

The Relative Importance of Internal versus External CSR and Its Impact on Employee Engagement in the Chinese Rubber Industry

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Abstract: This article explores the impact of corporate social responsibility (CSR) on employee engagement in the Chinese rubber industry, analyzes the direct role of internal CSR in optimizing the work environment, improving employee benefits and incentive mechanisms, and the role of external CSR in building corporate image and internal identity. At the same time, it pointed out the problems that currently exist in the CSR practice of China's rubber industry, including insufficient implementation of internal CSR, superficial external CSR, and the phenomenon of internal and external CSR fragmentation. In response to these issues, optimization measures have been proposed to strengthen internal CSR construction, deepen external CSR practices, and promote the integration of internal and external CSR, aiming to enhance employee engagement and overall corporate performance.

1. Introduction

In the context of global economic integration and sustainable development, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become one of the important criteria for measuring the success or failure of enterprises. In the Chinese rubber industry, with the intensification of market competition and the improvement of consumer environmental awareness, the importance of CSR is increasingly prominent. Enterprises should not only pursue economic benefits, but also actively fulfill social responsibilities to promote harmonious social development and environmental protection. This article aims to explore the impact of corporate social responsibility on employee engagement in the Chinese rubber industry, analyze current problems, and propose corresponding optimization strategies, in order to provide reference and guidance for enterprises in the industry.

2. The Importance of Corporate Social Responsibility on Employee Dedication in the Chinese Rubber Industry

2.1 The direct impact of internal CSR on employee engagement

In the Chinese rubber industry, internal corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices have a

crucial direct impact on employee engagement, which is not only reflected in material satisfaction, but also deeply resonates with spiritual and cultural values. The optimization of the working environment, as an important component of internal CSR, provides employees with a safe and healthy working environment, which is the foundation for improving employee satisfaction. When employees are in a safe, healthy and comfortable working environment, they can focus more on their work tasks, reduce occupational health problems caused by poor working conditions, and improve work efficiency and overall work experience. This positive work environment not only contributes to the improvement of employees' personal well-being, but also creates a more stable and efficient productivity foundation for the enterprise. Secondly, the improvement of employee benefits and incentive mechanisms is a key factor in enhancing employees' sense of belonging and loyalty. By providing competitive compensation, comprehensive social security systems, flexible work systems, and personalized career development paths, enterprises can effectively meet employees' basic needs and expectations. ^[1]

2.2 The Construction of Corporate Image and Internal Identity by External CSR

In the Chinese rubber industry, external corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices not only have a significant positive publicity effect on the company's image, but also deeply affect the identification and morale of internal employees, thereby enhancing their sense of pride and belonging. Actively participating in social responsibility projects such as environmental initiatives, public donations, community development, etc. can significantly enhance a company's brand image and social reputation. These activities not only demonstrate the responsibility of enterprises as social citizens, but also convey positive values and corporate culture to the public. With the widespread dissemination of media and social networks, these positive messages can quickly expand a company's social influence, enhance public goodwill and trust towards the company. ^[2] This positive brand promotion effect not only helps attract more consumers and investors, but also brings a sense of pride and honor to employees within the company, who cherish and are willing to contribute their efforts to such a company.

3. Issues Concerning the Impact of Corporate Social Responsibility on Employee Dedication in the Chinese Rubber Industry

3.1 Insufficient implementation of internal CSR

In the Chinese rubber industry, although the importance of corporate social responsibility (CSR) for employee engagement is increasingly being recognized, the problem of insufficient internal CSR implementation still exists, which directly affects employee engagement and overall work efficiency. One of the key factors restricting the effective implementation of internal CSR is the weakness in safety production and occupational health management. Due to its special production process and material characteristics, the rubber industry often comes with high occupational health risks. Some enterprises, while pursuing production efficiency, neglect the construction and improvement of safety production and occupational health management systems, resulting in frequent accidents and occupational diseases, seriously damaging the physical and mental health and occupational safety of employees, and reducing their dedication and work enthusiasm. The second prominent issue in the implementation of internal CSR is the imperfect employee welfare system and the single incentive mechanism. A good employee welfare and incentive mechanism is the key to enhancing employees' sense of belonging and loyalty. In some rubber companies, welfare benefits have not matched the level of industry development, and incentive mechanisms are often limited to traditional material rewards, lacking personalized and diversified incentive methods.

3.2 External CSR becomes a formality

In the Chinese rubber industry, the practice of external corporate social responsibility (CSR) often faces the problem of formalism, which seriously weakens its positive impact on corporate image and internal employee engagement. One common problem is the lack of sustainability and depth in social responsibility projects. Many companies often view CSR projects as a short-term public relations tool rather than a long-term development strategy. This short-sighted behavior leads to a lack of systematic planning and long-term goals for projects, often ending hastily after a period of execution, making it difficult to form sustained social impact.^[3] Some projects also lack depth in the implementation process, remaining only in surface form and failing to truly solve social problems or meet the actual needs of stakeholders. Secondly, insufficient investment in environmental protection and inadequate response to environmental issues are another important manifestation of external CSR being merely a formality.

3.3 The phenomenon of internal and external CSR fragmentation

In the Chinese rubber industry, the phenomenon of the separation of internal and external corporate social responsibility (CSR) cannot be ignored. This problem not only weakens the overall effectiveness of CSR, but also may trigger a crisis of trust, affecting the long-term development of enterprises. The main manifestation of the separation between internal and external CSR is the inconsistency between internal management and external image of the enterprise. When facing the external public, enterprises may deliberately shape a good image of actively fulfilling social responsibilities, paying attention to environmental protection and public welfare, in order to win social recognition and praise. At the internal management level, there may be problems such as loose safety production management, inadequate employee welfare protection, and lack of corporate culture. This phenomenon of internal and external inconsistency, once exposed or perceived by external stakeholders, will seriously damage the reputation and image of the enterprise, leading to a crisis of trust.^[4]

4. Optimization strategies for the impact of corporate social responsibility on employee engagement in the Chinese rubber industry

4.1 Strengthen internal CSR construction

In response to the shortcomings of China's rubber industry in internal corporate social responsibility (CSR) construction, the following optimization measures are proposed to strengthen internal CSR construction and enhance employee dedication. Firstly, enterprises should strive to improve their safety production and occupational health management systems. This requires enterprises to strictly comply with national safety production laws and regulations, establish and improve safety production responsibility systems, strengthen safety education and training, and enhance employees' safety awareness and self-protection capabilities. At the same time, enterprises should increase investment in occupational health, optimize the working environment, reduce occupational hazards, and ensure the physical health of employees. Through a comprehensive safety production and occupational health management system, enterprises can provide employees with a safe and healthy working environment, enhance their job satisfaction and dedication. Secondly, building a diversified and personalized employee welfare and incentive mechanism is the key to enhancing employee engagement. Enterprises should design diverse welfare projects and incentive measures based on the different needs and career development stages of employees. This includes but is not limited to providing competitive salary and benefits, a comprehensive social insurance

and housing provident fund system, flexible working hours and vacation arrangements, and abundant opportunities for employee training and development.

4.2 Deepening External CSR Practices

To deepen the external corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices of Chinese rubber industry enterprises and enhance their social image and employee engagement, the following strategies are particularly crucial. Firstly, companies should carefully select CSR projects that align with their core values and ensure that these projects are long-term and in-depth. This means that when choosing CSR projects, companies need to fully consider the sustainability, social impact, and compatibility with their own business models.^[5] Through continuous investment and meticulous cultivation, enterprises can not only make substantial contributions to society, but also establish a responsible and accountable brand image among the public. The enhancement of this positive image will further strengthen employees' sense of pride and belonging, and increase their dedication. Secondly, increasing investment in environmental protection and actively responding to industry environmental challenges is an inevitable choice for deepening external CSR practices. As a resource intensive and environmentally-friendly industry, the rubber industry has a particularly significant environmental responsibility. Enterprises need to increase investment in environmental protection technology, equipment updates, and pollution control, continuously reducing resource consumption and environmental pollution in the production process. At the same time, enterprises should actively pay attention to and participate in the formulation and implementation of industry environmental standards, promote the development of the entire industry towards a greener and more sustainable direction. This positive attitude and action towards environmental protection will win more social recognition and respect for the enterprise, and enhance the dedication and loyalty of employees.

4.3 Promote the integration of internal and external CSR

In order to achieve effective integration of internal and external corporate social responsibility (CSR) within the Chinese rubber industry, and enhance employee engagement and overall performance, companies need to take a series of strategic measures. One is to develop a comprehensive CSR strategy, which is the cornerstone of integrating internal and external CSR. This strategy should clearly define the collaborative goals of internal and external CSR, that is, how to achieve sustainable development of the enterprise's economy, society, and environment through the joint action of internal management and external practices.^[6] In the strategy, it is necessary to plan in detail the specific measures of internal CSR in improving employee welfare, safety production, and corporate culture construction, as well as the practical paths of external CSR in environmental protection, social welfare, supply chain management, and other fields, to ensure that the two support and promote each other^[7]. The second is to strengthen internal communication and training, which is the key to ensuring that the CSR concept is deeply rooted in people's hearts. Enterprises should strengthen employees' understanding and recognition of the CSR concept through regular CSR training meetings, internal CSR newsletters, and organizing employee participation in CSR projects. Simultaneously we should establish communication channels internally, encourage employees to provide opinions and suggestions on corporate social responsibility practices, and create a good atmosphere of full participation and joint promotion. This in-depth communication and training helps employees internalize CSR concepts in their hearts and externalize them in their actions, enhancing their work dedication and sense of responsibility. Finally, establishing a CSR performance evaluation system is an important means to achieve quantitative evaluation and feedback of internal and external CSR effectiveness. Enterprises should

design scientific and reasonable evaluation indicators and methods to comprehensively and objectively evaluate the implementation effect of internal and external CSR. The evaluation content should cover multiple dimensions such as employee satisfaction, safety production records, environmental performance, and social contribution, in order to comprehensively reflect the comprehensive effectiveness of CSR practices.^[8] At the same time, we should establish a feedback mechanism in the evaluation content, and provide timely evaluation results to relevant departments and employees to adjust and optimize corporate social responsibility strategies and practices. This performance evaluation and feedback system helps companies continuously improve their CSR practices and enhance their social image and employee engagement.

5. Conclusion

This article explores in depth the relationship between corporate social responsibility (CSR) and employee engagement in the Chinese rubber industry. It is found that internal CSR has a direct effect on enhancing employee engagement by optimizing the work environment, improving welfare and incentive mechanisms, while external CSR indirectly promotes employee engagement by shaping the corporate image and enhancing internal identification. There are problems in the current industry such as insufficient implementation of internal CSR, external CSR being merely a formality, and internal and external CSR being fragmented, which seriously constrain the positive impact of CSR on employee engagement. We have proposed optimization measures to strengthen internal CSR construction, deepen external CSR practices, and promote the integration of internal and external CSR, in order to comprehensively enhance the dedication of employees and overall performance of the Chinese rubber industry through comprehensive measures, and achieve sustainable development of the economy, society, and environment.

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