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Quality and social responsibility: a pathway to the future

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Abstract

Quality is a polyvalent concept, which transcends the desire to obtain economic benefits through an ethical manner, aiming not only for entrepreneurship, but also for social and environmental concerns. Basically, the interest falls upon the convergence of social responsibility with quality and also the management commitment to a new way of making a business successful. Social responsibility is an extensive topic, but also a part of the organizational culture of the company. In this context, top management objectives should target to maximize the positive impact, which the company has on society, and to minimize the negative effects. The consequences of such an approach can only be good for business, both financially and morally. The purpose of this article is to present a way for each company in order to promote equally quality and social responsibility as two essential components in ensuring a sustainable future for everyone.

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1. Introduction

In recent years, due to the many changes existing both globally and organizationally, the term "social responsibility" has become a frequently discussed topic among consumers and companies. For this reason, consumers have become more vigilant in purchasing products and services through their choice according to the production method. Referring to companies, instead of strategic objectives such as profitability, reliability and sustainability, it began to prevail actions, which effectively target social responsibility. Basic motto adopted by large organizations operating in the new trend consent seems to be "Doing well, by doing good". For this purpose, social responsibility is not a philanthropic option, but rather a new way of doing business.

2. Guidelines for quality and social responsibility. ISO 26000 on Social Responsibility

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In order to stay on the market in the current economic conditions, the company's orientation must meet customer needs without compromising the future. However, there should be taken into consideration a number of basically four factors, namely:

- **Financial factor**, has priority because without the assumption of profitability, shareholders become dissatisfied and will redirect the investments to another field of activity;
- **Social factor** is particularly important because a company must be concerned about the welfare of society considered as a whole. The interest for selling quality products and services, human rights, sales markets, working conditions and so on, should represent strategic objectives and constantly present for the top management;
- **Environmental factor**, or better **environmental management**, here we could include two other key factors converged to the basic idea of this article, namely: addressing energy security and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions;
- **Quality factor** that comes to embrace the three factors above, and also to help facilitate corporate approach to a better business.

Unlike traditional meaning, where the so-called industrial quality model emphasized on the conformity of products and services, control and standardization, in our days the priority is represented by the human being, or in other words: the consumer. The other aspect occupies somewhat a second place in the front of the social element, which prevails, and, from this perspective, arises the concern for the emergence of quality and social responsibility. By developing an effective program, obtaining an objective feedback and continuous improvement processes, companies will not only support social responsibility, but can achieve a considerable profit and a successful business.

Currently, many people make the mistake to believe that social responsibility refers to a series of actions to protect the environment or to provide considerable amounts of money to solve social cases. To solve this dilemma, the International Organization for Standardization has published in 2010 a new standard, namely ISO 26000: Guidance on Social Responsibility. Designed to assist companies, ISO 26000 is a guide that aims to transpose some real practical principles beneficial for the health and welfare of society. In other words, the standard complements and adds value to existing social responsibility initiatives in both the public and private sectors.

Contrast to ISO 9000, the standard for quality management, ISO 26000 does not contain specific requirements that businesses must comply and therefore is not certified. Basically, the standard aims at corporate governance to include principles, which refer directly to social responsibility. Ventures between social responsibility and quality that improve quality costs are real advantages that any world-class company cannot afford to not use them. According to ISO 26000 standard strategic decision-making processes should:

- Develop strategies, objectives and goals, which reflect management's commitment to social responsibility;
- Lead to the creation and protection of a healthy environment in which the principles of social responsibility are practiced;
- Create a system of economic and non-economic incentives on the performance of economic entities in terms of social responsibility;
- Rationally use of natural resources, financial and human resources;
- Determine the company's profit considering the results of accounting reflected by the emergence of management decisions and social responsibility.

Considering the above, management commitment regarding social responsibility should cover the following:

- Promoting and supporting the community in which it operates;
- Involvement in various programs designed to meet the social needs;
- Development projects in terms of environmental protection, supporting education, various actions aimed at socio-economic development, etc;
- Company's responsibility towards the people with which interacts: employees, customers, shareholders, suppliers, business partners, and so on;
- Engagement of the employees in the development and success of the company through their awareness and building a team spirit in order to ensure high quality products and services;
- Maintaining accountability to the community by providing quality products and services covering consumer needs;

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