

The challenge of responsibility

Policies and position papers are important. However, what really counts in corporate social responsibility is putting things into practice on the ground, underlines Deputy CEO Björn Hägglund.

“By far the most important issue related to corporate social responsibility is transforming the formal commitments you make in your policies into practice, and ensuring that everyone down the line in the organisation has got the message, as it were. It’s also the most demanding thing to do – of course.”

Another major challenge is that corporate social responsibility means different things, and different priorities, for different people, says Hägglund.

“Commitment must mean action.”

“For sales people, for example, it’s all about good business ethics generally. For our mills, health and safety are critical. And all of us have to respect diversity.”

“We’re talking about different issues, depending on what you do and where you are. In that sense, corporate social responsibility is very different from a corporate mission – and more complicated.”

“What’s key is that people feel that corporate social responsibility is something that concerns them.”

“Taking the time to sit down and think what it means in your own work and your own environment is easier said than done, though. People are

always busy, for one thing. Another thing is that many of the issues involved look simple or obvious and don’t appear to need any time to be implemented – and they do.”

Clear principles

“Small things can sometimes trigger quite large reactions, and wake people up to what we’re talking about.”

“I remember a case back last summer when we printed a photograph with a girlie calendar in the background in our Global magazine. That photograph generated a lot of reaction. And it made a lot of us realise something – yes, that’s sexual harassment if you think about it.”

Hägglund also points to bigger questions, such as doing business with countries that are the subject of international embargoes or similar initiatives.

“On issues like this, you simply have to say no.”

Never accept double standards

According to Hägglund, getting the balance right between taking account of local culture and corporate principles is key.

“We have to realise that the way we look at things is not universal. And that common sense and a willingness to listen are important wherever you are.”

“We must never accept double

standards. We must also be prepared to stand behind our principles when it counts. We don’t buy timber from rain forests, for example, even though it would often be a lot cheaper for us, we just don’t. Just like we don’t condone giving kickbacks.”

“Being serious about your business ethics means looking into the grey areas of your business, and taking the appropriate action to stop inappropriate practice.”

Involving people

Health and safety are also very much part of Stora Enso’s approach to corporate social responsibility.

“The worst thing here is a serious accident when one of our people dies on the job – for whatever reason, whether it’s a result of bad practise and could have been avoided, or as a result of an accident that couldn’t have been foreseen or prevented.”

“When something like this happens, it’s very, very regrettable. It just highlights the fact that we have to be careful all the time, and take safety very seriously.”

Hägglund emphasises that communication – getting the message out to people and getting them to respond – is always a challenge.

“Being ambitious about your goals – which we are – and having the right attitude, is important, but it’s not enough. You have to involve people



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in achieving those goals, and help them achieve them.”

“You must show commitment and enthusiasm yourself, to get people to listen and make things happen.”

Adding value where it counts

Hägglund says that a good approach to

corporate social responsibility, keeping your house in order, creates value – both for Stora Enso and its partners.

“We can add value to our customers’ business, for example, by being a responsible partner that they can rely on across the board, in everything, from quality to ethics and busi-

ness practices. Being a company you can rely on like this is also important for investors.”

“Investors are increasingly risk-averse today. And the concept of risk covers the whole scope of business, so the better our governance and business practices, the better our environmental performance, and the more value we can create.”

“Corporate social responsibility is far from being a soft issue.”

The courage of your convictions

Having the courage of your convictions is important, believes Hägglund.

“You have to be ready to go the whole course when you commit yourself to something in the area of social responsibility, and not give up half way when things start getting tough or complicated. That means understanding that commitment must mean action too.”

Hägglund believes that being ambitious – like Stora Enso is in areas such as operational excellence, performance, and corporate social responsibility – calls for getting everybody on board in the organisation; working with partners, and working in the industry as the whole with all the other players as well.

“Keeping our eye on our goals – and linking them to our everyday life as a company, making them part of the game plan, keeping them fresh – will help ensure that we meet the goals that we have set ourselves.” ■