

Business Operations Research Project

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Before beginning on the 2025-2026 Business Operations Research Events, students must understand this year's topic.

2024-2025 TOPIC

The 2025-2026 topic for each career category is for participants to collaborate with a local business or organization to seek and incorporate customer feedback into the company's corporate social responsibility initiatives and overall business strategies. Using the research findings, participants will develop a CSR strategy to achieve internal/external results.

This means understanding what customers value, what concerns them, and how their opinions can inform a company's CSR actions and practices. Some examples may include:

- **Environmental Initiatives:** Customers can provide insights into which environmental issues they prioritize, such as reducing carbon emissions, protecting natural resources, or promoting sustainable practices.
- **Social Impact Programs:** Customer feedback can help companies identify social issues they are passionate about, such as poverty reduction, education, or community development.
- **Ethical Sourcing and Manufacturing:** Customers can provide feedback on a company's sourcing practices, labor standards, and manufacturing processes.
- **Diversity and Inclusion:** Customer perspectives can inform a company's efforts to create a more inclusive and diverse workplace and customer base.

The guidelines for each of the Business Operations Research Events are consolidated to facilitate the coordination of participant activities in each of the career categories. This means the guidelines will be exactly the same for each career category. However, each career category will be treated separately as a competitive event.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Define corporate social responsibility (CSR).

Give two examples of current CSR strategies or practices.

What industry or local business could benefit from enhanced customer-driven CSR strategies?

How are CSR strategies used by businesses?

How do customer opinions influence business CSR decisions?

Why do you believe the industry or local business would make a good fit for this project?

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Clearly explain corporate social responsibility components and the purpose of their research to businesses.
- Identify potential questions or problems with the chosen business's current CSR approach.
- Analyze the business or organization's current corporate social responsibility strategies and customer engagement practices.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Identify company's brand promise
- Build trust in relationships
- Discuss the role of ethics in operations
- Explain the nature of corporate branding
- Explain the nature of corporate social responsibility
- Measure corporate social responsibility impact

Case Study: Introduction to CSR



You are to assume the role of sustainability director for IMPACT SOLUTIONS, a mid-sized retail company that specializes in home goods and lifestyle products. The chief executive officer (judge) wants you to determine how customer feedback should influence the company's CSR strategy moving forward.

Recent customer surveys have revealed that 78% of the company's customers prioritize environmental sustainability when making purchasing decisions, and 65% want to see more transparency in the company's supply chain practices. Additionally, customers have expressed interest in supporting local community initiatives and want the company to take a stronger stance on social justice issues.

However, there are internal concerns about the costs associated with implementing comprehensive CSR initiatives and questions about whether customer preferences should drive business strategy to this extent. Some stakeholders worry that focusing too heavily on CSR might detract from core business operations and profitability.

The chief executive officer (judge) wants you to evaluate how customer feedback should influence CSR strategy and make recommendations on balancing customer expectations with business objectives.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Describe factors used by businesses to position corporate brands
- Describe the role of customer voice in branding
- Determine stakeholder expectations
- Build and maintain relationships with customers

ACTIVITY 2:

Understanding the Topic



ACTIVITY QUESTIONS

- Using evidence from the articles, explain the difference between CSR and traditional marketing.
- Using the two resources provided, explain why a business should invest in customer-driven CSR strategies.
- Describe key steps in creating a CSR strategy based on customer feedback. Where do we begin?
- List four specific CSR strategies utilized by companies mentioned in the articles.
- List four specific results businesses saw as a result of implementing customer-driven CSR strategies.
- Now that you have some ideas of potential CSR strategies a business might use, what new ideas do you have for the role-play company from Activity #1?
- Questions You Have: What are you wondering in regards to your project?

RESOURCES

- [Why Social Responsibility is Important in Business](#)
- [2025 Most Innovative Companies Corporate Social Responsibility](#)
- [Is Corporate Responsibility Good Business](#)
- [Create Corporate Social Responsibility Strategy](#)
- [Corporate Social Responsibility Strategy](#)

KEY TERMS

- CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility)
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Customer Feedback
- Sustainability
- Social Impact
- Ethical Sourcing
- Community Engagement
- Brand Reputation

ACTIVITY 3:

Case Study: CSR Trends in Customer Engagement



As a corporate responsibility analyst, your role is to research market trends and analyze customer feedback to improve the company's CSR initiatives. You will determine opportunities for strategic change within the business based on customer values and expectations. The director has tasked you with compiling recent data for an important client to provide the CSR team with actionable insights. Once the research phase is complete, synthesize the information into a slide presentation for the morning meeting. Your presentation should include the following:

CHANNEL ANALYSIS (3 POINTS)

- What CSR issues do the client's customers care about most?
- Describe the data gathered from customer feedback and how it can be used to improve CSR strategy.

COMPETITOR ANALYSIS (6 POINTS)

- Locate one competitor and one other business that the primary market likely supports and evaluate two CSR initiatives each in terms of customer engagement and overall impact. For example, Target has sustainability commitments that resonate with environmentally conscious customers. How might that impact customer loyalty? What CSR activities might be implemented as a result of customer feedback?

CURRENT TRENDS (6 POINTS)

- Research trends and find three CSR strategies you recommend to the corporate responsibility team based on customer feedback. Support your recommendation with data from your research. Why does it make sense for the client and their customers?

RESOURCES

- [Customer Feedback](#)
- [CSR's Impact On Customer Loyalty: Why it Matters](#)
- [Using Social Initiatives to Build Trusted Customer Relationships](#)
- [How Consumer Insight is A Driving Force in Navigating CSR](#)
- [16 Brands Doing Corporate Social Responsibility Successfully](#)
- [Roth's Fresh Markets Has Fostered Decades of Deep Community Investment](#)
- [Kind Snacks to Test Paper Wrappers](#)
- [Inside Amazon's Sustainability Lab](#)