



CATÓLICA
ESCOLA DAS ARTES

PORTO

**The impact of internal communication on employee
purpose programs: a case study with Alaya by Benevity,
the corporate giving & volunteering software.**

Internship Report presented to Universidade Católica Portuguesa to obtain
a Master's Degree in Creative Industries Management

Margarida Ribeiro Alves Rego

Porto, July 2022



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Work developed under the orientation of
Prof. João Novais

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The impact of internal communication on employee purpose programs:
a case study with Alaya by Benevity, the corporate giving & volunteering software

Margarida Ribeiro Alves Rego

Sumário

A Comunicação Interna reside na forma como as pessoas de uma organização partilham informação umas com as outras. Várias investigações provaram que uma boa comunicação com os *stakeholders* internos é um fator significativo que contribui fortemente para uma boa estratégia e desempenho empresarial. Uma empresa precisa de saber como comunicar os seus objetivos e valores internamente, para os defender externamente. Permitir que as empresas definam a sua razão de ser, o que se traduz em Propósito Empresarial, ajuda a incorporar nas operações da empresa um conjunto de preocupações sociais e ambientais que podem causar impacto de dentro para fora, aquilo a que chamamos de Responsabilidade Social Empresarial.

Estabelecer um bom e significativo propósito e olhar para dentro para resolver questões sociais é uma ferramenta importante no caminho para a construção do envolvimento e empenhamento dos funcionários. Os trabalhadores visam trabalhar para uma organização que esteja em consonância com os seus valores e objetivos, o que lhes permite encontrar sentido no trabalho que fazem.

Ter uma força de trabalho empenhada aumenta o desempenho financeiro, melhora a reputação da organização ao aumentar a produtividade, promove uma maior satisfação no trabalho e, até reduz a rotatividade.

Palavras-chave: Comunicação Interna; Envolvimento dos Funcionários; Propósito da Empresa; Propósito do Funcionário; Responsabilidade Social Empresarial; Software de Responsabilidade Empresarial.

Abstract

Internal Communication resides in how the people in an organization share information with one another. Several research has proved that communicating properly with the internal stakeholders is a significant factor that contributes heavily to a good corporate strategy and performance. A company needs to know how to communicate its purpose and values internally, to advocate them externally. Allowing companies to define their reason for existing, which translates to Corporate Purpose, helps to incorporate within business operations a set of social and environmental concerns that can cause impact from the inside out, what we call Corporate Social Responsibility.

Establishing a good and meaningful purpose and looking inside to resolve societal issues is an important tool on the way to building Employee Engagement. Employees aim to work for an organization where they relate to its values and purpose, which allows them to find meaning in the work they do.

Having an engaged workforce boosts financial performance, improves the organization's reputation by increasing productivity, promotes higher job satisfaction, and even reduces turnover.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility; Corporate Responsibility Software; Corporate Purpose; Employee Engagement; Employee Purpose; Internal Communication.

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Introduction

Incorporating a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategy makes a company more competitive. Nowadays, 92% of the world's biggest companies have strategies implemented and produce reports on impact.

Employees want to be a part of their workplace initiatives towards CSR and find ways to give individually to max out impact. That's why investing in employee engagement has become one of the biggest trends in any organization's Corporate Social Responsibility strategy.

This means that companies are investing in the way employees feel about their workplace and the meaning in the work they do, aiming to establish a link between Corporate Purpose and individual purpose.

Several Corporate Responsibility Software have been emerging, like Alaya by Benevity, to provide companies with a platform where they can find opportunities to be more involved at an individual level.

According to Investopedia, "An engaged employee is in it for more than a paycheck and may consider their well-being linked to their performance, and thus instrumental to their company's success". For this reason, communication is critical when it comes to creating and maintaining employee engagement.

When an organization's purpose, values, and goals are well communicated internally, it allows for an emotional connection with employees to be developed, creating a greater commitment to what the company stands for, and finding meaning in the work that is done.

This report aims to give an overview of the Alaya by Benevity platform, where the curricular internship was done for 9 months, to then explain the impact of internal communication, organization, and discipline on the engagement rate of five of Alaya's clients.

To start, the company and the platform will be introduced, followed by the experience gained in the internship and the performance in it. After this, a Literature Review of the main concepts discussed will be done: Corporate Purpose & Corporate Social Responsibility; Purpose at Work & Employee Engagement; The Corporate Responsibility Software & Employee Purpose Programs; Internal Communication and its role in propelling CSR programs; and Corporate Social Responsibility in the Creative Industries.

The methodology strategy is based on five analysis units, all clients of the Alaya platform, and collected data through interviews with the Customer Success Managers for each company, having also collected data from the platform itself to be able to probe the engagement rate. The clients studied are

in the following industries: Banking, Consumer Services and Creative Industries. Each one of them will be analyzed based on their CSR Team & Program and Employee Engagement, based upon data from the Alaya by Benevity platform and interviews.

This report leaned heavily on previous research and conclusions made at the beginning of the academic year, for the scientific article “The impact of Internal Communication in Corporate Social Responsibility and Employee Engagement within organizations”, which became the basis for the study done in this report.

Part I - Alaya by Benevity

1.1 Alaya & Benevity

Alaya is a global provider of software that enables companies to build a common purpose-driven culture and employee engagement to make an impact, one act at a time. Headquartered in Switzerland, Alaya is present in the UK, Germany, France, Spain, and Singapore.

At this moment, it has more than 90 clients associated with its platform, to have access to an easier management of their CSR programs and employee involvement through volunteering, taking advantage of simple actions to support sustainability, diversity, equality and inclusion, and well-being.

Benevity, by whom Alaya was acquired in December 2021, is a certified B Corporation¹, and a leader in global corporate purpose software, providing the only integrated suite of community investment and engagement solutions for employees, customers, and non-profit organizations.

Benevity offers cloud solutions that power the purpose for many iconic brands in ways that better attract, retain, and engage today's diverse workforce, embed social action into their customer experiences and positively impact their communities and is recognized as one of Fortune's Impact 20.

With software available in 22 languages, Benevity has processed nearly \$8 billion in donations and 43 million volunteer hours to support 326,000 nonprofit organizations worldwide. The company's solutions have also facilitated 530,000 affirmative actions and awarded 1.2 million donations worth \$12 billion.

Together now as one single company, Benevity, tackling mostly the North American market, and Benevity International, they are present in more than 150 countries and have a community of more than 19 million users.

1.1.1 The clients

The combination of Alaya and Benevity means that they now offer the most complete Corporate Purpose solution in the market, working now with more than 800 of the world's most prominent brands.

Some of these clients are PwC, L'Oréal, Amazon, Johnson & Johnson, Nestlé, Accenture, Cognizant, Delivery Hero, PayPal, Nike, BMW, Toyota, Coca-Cola, Samsung, Chanel, Pfizer, and Levi's.

¹ "Certified B Corporations are leaders in the global movement for an inclusive, equitable, and regenerative economy. Unlike other certifications for businesses, B Lab is unique in our ability to measure a company's entire social and environmental impact." Retrieved from: <https://www.bcorporation.net/en-us/certification>

1.2 The Alaya Platform & Services

Alaya by Benevity offers a wide range of features and services to help companies with their Corporate Social Responsibility strategies and Employee Purpose programs. The two main features are the “Do Good” page that allows for volunteering and fundraising opportunities and the “Challenges” which are easy-to-complete actions that positively impact the world and the lives of each user/employee.

In the “**Do Good**” page users can find **two types of volunteering opportunities**:

- **Field-volunteering:** these are in-person activities to support nonprofits or causes, for example, preparing meals for people in need or participating in a beach clean-up.
- **Skills-based volunteering:** this serves to help nonprofits with specific tasks that require a certain skill, such as communication or finance.

You can also find **two types of donations**:

- **In kind donations or good collection:** this entails the collection of items needed by the nonprofit organizations, such as clothes, books, or food.
- **Monetary donations or fundraising:** this, as the name says, is all about donating money, individually or as a company, to nonprofits or causes.

On the “**Challenges**” page users can find a set of actions and activities for them to do, throughout a week or more, that have the goal to instigate positive habits in their lives. There are three areas of challenges:

- **Sustainability** (ex: “Go meatless for a week”)
- **Diversity and Inclusion** (ex: “BHM - Watch a movie or a TV show about black history”)
- **Wellbeing** (ex: “Do yoga for 15 minutes every day for 1 week”)

When a challenge is completed, users get awarded “Hopeys”, which is a philanthropic currency that represents virtual points, based on the effort level of each challenge:

- a) Low effort = 50 Hopeys
- b) Medium effort = 100 Hopeys
- c) High effort = 150 to 200 Hopeys

Alaya’s platform also offers tracking measurements, for companies to track their program’s impact and to receive feedback from their employees. The goal is to offer partner companies all the tools they need to have an effective and successful Purpose Program.

Besides the technology that goes into the platform, Alaya by Benevity offers a personalized client experience, through services like program set-up, creation, and establishment of CSR policies, the definition of program goals, the framework of causes to support and implementation of key initiatives to improve employee engagement and the success of the programs.

When companies sign on to the platform, they select ambassadors and champions for their programs. An ambassador is an employee that runs the program within the regions or countries the company is located in, this person is in direct contact with the Customer Success Manager at Alaya, to make sure the regions and countries reach the objectives set for the program. Whereas a champion runs the “day-to-day” operations of the program, they are the employees that oversee the implementation of local actions in the diverse office locations, reporting directly to the program’s ambassador at the company.

Part II – The internship

The present internship was carried out in the Barcelona office of first Alaya, and now Alaya by Benevity/Benevity International, in the Content & Engagement department, from September 15th of 2021 until June 30th of 2022, having a total duration of 41 weeks. This internship was done also as a part of the Erasmus traineeship program.

The Content & Engagement department, which I was a part of, focused on producing content for both nonprofits, on one side, to attract them to the platform, and to existing clients, to engage them and their employees. With a background in Communications, it was very easy for me to fall into the content creation tasks and to get involved in what the company does to make sure the client’s programs are successful.

2.1 - Why Alaya by Benevity?

I have been a scout for the most part of my life and surrounded by scouting and its values for the whole of it. In the scouts you’re taught to be the change you want to see in the world, to always try to leave it better than you find it and to find solutions during chaos and crisis.

When the opportunity came to join and learn from a company that focuses on bringing the change to every workplace, by helping both nonprofits and companies to change the world, one act at a time, it was a very easy yes.

2.2 - Main tasks and performance

The main objectives of this internship were for me to gain professional knowledge and experience in the area of project management, to acquire a greater understanding and language competence, in languages such as English, Spanish and French, to experience teamwork within the Content & Engagement department I worked on and with the other departments that came into the

scope of different projects, to acquire experience working in an international market, and to gain knowledge and proficiency in different programs and platforms used to support the tasks performed.

With this, within the scope of this internship, the tasks performed were always tied to the development of my project management skills. My main tasks were to create content, such as blog posts and guides to help clients and nonprofits with their programs and content, and, with this, I was very much connected with the Nonprofit and Client Success teams. After the content was created, it was my responsibility to handle all localization projects, to make sure that we had content localized for every market. Still, on localization, I was also responsible for the translation of the Alaya platform into every language needed, as well as to update it into the main languages used, which had to be made in constant contact with the Product team.

With the insights from all the projects handled and the constant inter teams work, I gained knowledge of the work being done for and to improve all clients' programs towards their CSR strategy.

Part III – Literature Review

3.1 - Corporate Purpose & Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate Purpose is an organization's reason for existing, what it stands for and how the business is done. It's about how an organization takes its goals towards value creation within and outside itself. The concept of Corporate Purpose can be linked to Corporate Social Responsibility, in the way that when making a statement of purpose, a company is ensuring to be better socially and environmentally, assuming accountability and responsibility.

According to Benevity, on their Impact Labs Report Corporate Purpose in its evolution has shifted from "statements to action". Now companies are being more attentive to their stakeholder's needs, internally and externally, presenting measurable actions on critical societal issues. These actions took the form of community investments in employee giving, volunteering, and learning opportunities, going even to customer initiatives.

With this growth, enterprises have expanded what they define as impact, taking into consideration what their employees think of what "doing good" is. By broadening this definition, companies started to promote a bigger sense of connection, community, and efficacy, and this helped to bring what we had as "corporate philanthropy" into the new era.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), according to UNIDO (United Nations Industrial Development Organization), is a management concept following which companies incorporate within their business operations a set of social and environmental concerns and ongoing interactions with their stakeholders. To add to this definition, Khan *et al* (2012), with their bases on Rupp *et al* (2006) and

Calderon (2011), consider CSR to be the process by which companies develop and then express their culture and social consciousness. In a summarized way, according to Gomez and Chalmeta (2013), Corporate Social Responsibility is the responsible management of corporate impacts.

Schaefer, Terlutter & Diehl (2019), based on Farooq, Farooq, & Jasimuddin's work (2014), detailed that there are four main domains of Corporate Social Responsibility: 1) Customer-oriented, it's where the company takes on its responsibility towards its customers; 2) Employee-oriented, it's when the company develops initiatives to warrant the wellbeing of its employees; 3) Environment-oriented, this strategy aims at the company's responsibilities concerning the natural environment; 4) Philanthropy-oriented, it's when a company recognizes its responsibilities in regards to society (p.128).

Hopkins's (2014) take on CSR is that it's "a process that is concerned with treating the stakeholders of a company or institution ethically or in a responsible manner" (Hopkins, 2014, p.1). This definition underlines that stakeholders exist both inside and outside of a company. With this, the author notes that CSR aims to create higher standards of sustainable living, while, at the same time, maintaining the profitability and integrity of a company, for both internal and external stakeholders.

Besides corporate and ethical behavior, the other three main components of Hopkins' concept for CSR are the importance of stakeholders. Regarding this component, the author explains that every person who has a stake in a company "has a right not to be treated as a means to some end", having to participate equally in the company itself and the direction it takes on (Hopkins, 2014, p.6).

With this, the different groups of stakeholders within companies, from customers to NGOs to employees, are pressing them to enhance their CSR strategies and actions so that they result in a bigger impact toward social and environmental issues. However, in order to have the proper effect, these socially responsible strategies need to be properly communicated, to nurture the corporate image and culture, improving the relationship with the stakeholders.

3.2 - Purpose at work & Employee engagement

As reported by McKinsey: "Employees expect their jobs to bring a significant sense of purpose to their lives", and those who "live their purpose at work are more productive than people who don't". Out of the thousand employees surveyed by McKinsey for their research, 70% admitted that their sense of purpose comes from the work that they do.

One of the first and most substantial studies on employee engagement came from Kahn (1990), who took upon Goffman's (1961) statement that the way employees are attached or detached from their roles tends to vary (Kular *et al*, 2008, p.4). However, there was a need to develop Goffman's concept in a way that fit the organizational life, which is a very complex environment.

To understand this complexity, Kahn (1990) studied the way individuals present themselves within an organizational environment, concluding that employees are either personally engaged or

personally disengaged. These terms represent the level of “personal self” that people bring to their roles at work (Kular *et al*, 2008, p.4).

According to Budriene & Diskiene (2020), the principle on which employee engagement is conveyed indicates the emergence of motivation, active involvement of the employees in all company processes, which in turn is valuable to the organization itself, promoting productivity and efficiency.

However, it’s important to note that the concepts of employee engagement and employee motivation are different. Motivation is what makes an employee complete a specific task, while engagement relies on cognition and the energy they put into their performance (Bakker, 2011, mentioned by Budriene & Diskiene, 2020).

Relying on a comparison to the concept of loyalty, Budriene & Diskiene (2020) defined engagement as being “a stable attitude characteristic of the employee, which involves a prolonged concentration of the employee on solving problems that bring additional effect to the organization, which is reflected in the additional emotional attachment of the employee to the goals and values of the organization” (Budriene & Diskiene, 2020, p.3).

Kahn (1990), mentioned by Roy (2020), when developing the concept of employee engagement identified three major dimensions: physical, cognitive, and emotional. Along these lines, Kahn defines employee engagement as being an expression of the employee’s selves, physically, cognitively, and emotionally, in their work performance, which in turn makes them have more love and passion for their job and their organization.

Ray (2004), mentioned by Roy (2020), acknowledged that employee engagement is “a state of emotional and intellectual commitment to the organization and it can be measured by three primary behaviors: say, stay, strive” (Roy, 2020, p. 3290). The say component speaks to the employee’s ability to speak freely to and positively about their organization to others, being them potential employees or customers; the stay is linked to the employees’ appeal to be a part of an organization disregarding other opportunities, and the strive has to do with the employees’ productivity and their will to work harder on their job.

With this, Kahn (1990) stated that there are three psychological circumstances related to engagement or disengagement in an organization: meaningfulness, safety, and availability. It’s important to note that according to the author, employees ask themselves three fundamental questions when examining the situation of their role at work: 1) How meaningful is it for me to bring myself into this performance? 2) How safe is it to do so? 3) How available am I to do it? The conclusion here is that employees are more engaged when their role and their organization offer them more psychological meaningfulness and safety (Kular *et al*, 2008, p.5).

Richman (2006), mentioned by Roy (2020), states that many aspects facilitate employee engagement in organizations. She organizes them in a “commitment pyramid” while defining engagement as the commitment one has with their organization, according to their importance. So, at the top, we have communication, career advancement, flexibility, and job satisfaction.

3.3 - The Corporate Responsibility Software & Employee Purpose Programs

According to a Givinga study from 2019, companies nowadays need to incorporate Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategies to be competitive. Over 92% of the world's 250 biggest companies now publish CSR reports, making a 64% increase from 2005.

Having new workplace trends, with more socially and environmentally conscious employees and consumers, demands the setting of Corporate Responsibility (CR) programs and the CR software helps enable them.

With this, the market of CR software is expanding, being that CSR is no longer a topic only for Fortune 100 companies, and now small and medium businesses also need to put in place employee purpose programs to align with their strategies. Givinga highlights that in 2016 51% of employees wouldn't work for a company that didn't have a CSR strategy in place, having this number increased in the last years.

This type of corporate giving platform let's employees choose the charities they want to support, be it from a list of approved ones, which reduces any legal risk, or just from the ones available, most programs now even allow employees to nominate the charities close to their hearts. Social giving tools like these platforms help brands expand their influence while raising funds and working hours for charity, giving the employees the opportunity to oversee their personal giving strategies.

Employees now want to be part of their company's efforts towards being socially responsible, being able to give individually to maximize their impact. This is achieved by companies' corporate programs going towards employee purposes. Here comes the necessity for corporate responsibility software to provide a platform for employees to be active personally in their company's CSR program, instead of just having to wait for companywide initiatives.

To summarize, Corporate Social Responsibility software, aligned with a CSR program and strategy, focused on employee purpose, serves to track, and measure the impact a company and its employees have through the respective program. Plus, a CSR platform aids companies to implement policies and practices and sharing their CSR initiatives with their employees.

Research, done by McKinsey, Project ROI, and Gallup shows that the companies that invest in purpose driven employee programs and tools that propel their engagement have a 6% higher market value, 21% more profitability and 57% reduction of turnover. With this data it's clear to see that establishing a sense of purpose at the workplace leads to a higher employee engagement which in turn leads to a better business performance overall.

3.4 – Internal communication and its role in propelling CSR programs

According to Theaker (2004), mentioned by Chalmers (2008), internal communications have been undergoing major changes since it was first thought of. In 1940, this type of communication was a type of employee entertainment tool, going for the 1950s, it started to be used as an informative tool and then a persuasive tool, later in the 1960s. It was in 1980 that we started to see the real evolution of the meaning of internal communication we deal with today.

Currently, internal communication has its focuses on the experience of the employees within the organization they work for. Any company's success nowadays it's dependent on whether the employees find meaning in their work and the organizational culture overall or not. When most employees feel disconnected from the way an organization works, it's mostly because the leadership is not taking the time to communicate better with their staff.

With this, internal communication serves to support employee engagement to promote a better organizational culture that, in turn, will boost the company's performance.

Being responsible for all forms of communication happening within an organization, internal communication professionals need not only to understand people and their roles in an organization, but also must have the know-how to influence employees, their knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors (Chalmers, 2008, p.5).

Still, the academic field of internal communication can cover a lot of territories, such as organizational communication, corporate communication, employee communication, and even public relations. Internal corporate communication, one of the four dimensions of internal communication – alongside internal line management communication, internal team peer communication, and internal project peer communication -, consists of communicating all the issues regarding the organization itself, such as goals and objectives, developments, activities, and achievements (Duthler & Dhanesh, 2018).

Welch and Jackson (2007), mentioned by Duthler & Dhanesh (2018), defined internal corporate communication as being the communication between the strategic managers of a company with their internal stakeholders that aims to foster the commitment to the organization, a “sense of belonging” and a comprehension of its growth and ever-changing environment (p. 455).

Internal communication has long been established as a strategic focus for business communication, being a major component in the building of positive relationships between management and employees (White, Vane & Stafford, 2010, based on Barnfield, 2003). This type of communication is essential not only to keep employees informed on their day-to-day but also to increase job satisfaction and performance.

To develop a better and more employee-focused organizational culture, it's imperative to invest in a good internal communication strategy, that will allow companies to better inform their internal

stakeholders, being most of them the employees, of their actions regarding the welfare of the organization.

To promote employee engagement, it's necessary to make them understand the company's mission and how their work aligns with it. So, when it comes to decisions regarding the organizational culture, like actions towards Corporate Social Responsibility, needs to be communicated internally, so that the whole company is in sync.

Corporate Social Responsibility has become an imperative in the strategy of many industries, with the focus being on the employees and their well-being, then branching towards more environmental and social causes. This internal stakeholder group has been established as having a crucial role when it comes to shaping the external stakeholders' view and evaluation of the companies they work for (Schaefer, Terlutter & Diehl, 2019).

Be it through website information, policies, or reports, companies rely much on communication to promote their actions, which became a way of assuring the completion of the organization's obligations towards society (Khan *et al*, 2012, based on Sharma *et al*, 2009). This willing attempt to make sure the outside knows about the company's efforts on the matter of CRS comes from the pressure concerning social issues, like human rights or the environment.

However, before achieving the benefits that come with being socially responsible towards the external public, companies must communicate their actions to their internal stakeholders, to foment a more positive and transparent culture (Duthler & Dhanesh, 2018). Budriene & Diskiene (2020) emphasize how "identifying the situations that foster the work environment of employees is vital for the sustainability and growth of organizations" (p.2).

Internal communication, alongside the company's efforts on CSR, has a significant relationship when it comes to the employee's affective commitment to their organization (Gomes, Asseiro & Ribeiro, 2014). Alongside the previous statements, it's important to highlight the power of strategic internal communication when it comes to benefiting employee satisfaction and productivity.

This type of strategy when well implemented generates a positive word of mouth on the employees about their organization, making them be the greatest brand ambassadors, instead of the loudest critics (White, Vane & Stafford, 2010, p.3).

An engaged workforce boosts financial returns and improves the organization's reputation through increased productivity, higher job satisfaction, and decreased turnover (Saks, 2006, mentioned by Karanges *et al*, 2014). Karanger *et al* (2014) refer to Iyer and Isarel (2012) when identifying internal communication as the key driver of employee engagement.

There are influencing factors when it comes to employee engagement, Anitha (2014), mentioned by Roy (2020), states them as the workplace environment, the leadership, the compensation, the training and development, the workplace policies and procedures, and the relationships formed with co-workers.

According to several studies, a high level of employee engagement has a positive impact on a company's performance. The more engaged the employees are, the more they help companies reach great results, boosting profit rates. Based on this, employee engagement has become a decisive competitive advantage (Budriene & Diskiene, 2020).

Several factors improve employee engagement, most of them directly linked to the employee's self, based on his character, values, and the evaluation they make of the surrounding environment.

Upon this, we need to take a closer look at the conditions within the organization that, allied with the employee's self, allow for engagement to be established. These range from good leadership, a well-positioned middle manager, clear goals, attention, care, and respect for workers to safeguarding an efficient work process (Budriene & Diskiene, 2020, p.4). Therefore, employee engagement is a direct result of good and well-implemented internal communication (Ruck & Welch, 2012, mentioned by Roy, 2020).

3.5 – Corporate Social Responsibility in the Creative Industries

The British Department of Culture, Media, and Sports (DCMS) created a task force that defined the creative industries as having their origin in individual creativity. The industry connects technology, science, culture, and business, and originates outputs that rely on artistic and intellectual elements linked to human development, according to Martinaityte and Kregždaite (2015), mentioned by Hou, Wen-Min & Hung (2017).

Creative industries have been a critical motivator of economic development, employment, and social unification, as said by Hou, Wen-Min & Hung (2017) after analyzing the work of Pratt and Jeffcutt (2009). This industry gives what is known to be intellectual property a bigger and more symbolic value that leads to the evolution of aspects such as social behavior and culture.

When studying the efficiency and performance of businesses, comparing companies in the creative industries with a CSR strategy and companies without, the authors came to the result that the firms that have a CSR strategy implemented outperform the ones that don't (Hou, Wen-Min & Hung, 2017, p.270).

As creative industries rely heavily on human competences, such as creativity, talents, and the skills to "generate intellectual output" (Hou, Wen-Min & Hung, 2017, p.274), the attempt that a CSR strategy makes towards improving the culture and image of a company, as well as its relationship with the stakeholders, leads to a higher performance, according to the authors. Cultivating good relationships with employees can improve creativity and with this performance improves as well.

Part IV - Methodology and data recovery

4.1 - Objectives of the investigation

The main objective of this investigation is to determine how big of a factor internal communication is when it comes to the success of employee purpose programs in a company's corporate social responsibility strategy.

For this purpose, it is imperative to study several relations to understand the outcome: the relationship between internal communication and an effective and well-structured corporate purpose and CSR strategy, and between internal communication and consequential employee engagement.

This report aims to understand how the companies that outsource a CSR software for support in their own internal strategies and programs are structured and how their internal communication can affect the outcome of those with the employees and their engagement.

4.2 - Methodology strategy and characterization

Analysis Units

This report has the objective of analyzing what is the relationship between internal communication and a successful CSR strategy and employee purpose program. For this purpose, as analysis units, five companies were chosen in different industries to be studied according to the success rate of their program on the Alaya platform and their internal structure as shared by their respective Customer Success Managers at Alaya by Benevity.

For privacy and legal purposes, the names of the companies will not be disclosed. In the context of this study, they will be named as followed:

- **Company A** is a part of the Private Banking & Wealth Management Industry and has a total of 3000 employees.
- **Company B** is in the on-demand Consumer Services industry and has 7120 in total.
- **Company C** is a part of the IT Services and IT Consulting industry, with 1000 employees.
- **Company D** is in the Internet Publishing industry, with a total of 240 employees.
- **Company E** is a part of the Event Services industry, having 130 employees.

It's to be noted that all five are Alaya by Benevity's clients, and their employees are users of the platform. They use Alaya as an outsourced software to aid their respective programs and increase impact and engagement.

All five companies have been analyzed in terms of their internal structure and communication, their CSR strategy and programs implemented, and their employee engagement when it comes to the Alaya platform.

Data collection

This study was conducted on both primary and secondary information sources, having relied on both interviews and data.

a) Primary Sources: Interviews

As a primary source of information, four interviews were made with the three Customer Success Managers responsible for the five companies studied. Both the interviewees answered a set of ten questions tailored to analyze the main topics to be studied, already mentioned above: internal structure and communication, CSR strategy and programs implemented, and employee engagement.

The questions were made as follows:

1. Is there a CSO (Chief Sustainability Officer)? Or a specific position inside the company dedicated to implementing the CSR strategy and the employee purpose program?
2. Do you have any idea how many people they have allocated to a CSR team?
3. Do you know how involved the senior leadership is team with CSR initiatives and decisions? How much does sustainability and CSR weigh into their decisions for the company?
4. Do you know if the CSR strategy of the company is integrated in the financial measurement, reporting, goal setting or decision making?
5. What type of initiatives are done by the company with Alaya to enforce their CSR strategy and employee purpose program?
6. How has their employee engagement evolved since they've joined the platform? What do they have access to on the platform?
7. How do their employees get engaged in the CSR strategy?
8. What type of initiatives do we help the company with for them to better engage their employees?
9. From 1-10 how do you evaluate their program?
10. Do you get any feedback from their employees?

b) Secondary Sources: Extracts from the platform

To support the information collected through the interviews, extracts were taken from each company's platform to measure their employees' engagement rates through the following factors:

- Number of employees

- Platform creation date
- Volunteering activities done
- Number of users on the platform
- Number of hours volunteered
- Challenged completed
- *Hopeys* awarded
- Activities that were done during work time

Company A:

Number of Employees	Creation date	Volunteering activities done	Number of hours volunteered	Challenges completed	Hopeys awarded	Activities done during work time	Number of users on the platform
3000	25/08/2021	61	273	222	25500	56	481 (16%)

Table 1: Company A

Company B:

Number of Employees	Creation date	Volunteering activities done	Number of hours volunteered	Challenges completed	Hopeys awarded	Activities done during work time	Number of users on the platform
7120	17/02/2021	710	2557,95	386	59100	586	2560 (36%)

Table 2: Company B

Company C:

Number of Employees	Creation date	Volunteering activities done	Number of hours volunteered	Challenges completed	Hopeys awarded	Activities done during work time	Number of users on the platform
1000	20/10/2021	11	7,83	156	10020	3	317 (32%)

Table 3: Company C

Company D:

Number of Employees	Creation date	Volunteering activities done	Number of hours volunteered	Challenges completed	Hopeys awarded	Activities done during work time	Number of users on the platform
240	14/09/2021	17	81,5	26	2550	18	100 (42%)

Table 4: Company D

Company E:

Number of Employees	Creation date	Volunteering activities done	Number of hours volunteered	Challenges completed	Hopeys awarded	Activities done during work time	Number of users on the platform
130	03/02/2020	18	44	-	-	14	65 (50%)

Table 5: Company E

Part V - Analysis and discussion of data

Company A

- **CSR Team & Program**

Company A has a dedicated sustainability program and a B Corporation status. The head of their program and Alaya's person of contact is the Sustainability Manager and leads a team of various specialized networks that tackle different issues within the CSR program, such as sustainability and diversity. Besides these networks, the company has employees from various departments acting as champions for their program.

Even before joining the Alaya platform, this company already had a very rich program, in which the leadership is quite involved. It's part of the fabric of the company itself to work towards sustainability and have a good CSR program.

Company A bought the Alaya platform to evolve their program, acting as a support system for the CSR strategy and to increase employee engagement, through various volunteering activities.

When it comes to the management of the company, they are quite familiar and involved, having established different points of contact with Alaya, besides the Sustainability Manager, such as the heads of their foundation and various people in their networks that work with different initiatives as a part of the CSR program.

This company has very clear measurements for their CSR strategy, which tells us that this type of program weighs a lot in their decision-making process. They align with Alaya to make sure that the targets are being reached.

Company A targets consists of a three-year plan to evolve their program with Alaya:

- Year 1: 30% of employees on the platform, 60% of user engagement and 55% of total users actively volunteering.
- Year 2: 35% of employees on the platform, 65% of user engagement, and 55% of total users actively volunteering.
- Year 3: 40% of employees on the platform, 70% of user engagement, and 55% of total users actively volunteering.

As for Company A's general policy, they have the target of 2.000 hours volunteered per year, amongst all of the staff. They offer their employees a total of three calendar days (21 hours) a year to do volunteering.

For the evaluation of these metrics and targets, they have a monthly check in with Alaya to see their impact status.

- **Employee Engagement**

Company A is currently on year one of their contract with Alaya, having only launched in November of 2021. Currently they have 16% of their total employees (3.000) as users on the Alaya platform, accounting for 273 hours volunteered so far, a total of 61 volunteering activities, 92% of which were done during work time - this can be seen in Table A on the data collection point in the last chapter.

To engage their employees, Company A focuses mostly on Field Volunteering activities, leaning on Alaya to help them organize group volunteering activities with 15 to 30 people at a time.

On the Alaya platform, they have access to the Do-Good activities, except the monetary donations, which they do in the name of the company, not letting employees do it individually, and Challenges - they registered a total of 222 Challenges completed and 25.500 *Hopeys* awarded.

In terms of increasing employee engagement, they have a calendar of events, provided by their various networks aligned with the CSR program - sustainability, diversity, gender - to implement worldwide initiatives like International Women's Day or Pride.

As for feedback, Company A's employees love to use Alaya's platform to help them track their impact and guide them through new initiatives to improve their CSR program and engagement.

Overall, they have an engagement rate² of 59% from the 16% of users on the platform, coming mainly from their participation in challenges.

Company B

- **CSR Team & Program**

Company B values Impact & Sustainability as one of their main pillars, with key areas such as environment, social logistics, and diversity and inclusion. They conduct regular and transparent reports to analyze their progress in sustainability and social goals, as well as measuring their socio-economic impact.

² The engagement rate was calculated by dividing the total number of volunteering activities done and challenges completed per the total number of users on the platform.

The person of contact between them and Alaya is the Volunteering Lead, with a team of around five people who are internally allocated to different areas of the CSR strategy, not just volunteering.

This company has a corporate volunteering program to give every employee the opportunity to make an impact in their communities and contribute to the causes most meaningful to them. They aim to increase the company's culture and sense of belonging through their program as well to increase the employees' personal wellbeing.

They have established a Company Giving Policy allowing every employee eight hours of volunteering per quarter, leaning on the Alaya platform to log the employees' impact. The senior leadership of Company B is very interested and involved in the company's volunteering and overall CSR program, having, besides this, a certain amount of money that is allocated to various charities.

The company aims to produce reports quarterly and yearly, to track the impact they have. In their last report, from March 2022, their program had the following impact after a year, for their overall initiatives inside the company: 1.865 participants, 4.938 volunteered, 200+ nonprofit organizations impacted, and 25 countries engaged.

- **Employee Engagement**

Company B has been with the Alaya platform for over a year now, their biggest impact comes from the volunteer weeks they organize in their office locations. The report from March 2022 stated that in a year the impact of these volunteering weeks was: 718 participants, 2.907 hours volunteered, 180+ nonprofit organizations impacted, and a total of 20 countries engaged.

Having the Alaya platform as a support for their program, they have access to every feature, from the Do-Good activities (field volunteering, skills based volunteering, goods collection and fundraising) to the challenges and registered a quite high impact.

This Company currently has 36% of the total of employees (7120) as users on the platform, registering 2.558 hours volunteered, having done 710 volunteering activities on the platform. With the Challenges feature, they completed 386 and gained a total of 59100 *Hopeys*.

They have an ambassador program that covers all their locations and champions in all their offices, to help engage users and increase impact. The biggest impact comes from the volunteering weeks and specific campaigns they organize and communicate internally so that their employees can participate in.

The feedback from the company's employees is very positive overall, they enjoy the volunteering weeks the most, the staff feels like the opportunity to connect with the nonprofit organizations is very rewarding.

Company B registers an engagement rate of 43% from the 36% of users on the platform, this comes mainly from their participation in volunteering activities.

Company C

- **CSR Team & Program**

Company C is a startup that established itself also as a Socially Responsible Corporation, being their main objective to enable people through jobs, this being mostly aimed for their clients. However, they are trying to complete that with philanthropy work as an organization.

Their point of contact with Alaya is the Community & Culture Manager, which is a position tied to the Human Resources Team. Even though they have a specific person to headline their corporate giving program, being a startup makes them disorganized in the way they want to execute the program and their strategy. Having great ideas to implement and evolve their program but they don't appear to have the time as the lead is in the HR time and has a lot of other tasks at hand.

As far as their CSR team goes, it's just that one person, however, they do have a couple of champions only in their two biggest office locations - because a lot of their employees work remote - but they are not CSR profiles, just employees within the company that volunteer to headline the program locally.

When it comes to the senior leadership, they can be too involved, constantly making decisions that affect the whole program in a negative way, such as being the people to approve or not what goes on the program and what the employees have access to.

Company C does not have a clear Corporate Giving Policy, they only communicate the key highlights of the program, which are:

- The program is powered by the Alaya platform and employees can take action by:
 - Volunteering Globally by leveraging Alaya to find charities both in their own community and around the world that spark interest or align with their passions.
 - Volunteering Remotely by sharing their skills with nonprofits around the world, for example, by mentoring aspiring entrepreneurs with a migrant background or helping with a nonprofit's social media.
 - Volunteering in Person by discovering various volunteer opportunities on the Alaya platform and finding time that works for them to take action – whether on their own, with family or friends, and of course their colleagues at the company.
 - Making donations or raising funds to specific projects for a variety of causes directly on the platform or sharing it with their network.
 - Completing Purpose Challenges by trying everyday positive actions like, going meatless, meditating, or keeping a gratitude journal.
 - Spreading the Word by leveraging the giving internal channel as well as engaging on the Alaya platform newsfeed to increase participation, raise funds, and gather others to join events.

This is a company that expanded in size in the last year, and they wanted to offer their employees a CSR platform, however, they don't present a strategy for it and don't have the necessary expertise to do so.

- **Employee Engagement**

As far as activities to improve employee engagement go, they have only done one when they launched last year - a matching campaign where for every employee that signed up to the platform, they donated a dollar to a chosen charity. Since that they haven't done anything with the platform to improve engagement, which proves to come from the lack of strategy and direction to the program.

Company C has 32% of the total number of employees (1.000) active on the platform, with almost 8h of volunteering, coming from 11 activities done - only three of them being done during work time. When it comes to challenges, they completed 156 and gained 10.020 *Hopeys*.

There's no feedback coming from the employees, most of them know it exists but there is nothing being done internally to make them use it, so they don't come forward to give feedback.

They register a 53% of engagement rate from the 32% of users on the platform, which comes mainly from the participation in challenges.

Company D

- **CSR Team & Program**

Company D has three sustainability objectives: encourage employees, support local communities, and incorporate sustainability in the company. The person of contact to help develop their program with Alaya is a part of the HR department, as well as the rest of the sustainability team.

The company does not have a Corporate Giving Policy and the management is not overall involved when it comes to developing their sustainability objectives with Alaya, failing to show up to monthly meetings. The main point of contact for activities is the local champion in their biggest regions.

They don't appear to have the structure needed to develop a program like this with the support of a platform like Alaya, seeing as it's the HR department that headlines these initiatives and they don't have time for it for the most part.

- **Employee Engagement**

To engage their employees through the Alaya platform, Company D works mostly with awareness day campaigns and challenges, but only periodically, as it is tied with the time that the HR department must give to these initiatives and to communicate them. However, the participation rates are generally very low, which means that the communication with the employees was not effective.

The company has access to all features on the platform and registered 42% of the total number of employees (240) on the platform, with 82 volunteering hours logged through 17 activities - being all of them done during work time. With the new access to challenges, they managed to complete 26 and received 2.550 *Hopeys*.

With help from Alaya they are trying to organize volunteering activities in more specific locations, but as they are very poorly structured it's not easy to define things.

As for feedback from employees, the punctual volunteering activities made them show themselves to be happy and satisfied.

The engagement rate for Company D is 18% of the 42% of users on the platform, coming similarly from both challenges and volunteering activities.

Company E

- **CSR Team & Program**

Company E aims to be a Sustainable brand and to direct its clients to more sustainable practices. In 2015 they created their Sustainability department to develop, implement, promote, and monitor the sustainability strategy within the organization. The person of contact between the company and Alaya is the Executive Director of Sustainability, working on the program with a team of around 5 people.

However, their strategy appears to be more directed towards providing sustainable solutions to their clients rather than investing in it internally. The company has the platform but hasn't set a Corporate Giving Policy for their employees, not having targets or ways to measure.

- **Employee Engagement**

To engage their employees their goal was to invest in organizing volunteering activities, as Alaya has access to a large network of nonprofit organizations in their main location, but so far they haven't done anything concrete.

The company has access to the Do-Good activities on the platform, however, they don't have access to challenges. Currently, they have 50% of their total employees (130) on the platform, with 18 volunteering activities done, 14 of them during work time, totaling 44 hours volunteered.

There's no contact with employees to gather feedback. Company E registered an engagement rate of 14%, coming only from volunteering activities.

Discussion

Upon the five companies analyzed it's possible to verify some different outcomes and outlines to CSR strategies overall.

Company A gives us the highest engagement rate (59%), having a very invested and specialized team and defined targets in which they want to measure their impact. With an internally defined policy to guide employees and set an aim, and a platform to engage them and track success, in less than a year they have proved to be quite invested. This type of internal discipline proves to be the best way to drive employee engagement within a company.

Company B has a very high volunteering motivation, having most of its engagement rate (43%). The company, with a structured policy and specialized team that offers volunteering hours per quarter and not per year as is custom, aims to implement initiatives to engage their employees in volunteering activities, with an impressive number of 710 done in a year. With volunteering weeks in place all over their office locations, they provide an engagement opportunity to their global network.

Company C, while very disorganized without a clear policy for corporate giving, has shown a good engagement rate (53%), coming mostly from the Challenges done by employees on the Alaya platform. However, to achieve traction, they want they need to have a better structured and specialized team, whose job is mainly to take care of the internal and engagement programs of the company.

Company D, with only an 18% of engagement rate is struggling to find some traction in their program with the lack of time from the HR department to dedicate to this. Not attending monthly meetings with Alaya to help develop and promote their program shows a lack of commitment, aligning itself with the lack of any policy or strategy.

Company E, with the lowest engagement rate overall (14%), appears to be more concerned with providing sustainable solutions to their clients than investing in their own internal program, despite having created a specific Sustainability department for that purpose.

To develop a better and more employee-focused organizational culture, it's imperative to invest in a good internal communication strategy, that will allow companies to better inform their internal stakeholders, being most of them the employees, of their actions regarding the welfare of the organization.

To promote employee engagement, it's necessary to make them understand the company's mission and how their work aligns with it. So, when it comes to decisions regarding the organizational culture, like actions towards Corporate Social Responsibility, needs to be communicated internally, so that the whole company is in sync.

Corporate Social Responsibility has become an imperative in the strategy of many industries, with the focus being on the employees and their well-being, then branching towards more environmental and social causes. This internal stakeholder group has been established as having a

crucial role when it comes to shaping the external stakeholders' view and evaluation of the companies they work for (Schaefer, Terlutter & Diehl, 2019).

However, before achieving the benefits that come with being socially responsible towards the external public, companies must communicate their actions to their internal stakeholders, to foment a more positive and transparent culture (Duthler & Dhanesh, 2018). Budriene & Diskiene (2020) emphasize how "identifying the situations that foster the work environment of employees is vital for the sustainability and growth of organizations" (p.2).

Internal communication, alongside the company's efforts on CSR, has a significant relationship when it comes to the employee's affective commitment to their organization (Gomes, Asseiro & Ribeiro, 2014). Alongside the previous statements, it's important to highlight the power of strategic internal communication when it comes to benefiting employee satisfaction and productivity.

This type of strategy when well implemented generates positive word of mouth among the employees about their organization, making them the greatest brand ambassadors, instead of the loudest critics (White, Vane & Stafford, 2010, p.3).

An engaged workforce boosts financial returns and improves the organization's reputation through increased productivity, higher job satisfaction, and decreased turnover (Saks, 2006, mentioned by Karanges et al, 2014). Karanger et al (2014) refer to Iyer and Isarel (2012) when identifying internal communication as the key driver of employee engagement.

There are influencing factors when it comes to employee engagement, Anitha (2014), mentioned by Roy (2020), states them as the workplace environment, the leadership, the compensation, the training and development, the workplace policies and procedures, and the relationships formed with co-workers.

According to several studies, a high level of employee engagement has a positive impact on a company's performance. The more engaged the employees are, the more they help companies reach great results, boosting profit rates. Based on this, employee engagement has become a decisive competitive advantage (Budriene & Diskiene, 2020).

When it comes to Creative Industries, as is the case for companies D & E, they seem to be a bit different from the other sectors when it comes to CSR strategies and programs.

Mísař and Srpová (2015) conducted research that analyzed the approach of small and medium companies within the creative industries to CSR. Of a total of 61 SMEs analyzed, only 17 knew what the term CSR meant, proving that the level of knowledge of this subject in the creative industries is "superficial and inconsistent" (Mísař and Srpová, 2015, p.1150).

The authors concluded that the main barriers to implementing CSR strategies in the creative industries are lack of awareness on the topic; restriction of creativity caused by standard methods; overly structured implementation plans that don't allow flexibility; the entrepreneurs perceive themselves as artists; lack of time; no defined strategy at all (Mísař and Srpová, 2015, p.1151).

This is an industry that constantly needs to be encouraged to establish plans and strategies, based on the benefits and advantages of having a CSR strategy aligned with the company's goals.

Alaya by Benevity, whose mission is to "enable companies to build a purpose-driven culture and engage employees to make a meaningful impact", has been studying the way its corporate partners are investing in their Corporate Purpose, to drive a more meaningful CSR strategy, to engage their employees.

Firstly, it's important to understand how Corporate Purpose is intertwined with Employee Purpose. According to Alaya's research, for a company's purpose to be true, it needs to be lived and backed up by its employees. In the guide published by the Employee Purpose Platform on "How to define an engaging Corporate Purpose", there's a statement that indicated that people want to work for an organization that shares their values, in the actions taken daily.

With this, it's the organization's responsibility to provide a connection between the Corporate Purpose and the values of their employees. A company with a strong purpose statement will be more attractive to talent and employees who mean to work for a common goal.

Alaya's guide states that upon the construction of a Corporate Purpose it's important to communicate it, to install a long-term perspective into the stakeholders, both internal and external. Upon case studies made with various corporate partners (BNP Paribas Switzerland, Frontiers, Nextthink, Scor, EHL), there was always one conclusion that was remarked, the need for a proper communication strategy.

Internal communication is key, it's important to find a good strategy to keep the employees informed without overloading them at the same time, this allows companies to not only share their values and actions but also to get feedback from the other side on their practices. When implementing a CSR strategy, based on the Company's Purpose, the staff needs to be on board for it to succeed, and if there's no internal communication the goals are lost on them.

It's imperative to communicate clearly and regularly about what CSR efforts, a company is putting into place, to allow employees to learn about what is going on and how they can be a part of it. This allows them to align their values with the company's and to find meaning in the work that is being done.

In their eBook about "The real business benefits of investing in Employee Purpose," Alaya relied on research from McKinsey to state that creating bonds with individual purpose benefits both employees and companies alike. With this, employee purpose, according to Alaya, is about enabling and encouraging employees to bring purpose to their work environment, therefore having the opportunity to work in a place that's meaningful to them.

McKinsey, with their research, concluded that investing in a program for Employee Purpose and Engagement brings five times higher levels of well-being, four times more engagement, a 6% higher value market, 21% higher profitability, and 57% reduction in turnover.

Part VI - Conclusions

In a conclusive tone, to determine the impact of internal communication in this environment, it's important to highlight the way the topics are all connected with one another.

Internal communication refers to all the forms of communication that exist within an organization, directed toward the internal stakeholders. This type of communication allows companies to share their values and goals with their teams, creating a Corporate Purpose statement, and becoming one with its employees. Corporate Social Responsibility is the process that comes after developing a Corporate Purpose, concerning the ethical and responsible way an organization's stakeholders, internal and external, are treated, building a social consciousness within the organizational culture.

Good communication of the organization's purpose towards being corporately responsible, helps employees to feel purpose and find meaning in their place of work, increasing their engagement in the company's activities and actions. Employee Engagement conveys the emergence of motivation, and active involvement of the employees in all company processes, which in turn is valuable to the organization itself, promoting productivity and efficiency.

An internal communication strategy helps to develop said social consciousness and to align the internal stakeholders, most of them being employees, with the culture and values of the company itself. As Gomes, Asseiro & Ribeiro (2014) stated in the evaluation of their study, it's important to articulate internal communication with CSR to manifest a Socially Responsible Internal Communication that will affect the way employees are engaged with their companies.

With this, if companies invest in an internal communication strategy that will allow them to properly communicate their CSR efforts internally, towards establishing a better work environment and social consciousness in all stakeholders, then employees will not only feel more connected to the organization's culture, but they will become its greatest advocates.

When employees are engaged in their workplace, and passionate about the work they do, productivity is proven to increase along with their efficacy. This, in turn, helps to boost companies' financial returns and reputation overall.

Overviewing the results provided by McKinsey, activating a program for Employee Purpose, which relies on a Corporate Purpose statement and a CSR strategy, both well communicated and implemented with the internal stakeholders, promotes well-being, engagement, market value, and profitability.

These benefits, alongside the increase in productivity and effectiveness, mentioned previously in this work, help to take companies to another level, making them a more attractive market and talent-wise. Taking all these factors into consideration, concluding, good internal communication impacts the way organizations communicate themselves and their purpose to their employees, which will facilitate ways to create and implement a good CSR strategy that relies on those individual and corporate shared values. And, when a company is in sync with its employees, providing them with a positive and

meaningful workspace, they will be more engaged in their work and the actions of the firm itself, internally and externally.

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