. (1995): *Nachgelassene Manuskripte und Texte*. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag GmbH.
- Caywood, C.L. (1997): *The Handbook of Strategic Public Relations & Integrated Communications*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Chiapello, E. and Fairclough, N. (2008): Nowa ideologia zarządzania. Podejście transdyscyplinarne krytycznej analizy dyskursu i nowej socjologii kapitalizmu. In: Duszak, A. and Fairclough, N. (eds.). *Krytyczna analiza dyskursu*. Cracow: Universitas, pp. 373–404.

- Christensen L.T. (2007): The Discourse of Corporate Social Responsibility. Postmodern Remarks. In: May, S.K., Cheney, G. and Roper J. (eds.). *The debate over corporate social responsibility*. New York: Oxford University Press US, pp. 448–458.
- Clegg, S., Kornberger, M. and Pitsis, T. (2005): *Managing and Organizations. An Introduction to Theory and Practice*. London: Sage Publications.
- Cornelissen, J. (2008): *Corporate Communication. A Guide to Theory and Practice*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Den Hond F., De Bakker F.G.A. and Neergaard P. (2007): *Managing corporate social responsibility in action*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited.
- Ferguson, S.D. (1999): *Communication planning: an integrated approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Foley, J. and Kendrick, J. (2006): *Balanced Brand: How to Balance the Stakeholder Forces that can make or break your business*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Ford, C. (1999): Corporate Culture. In: Runco, M.A. and Pritzker, S.R. (eds.). *Encyclopedia of Creativity*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press, pp. 385–394.
- Frederick, W.C. (2006): *The Story of Corporate Social Responsibility*. Indianapolis, IN: Dog Ear Publishing.
- Freeman, E.F., Harrison, J.S. and Wicks, A.C. (2007): *Managing for Stakeholders. Survival, Reputation and Success*. Caravan Book.
- Friedman, A.L. and Miles, S. (2006): *Stakeholders: Theory and Practice*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ganesh, S. (2007): Sustainable Development Discourse and the Global Economy: Promoting Responsibility, Containing Change. In: May, S., Cheney, G. and Roper, J. (eds.). *The Debate over Corporate Social Responsibility*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 379–390.
- Gillis, T.L. (2006): *The IABC Handbook of Organizational Communication: A Guide to Internal Communication, Public Relations, Marketing, and Leadership*. San Francisco: John Wiley and Sons.
- Göthberg, P. (2007): Lost in Translation: The Case of Skandia's 'Ideas for Life'. In: Den Hond, F., De Bakker, F.G.A. and Neergaard P. (eds.). *Managing corporate social responsibility in action*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, pp. 93–110.
- Grayson, D. and Hodges, A. (2004): *Corporate Social Opportunity! 7 steps to make corporate social responsibility work for your business*. Sheffield: Greenleaf Publishing Limited.
- Hazlett, S.H., McAdam R. and Murray, L. (2007): From quality management to socially responsible organisations: the case for CSR. *International Journal of Quality & Reliability Management*, 24/7, pp. 669–82.
- Hemmati, M. (2002): *Multi-stakeholder processes for governance and stability*. London: Earthscan Publications Ltd.
- Heugens, P., Van den Bosch, F. and Van Riel, C. (2002): Stakeholder integration: Building mutually enforcing relationships. *Business & Society*, 41/1, pp. 36–60.
- Hitt, M.A., Ireland, R.D. and Hoskisson, R.E. (2008): *Strategic management: competitiveness and globalization: concepts & cases*. Mason, OH: South Western Cengage Learning.

- Hopkins, M (2007): *Corporate Social Responsibility & International Development. Is Business the Solution?* London: Earthscan. <http://www.stakeholderforum.org/index.php?id=multistake>
- Hyde, M.J. (2004): *The ethos of rhetoric*. Columbia: University of South California.
- Ihlen, Ø. (2009): Good Environmental Citizens? The Green Rhetoric of Corporate Social Responsibility. In: Heath, R.L., Toth, E.L. and Waymer, D. (eds.). *Rhetorical and Critical Approaches to Public Relations*. New York: Routledge, pp. 360–374.
- Keyton, J. (2005): *Communication and organizational culture. A key to understanding work experiences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Kuhn, T. (2008): A Communicative Theory of the Firm: Developing an Alternative Perspective on Intra-organizational Power and Stakeholder Relationships. *Organization Studies*, 29, pp. 1227 – 1254.
- Laplume, A., Sonpar, K. and Litz, R. (2008): Stakeholder theory: A longitudinal review of a theory that moves us. *Journal of Management*, 24/6, pp. 1152–1189.
- Lauring, J. and Thomsen, Ch. (2008): Collective ideals and practices in sustainable development: managing corporate identity. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 16/1, pp. 38–47
- Lewicka-Strzalecka, A. (2006): Opportunities and Limitations of CSR in the postcommunist countries. *Corporate Governance*, 6/4, pp. 440–448.
- Lundgren, R.E. and McMakin, A.H. (2009): *Risk Communication. A Handbook for Communicating Environmental, Safety and Health Risk*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons.
- Lydenberg S. (2005): *Corporations and the public interest: guiding the invisible hand*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- Manning, T. (2002): *Making sense of strategy*. New York: Amacom.
- Martin, J. (2003): Great Expectations-But Whose? Stakeholder Theory and its Implications for Ethical Behavior in Public Organisations. In: Bishop, P. Connor, C. and Sampford, Ch. (eds.). *Management, organization, and ethics in public sector*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, pp. 43–66.
- Martin, G. and Hetrick, S. (2006): *Corporate reputations, branding and people management: a strategic approach to HR*. Burlington: Elsevier Ltd.
- May, S. (2006): *Case studies in organizational communication: ethical perspectives and practices*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.
- Mc Manus, T. (2008): The business strategy/corporate social responsibility “mash-up”. *Journal of Management Development*, 27/10, pp. 1066–1085.
- McMillan J. (2007): Why Corporate Social Responsibility: Why Now? How? In: May S.K., Cheney, Grand Roper J. (eds.). *The debate over corporate social responsibility*. New York: Oxford University Press US, pp. 15–29.
- Mio, J.S. (1996): Metaphor, Politics, and Persuasion. In: Mio, J.S. and Katz, A.N. (eds.). *Metaphor. Implications and applications*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, pp. 127–146.
- Mladenov, I. (2006): *Conceptualizing Metaphors. On Charles Peirce’s marginalia*. Abingdon: Routledge.

- Morsing, M. (2006): CSR as strategic auto-communication – on the role of external stakeholders for member identification. *Business Ethics: A European Review*, 15/2, pp. 171–182.
- Mraović, B. (2004): The power of networks: Organizing versus organization. In: Crowther, D. and Rayman-Bacchus, L. (eds.). *Perspectives in Corporate Social Responsibility*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, pp. 59–84.
- Nielsen, A.E. and Thomsen, Ch. (2009): Investigating CSR Communication in SMEs: a case study among Danish middle managers. *Business Ethics* 18/1, pp. 83–93.
- Paine, L.S. (2003): *Value shift: why companies must merge social and financial imperatives to achieve superior performance*. New York: The McGraw Hill Companies.
- Patton, D. (2006): Corporate responsibility and the environment. In: Worthington, I. and Britton, Ch. (eds.). *The business environment*. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, pp. 447–470.
- Peterson, T.R. and Norton, T. (2007): Discourses of Sustainability in Today's Public Sphere. In: May S.K., Cheney G. and Roper J. (eds.). *The debate over corporate social responsibility*. New York: Oxford University Press US, pp. 351–364.
- Philips, R. (2003): *Stakeholder Theory and Organizational Ethics*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.
- Puncheva, P. (2008): The Role of Corporate Reputation in the Stakeholder Decision-Making Process. *Business & Society*, 47/3, pp. 272–290.
- Putman, L.L., Phillips, N. and Chapman, P. (1999): Metaphors of communication and organization. In: S.R. Clegg, C. Hardy and W.R. Nord (eds.). *Managing organizations. Current issues*. London, Sage Publications, Ltd, pp. 125–158.
- Rowley, T. and Moldoveanu, M.C. (2003): When Will Stakeholders Act? An Interest and Identity-Based Model of Stakeholder Mobilization. *Academy of Management Review*, 28, pp. 204–219.
- Sama, L.M., Welcomer, S.A. and Gerde, V.W. (2004): Who speaks for the trees? Invoking an ethic of care to give voice to the silent stakeholder. In: Sharma, S. and Starik, M. (eds.). *Stakeholders, the Environment and Society*. Cheltenham: Edward Edgar Publishing Limited, pp. 140–165.
- Schement, J.R. (1993): Communication and Information. In: Schement, J.R. and Ruben, B.D. (eds.). *Between communication and information*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, pp. 3–34.
- Sellnow, T.L., R.R. Ulmer, M.W. Seeger, R.S. Littlefield (2008): *Effective risk communication. A message-centred approach*. New York, Springer.
- Shaw, J.A. (2006): CSR : Where is the Love? *Social Responsibility Journal*, 2/1, pp. 112–119.
- Smith, L. and Moutner, P. (2008): *Effective Internal Communication*. London: Kogan Page Limited.
- Socha, T.J. (1999): Communication in family units. Studying the first “group”. In: Frey, L.R. (eds.). *The handbook of group communication theory and research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Ltd, pp. 475- 492.
- Spence, C. (2007): Social and environmental reporting and hegemonic discourse. *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal*, 20/ 6, pp. 855–882
- Svensden, A. (1998): *The stakeholder strategy: profiting from collaborative business relationships*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett- Koehler Publishers Inc.

- Steiner J.F. (2005): *Business, government, and society: a managerial perspective: text and cases*. New York: McGraw-Hill Professional.
- Stittle, J. (2003): *Annual reports: delivering your corporate message to stakeholders*. Aldershot: Gower Publishing Limited.
- Taber, T.D. (2007): Using Metaphors To Teach Organization Theory. *Journal of Management Education*, 31/4, pp. 541–554.
- Tietze, S., Cohen, L. and Musson, G. (2003): *Understanding the organizations through language*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Tilley, Ch.Y. (1999): *Metaphor and material culture*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- van Riel, C.B.M. (2000): Corporate Communication Orchestrated by a Sustainable Corporate Story. In: Schultz, M., Hatch, M.J. and Larsen, H. (eds.). *The expressive organization: linking identity, reputation, and the corporate brand*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 157–181.
- Verzuh, E. (2003): *The portable MBA in project management*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons.
- Viviers, D and Van Schalkwyk, H. (2002): *Success with English Language and Communication skills*. Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman (Pty).
- Weick, K.E. (2001): *Making Sense of the Organization*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Weintraub Austin, E. and Pinkleton, B.E. (2006): *Strategic Public Relations Management. Planning and Managing Effective Communication Programs*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Werther, W.B. and Chandler, D. (2006): *Strategic corporate social responsibility. Stakeholders in a global environment*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Windell, K. (2007): The Commercialization of CSR: Consultants Selling Responsibility. In: den Hond, F., de Bakker, F.G.A., Neergaard, P. (eds.). *Managing corporate social responsibility in action*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, pp. 33–52.
- Wolff, F., Barth, R., Hochfeld, Ch. and Schmitt, K. (2009): Rhetoric and realities in CSR: main findings and implications for public policy and research. In: Barth, R. and Wolff, F. (eds.). *Corporate social responsibility in Europe. Rhetoric and realities*. Cheltenham: Edward Edgar Publishing, pp. 289–311.
- Yasukawa, S. (2008): Message from the president. In: *Manufacturing for the brighter future. Aichi steel report 2008*. [http://www.aichi-steel.co.jp/ENGLISH/envi\\_rep/pdf/08/all.pdf](http://www.aichi-steel.co.jp/ENGLISH/envi_rep/pdf/08/all.pdf)

**Corporate Social Responsibility and Communication with Stakeholders**

## Abstract

The aim of this article is to present the idea of Corporate Social Responsibility through a discursive prism. This aspect is one of the less-researched fields in various discussions of CSR. Thus, in my paper I would like to draw attention to how words determine sustainable development via the example of CSR communication. Since companies do not exist in a vacuum and their performance is determined by their environment, stakeholders need to be taken into consideration during any discussion on corporate social responsibility. It is communication which is responsible for spreading, understanding and implementing CSR strategies; the focus is placed on language and its instruments in putting the CSR strategy into practice. Since we live in a world of symbols, linguistic symbolism, especially metaphors and their role in communicating CSR issues, will be also discussed in this article.

**Spółeczna odpowiedzialność biznesu i komunikacja z interesariuszami**

## Streszczenie

Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie korporacyjnej odpowiedzialności biznesu z perspektywy dyskursywnej. Ten aspekt jest jednym z najmniej podejmowanych tematów podczas dyskusji na temat CSR. W tym krótkim artykule zwracam uwagę na to, jak słowa determinują zrównoważony rozwój organizacji w kontekście komunikacji CSR. Firmy nie istnieją w próżni, ich działanie jest uzależnione od otoczenia, w którym funkcjonują, więc interesariusze powinni być także uwzględniani podczas analizowania CSR. To dzięki komunikacji idee CSR są rozpowszechniane, rozumiane i wprowadzane, więc język i instrumenty językowe są przedmiotem analizy. Żyjemy w świecie symboli i symbolizm lingwistyczny, szczególnie reprezentowany przez metafory, został szerzej omówiony w tej pracy.