

Employee volunteering: soul, body and CSR

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Abstract

Purpose – *By focusing on the intra-organization dimension of corporate social responsibility (CSR), this paper aims to offer an ethnographic analysis of the way Coca-Cola integrates its re-branding and marketing strategies with CSR and the processes through which this strategic agenda is diffused into the company's national franchise in Israel.*

Design/methodology/approach – *The research is based on a combined qualitative methodology of interviews with managers and employees on all levels of the organization; participant observations of formal meetings, company events and informal gatherings; and document evaluation.*

Findings – *This paper shows how the CSR program is purposefully and rationally designed to meet the standards of a business case approach to CSR and that, accordingly, company managers integrate it into the activities of departments and divisions such as sales, marketing, and human resources (HR). The paper further shows that the cause-marketing and product-branding goals underlying the global re-branding strategy of Coca-Cola have been mediated through employee volunteering projects that are based on the recruitment and mobilization of the physical bodies of employees not only as “bodily-corporate-producers”, but also as “bodily-corporate-ambassadors”.*

Research limitations/implications – *The in-depth empirical research that focused on a single corporation enabled the author to reach a better understanding of the intricate organizational processes involved in the implementation of CSR programs and their effects. At the same time, the research plan lacks a comparative examination of similar processes in other corporations. In this regard, this paper delineates the theoretical and empirical contours for future studies on the actual effects of implementation processes of the business case model for CSR.*

Originality/value – *The paper enriches a missing part in the literature regarding empirical examination of the impact of CSR at close range and at the level of individual firms.*

Keywords *Employee-volunteering, Corporate governance, Business case for corporate social responsibility, Community relations, Israel*

Paper type *Research paper*

Introduction

The notion and practice of corporate social responsibility (CSR) has by now become an integral element of political life in general and corporate governance in particular (Aras and Crowther, 2008; Kolk and Pinkse, 2010). Corporations design or join a variety of initiatives with the aim of promoting their social performances (den Hond *et al.*, 2007). Such measures include the creation of designated managerial positions, the development of “socially responsible” managerial systems, and the adoption of firm-specific and industry-wide codes of conduct. Corporations also launch community projects which they publicize through various media, integrate “corporate citizenship” and CSR items to their websites, publish annual social sustainability reports, mobilize CSR at the service of “social branding” and “cause marketing”, and join global initiatives such as the UN Global Compact[1] (Crowther, 2008; Brown *et al.*, 2010).

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CSR activities are also increasingly backed by scientific studies models and academic studies. In particular, CSR is increasingly framed in terms of business-oriented models which assume, or measure, or predict the economic value of acting responsibly. Typically deployed under the title of “the business case for CSR”, a variety of relevant measures and practices are thus conceived as commercial assets rather than liabilities (Crowther and Caliyurt, 2004; Lee, 2008). The business case for CSR – fast becoming normative common sense in business-management circles – reflects the conviction that socially-responsible corporate behavior yields benefits such as reputation, consumer trust, employee loyalty, and investors’ confidence. On the preventive side, CSR is assumed to be essential for risk-management strategies, successfully defending the corporation against reputational risks, shaming campaigns, legal suits, and commercial scandals (Smith, 2008).

The abovementioned developments are not products of corporate activity alone. As more than a few scholars note (e.g. McBarnet, 2007; Shamir, 2010), CSR has become an industry in and of itself, consisting of commercial and non-commercial organizations and consultancies that produce various instruments for deploying, auditing, and reporting upon CSR. Yet again, this emergent “market for virtue” (Vogel, 2005) prospers under the umbrella of a vast academic literature focusing on this field. Some of this literature focuses on identifying the drivers for CSR, the varied ways in which CSR models are adopted, and the connection between socially responsible performance and commercial and financial success (Lee, 2008; Wood, 2010). Others engage in analyzing the variance in the implementation of CSR and seek to assess compliance (Parker and Nielsen, 2009).

Mainly grounded in a neo-institutional approach, sociologists employ terms such as normative diffusion, world culture model, and isomorphic mechanisms in order to account for the spread of CSR (Bartley, 2007; Campbell, 2007; Hess and Warren, 2008; Jamali, 2010). At the same time, empirical studies exploring CSR at close range and at the level of individual firms are still scarce (see Frenkel and Kim, 2004; Prieto-Carrón, 2004; Pun, 2005; Rodríguez-Garavito, 2005; Royle, 2005; Shamir, 2005; Bonanno and Constance, 2006, 2008; Yu, 2007). Accordingly, this article seeks to enrich this relatively missing part in the study of CSR. Thus, while in another article I offer an empirical examination of the impact of CSR programs on local communities (Barkay, 2010), in this article I trace the assembly of a CSR program on the ground and analyze the organizational dynamic that it throws into action. Concretely, by focusing on the intra-organization dimension of CSR, this article explores the way Coca-Cola integrates its re-branding and marketing strategies with CSR and analyzes the processes through which this strategic agenda is diffused into the company’s national franchise in Israel[2].

In the first part of the article I examine the conceptual and organizational dimensions of assembling a CSR program and the way this program is integrated into the firm’s structure of governance. I show that the program is purposefully and rationally designed to meet the standards of a business-case approach to CSR and that, accordingly, company managers integrate it into the activities of departments and divisions such as sales, marketing, and human-resources (HR). In the process, I posit that it is possible to identify a Weberian-type shift from the substantive values allegedly underlying the notion of CSR to instrumental goals such as the firm’s branding and marketing agenda or the firm’s risk-management approach.

The second part of the article takes a closer look at one specific element within this overall configuration. I consider the centrality of employee volunteering to the firm’s objectives, both internally (e.g. in order to secure employee loyalty) and externally (e.g. in order to implement a community outreach agenda). I show that the cause-marketing and product-branding goals underlying the global re-branding strategy of Coca-Cola have been mediated through employee volunteering projects which are based on the recruitment and mobilization of the physical bodies of employees. Employees (specifically “blue-collar” and production line) are routinely expected to harness their bodies at the service of the corporation in the course of commercial production[3]. However I show that Coca-Cola’s CSR program has been designed so as to extend this role and to mobilize the bodies of employees also for the purpose of volunteering in communities.

All in all, I find that at the level of corporate governance CSR is increasingly conceived as a ready-made tool at the service of the organization's marketing and HR departments. I also find that as far as blue-collar employees are concerned, the emphasis on the connection between employee volunteering and social responsibility is realized through the mobilization of employees, not only as bodily-corporate-producers but also as bodily-corporate-ambassadors. While some critical students have already commented on the de-radicalization of CSR, describing it as a set of voluntary initiatives which are designed to politically deflect the prospects of binding regulation (Shamir, 2004; Hess and Warren, 2008), this article considers the de-radicalization (or potentially pacifying) effects of CSR on management-employee relations.

Background

In recent years, Coca-Cola became implicated in a number of publicity scandals concerning the firm's social and environmental performances. For example, Coca-Cola had been accused of complicity in the murder of nine labor organizers who were active among the corporation's Colombian bottling plant workers (Gill, 2005). Coca-Cola faced allegations of union busting in Pakistan, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Turkey. In the US, Coca-Cola was charged with racial discrimination over issues such as compensation, promotion, and performance evaluations (Wooten and James, 2004). In southern India, the company was held responsible for draining underground water reserves, polluting wells, causing water shortages in local communities, and for allowing excess levels of pesticide in its beverages (Raman, 2007). In addition, the corporation was charged with exhausting water resources in El Salvador. Concurrent with these allegations, Coca-Cola faced numerous shaming campaigns, boycotts, and legal suits (Kendall *et al.*, 2007).

In response, Coca-Cola launched a wide range of social responsibility initiatives. In India, the company has supported community-based rainwater harvesting projects to restore water levels and has partnered with NGOs and governments to provide accessible medical care to impoverished populations. At the global level, Coca-Cola joined the UN Global Compact[4] and launched "The CEO Water Mandate" to promote better water management in companies' direct operations and supply chains[5]. In response to pressing human rights issues, Coca-Cola has set up primary education projects to benefit children in slums and villages in India, while subsidizing higher education programs and scholarships in various developing countries, including Columbia. Finally, through the Coca-Cola Africa Foundation, the corporation has become dedicated to combating transmission of the HIV/AIDS virus.

Moreover, alongside its troubled human rights, labor, and environmental record, recent years implicated Coca-Cola in a no less severe challenge to its commercial hegemony in the area of soft beverages. While human rights and environmental concerns had been mainly raised in respect to the firm's operations in developing countries, consumers in developed countries began to seriously criticize the negative nutritional impact of its product, thereby directly risking its core business activity. On this front Coca-Cola faces not only a crisis of reputation but an actual threat to the very legitimacy of its line of products. Subsequently, various reports indicate that Coca-Cola has suffered a decline in global sales and therefore risks to the value of its shares (Warner, 2006).

In response to this threat Coca-Cola initiated a "sustainability scheme" which is designed to promote its commitment to health and physical wellbeing issues worldwide. One element of this scheme consists of adopting a beyond compliance policy of transparency in respect to nutritional information on product labels (exceeding federal requisites)[6]. Another element of the sustainability scheme is to adhere to codes of responsible advertising and marketing that target children. A third crucial element, and the one on which I focus in this article, is to encourage, sponsor and initiate grassroots programs around the world and to promote physical activity and reduce the hazardous effects of inertia associated with modern lifestyles[7].

In order to meet the above objectives the company developed the Active Healthy Living (AHL) project[8]. AHL activities include the broadening of Coca-Cola's line of products and to include more dietary beverages, juices, energy drinks and water, and the initiation and

support of hundreds of projects worldwide aimed at promoting nutritional education and physical activity. In this regard, the AHL strategy draws a direct link between the company's core business and practices of social responsibility.

As a global strategy the AHL was planned to be adopted and implemented by all Coca-Cola's operations around the world, and as such it was also conveyed to Coca-Cola Israel. Legally registered as The Central Bottling Company Ltd, Coca-Cola Israel is a privately owned company in which the Coca-Cola Company does not have equity[9]. Unlike many of Coca-Cola's bottling plants around the world, Coca-Cola Israel is autonomous in most aspects of production, marketing, and distribution. Yet because the parent-corporation fully owns Coca-Cola's syrup concentrate formula as well as its brand name, it retains primary responsibility for product quality control, brand promotion, and brand reputation. It is in the context of this organizational arrangement that the parent-corporation instructed the Israeli bottler to implement its AHL strategy. In what follows, I explore the manner in which Coca-Cola Israel has developed the AHL strategy and a CSR program that would serve it ends. Specifically, I focus on the design and implementation processes of the company's employee volunteering program.

Part 1: healthy life style, social responsibility, and corporate governance

Assembling the program

In 2004, under a directive of its CEO, Coca-Cola Israel created a new managerial position: community relations coordinator. The new position was filled by a mid-level executive whose qualifications included a training course for community relations managers that had been organized by a local MaNGO[10]. The training course delivered two consistent messages to its trainees: CSR was not about philanthropy but rather a strategic concern and community relations managers were professional agents of CSR in general within their respective firms (Shamir, 2005). In interviews the coordinator stressed the need to integrate CSR into the firm's core structure of governance and envisioned an organizational learning process that would culminate in "realizing the need for a Vice President for CSR" (PI, Community Relations Coordinator; November 10, 2004).

In line with the business-case approach that characterized the training course, the new Coordinator articulated her tasks in pragmatic and business-like terms. Promoting the vision that a company's CSR policy was instrumental to improving brand reputation, stakeholder relationship, and financial performance the coordinator decisively suggested that "the interface between the consumer and the bottle had a great potential for CSR activities" (PI, Community Relations Coordinator, November 10, 2004). According to this evolving business-oriented vision, communities had to be treated not merely as groups in need of "welfare aid" but as "strategic partners to whose needs the company had to be sensitive" (PI, Community Relations Coordinator, November 10, 2004).

The coordinator was initially assigned to the human resources department in order to design community programs that would be based on employee involvement. Yet a few months later the position of the coordinator was re-assigned to the Marketing department. This change has to be understood in light of the arrival of the parent-company's Active Healthy Living (AHL) project. Developed at Coca-Cola corporate headquarters in Atlanta, the AHL initiative strove to address the corporation's global branding crisis and the subsequent decline in its global sales. The primary objective of the initiative was to directly tackle what had been perceived as the primary cause for this crisis, namely the worldwide "health trend" in general and the increasing prevalence of obesity in particular.

The strategy that had been decided upon in order to realize the crisis-management objective focused on the associating the firm's brands with an active and healthy life style. The global re-branding process was to be implemented at three analytically distinct levels. First, Coca-Cola has broadened its product and package sizes range in order to help consumers to manage their calorie intake. Coca-Cola also committed to greater transparency of nutritional information on its packaged products. Second, AHL was to be implemented through the initiation and operation of educational programs that would focus

on the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. Third, Coca-Cola resolved to launch a variety of community programs designed to promote physical activities among its actual and potential consumers. Accordingly, the communications and public relations strategy of the company was to stress that Coca-Cola encouraged its consumers to lead healthy lifestyles by selling nutritionally sound beverages, engaging in responsible marketing practices, and supporting community programs emphasizing healthy and active lifestyles[11].

Notably, the fact that the interests of the company were to be defended by directly communicating and advocating a healthy lifestyle agenda to world-wide communities ensured that the AHL project could be tied to the broader concerns of corporate social responsibility. Like other brand-name global corporations, and in line with the business-case approach to CSR, the framing of AHL in terms of social responsibility reflected the conceptual shift from “old philanthropy” to “strategic community engagement” (Austin, 2000). Thus the issue of the nutritional value of its products and the responsible way to consume them allowed Coca-Cola to naturalize the link between its commercial interests and its proclaimed commitments to social responsibility.

Being part of the global distribution system of the parent-corporation, Coca-Cola Israel has been required to implement the AHL strategy. The corporate representatives who provided Coca-Cola Israel with guidance on the AHL strategy were explicit in advising that it had to rely on the nourishment of relations between the company and local communities. Yet while the Israelis were provided with general directives as to how to develop the AHL strategy, they were left to conduct their own research and to decide upon the most suitable means to achieve this stated goal (PI, Strategy and Research Manager; July 17, 2005).

The general understanding was that the company had to integrate its community charitable operations – up till then a sideline under-publicized activity – into its core business operation. More concretely, the company sought to develop a branding policy that would foster a relationship with “communities” (PI, Marketing director; May 10, 2004). The task of adapting AHL to the Israeli market through these means had been assigned to the marketing department. In turn, the department sought to bring the community relations coordinator under its wings in order to secure the link between AHL and community projects at the organizational level. The idea was not to sever ties with the HR department but rather to integrate or at least to jointly coordinate the activities of both departments as far as the AHL strategy was concerned: “in marketing they seek to decode emotions. Once they understood that social responsibility was part of this decoding process, they wanted me in their department” (PI, Community Relations Coordinator; May 5, 2005).

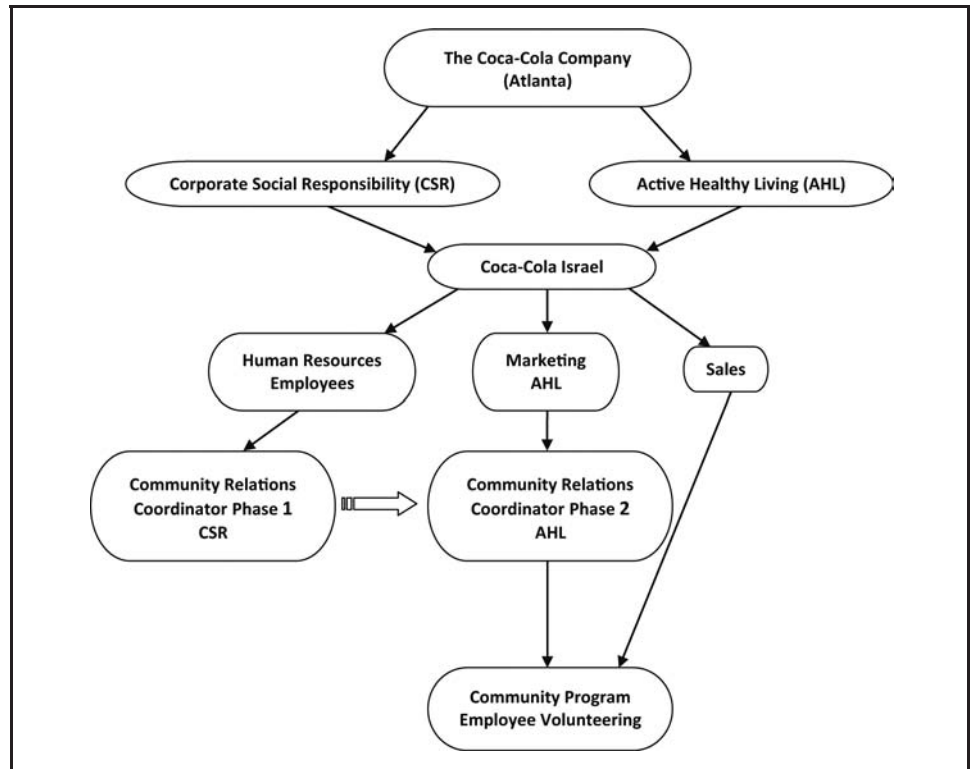
Over the course of the next few months, an AHL/CSR program – already conceptually coupled – evolved through the collaboration between the Marketing, Sales, and HR departments. This collaboration yielded an effort to create a community involvement program that would contribute to the firm’s core business operation both internally and externally. Meeting the considerations of sales and marketing, the community program had to enhance the brand while simultaneously reflecting both the new commitment to AHL and the firm’s socially responsible commitment to the “community”.

Another crucial link in the overall assembly was to involve the HR department. Drawing on the organizational resources of the HR department, community programs could be relied upon to operate through employee volunteering. Thus already at this stage the almost intuitive understanding among the firm’s managers was that AHL, community projects, and employee volunteering had to be somehow assembled. Figure 1 summarizes the organizational flow from the parent company to Coca-Cola Israel and the organizational assembly of AHL/CSR through a community program that was designed to rely on employee volunteering.

Translating concepts into action: The Active Playgrounds project

Having assembled CSR with AHL at the conceptual level and bringing together various departments of the firm at the organizational level, it was now time to identify suitable client communities and to design an operative scheme. To that end, the coordinator contracted Zionism 2000[12], a local MaNGO[13] that specializes in developing and advising

Figure 1 Organizational assembly of AHL/CSR



corporations on community involvement. Zionism 2000 emphasizes the importance of employee volunteering and acts as a mediator in establishing partnerships with suitable target communities. As such, collaboration between Coca Cola and Zionism 2000 seems to have served company goals. To realize its objectives, Zionism 2000 created a nation-wide network of “business for the community” coordinators with experience in designing employee involvement projects. Coca-Cola’s collaboration with Zionism 2000 was based on the latter’s practical assistance as well as on its business-like approach to CSR. Indeed the representatives of Zionism 2000 assured the coordinator that “we are confident that employee volunteering builds loyalty and pride in the company” (PO, meeting of Coca-Cola’s coordinator and Zionism 2000 representative; May 4, 2005).

The community relations coordinator was responsible for locating suitable playgrounds, negotiating with local governments and external suppliers, and coordinating operations with the relevant departments within the firm and with the local government for each volunteering day. To ensure that the efforts would make a significant difference, viable locations for the project were defined as rundown playgrounds in poor neighborhoods.

Aided by Zionism 2000, the next step was to decide upon a concrete program. A team of managers from HR, marketing, and sales was responsible for implementing the program. Executives in the sales division came up with the idea of utilizing the skills of employees by engaging them in community volunteering tasks of renovating recreation and sport facilities in public playgrounds. An executive from the marketing department also opined that “community relations should generate a sympathetic environment for the firm and the brand because they have the advantage of not being perceived as a commercial practice but rather as an altruistic endeavor. In this sense, the renovation of children’s playgrounds by our employees would perfectly serve the AHL strategy: this project is both about being physically active and about giving back to the community” (PI, Strategy and Research Manager; July 17, 2005). The joint team thus resolved to create the “Active Playgrounds” program and to frame it in all of the internal and external communications of the company as “the AHL employee involvement program for creating social change” (CC, April 2005).

In order to mobilize employees, the coordinator also involved company managers from the internal communications and workplace wellbeing HR units. The aim of this cooperation was to “look for ways to harness the HR toolkit for the AHL employee volunteering project” (PI, Community Relations Coordinator; April 5, 2005). The active involvement of the HR department guaranteed that the community program would realize an integrative model that addressed both the external and internal objectives of the firm[14]. Outwardly, the program aimed at strengthening the brand amongst its consumers. Inwardly, it aimed at enhancing employee loyalty and sense of belonging and identification with the firm. Figure 2 summarizes the organizational moves undertaken in order to implement the project.

All in all, the marketing, sales and HR departments treated the community involvement program as a valuable and significant organizational resource both in terms of brand values and the firm’s internal organizational culture. In the process, the idea and practice of CSR seems to have been so fundamentally recruited to the firm’s re-branding strategy so as to render it into a mere instrument at the service of the commercial cause. In the next part of the article I consider some of the implications of this project, focusing on the internal dynamic of employee volunteering.

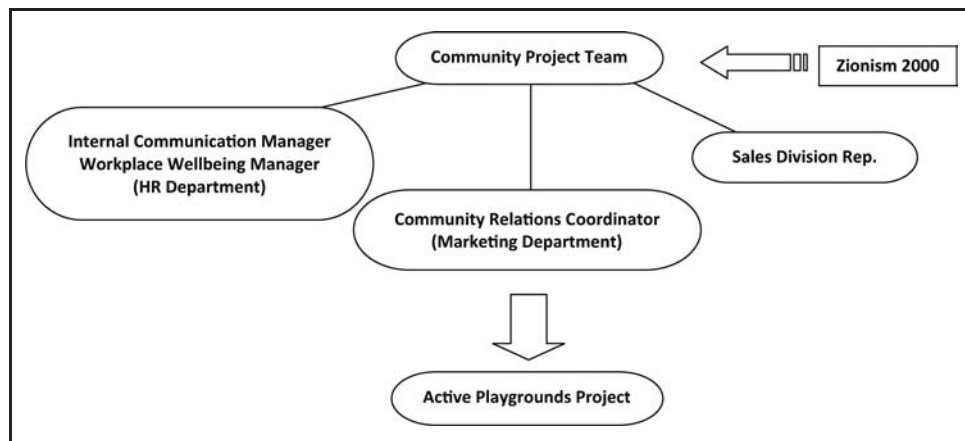
Part 2: employee volunteering, active bodies, and organizational culture

The Active Playgrounds project

Deliberations among company executives who were in charge of implementing the AHL strategy included a suggestion that was eventually rejected in favor of the Active Playgrounds project. The idea was to prompt the firm’s regional units to develop partnerships with elementary schools in their areas of operation: employees in the regional units would organize educational activities that would focus on the theme of active healthy living (e.g. sporting events, lectures and presentations, and educational tours). However executives from the sales division – under whose authority were most of the potential volunteers – objected to this idea on grounds that their employees worked as delivery-truck drivers and forklift operators and could not be expected to give lectures to school children. Employee volunteering had to rely on the bodily skills of employees and to focus on manual tasks such as painting and building (PC, Project Team Member; April 21, 2005).

The focus on the recruitment and mobilization of physical bodies became a constitutive element in realizing employee volunteering at Coca-Cola Israel. The ideas of executives in Coca-Cola Israel on the principled issue of employee volunteering were in line with general trends and beliefs concerning the merits of CSR. Many CSR practitioners and scholars hold that volunteering programs positively affect the attitudes of employees towards their firms as well as the relationship of firms with relevant communities (Peterson, 2004; Bart *et al.*, 2009; Muthuri *et al.*, 2009; Pelozo *et al.*, 2009). Accordingly, many community projects are

Figure 2 Towards the implementation of the active playgrounds project



designed to include employee volunteering as a means for fusing the general principles of CSR with the merits of enhancing employees' satisfaction, motivation, and performance (Zappalà and Arli, 2009; Houghton *et al.*, 2009; de Gilder *et al.*, 2005; Kim *et al.*, 2010). Rating agencies that monitor and assess corporate community programs (e.g. KLD, BitC and FTSE) also count community employee volunteering programs as positive indicators of CSR at firm-specific level.

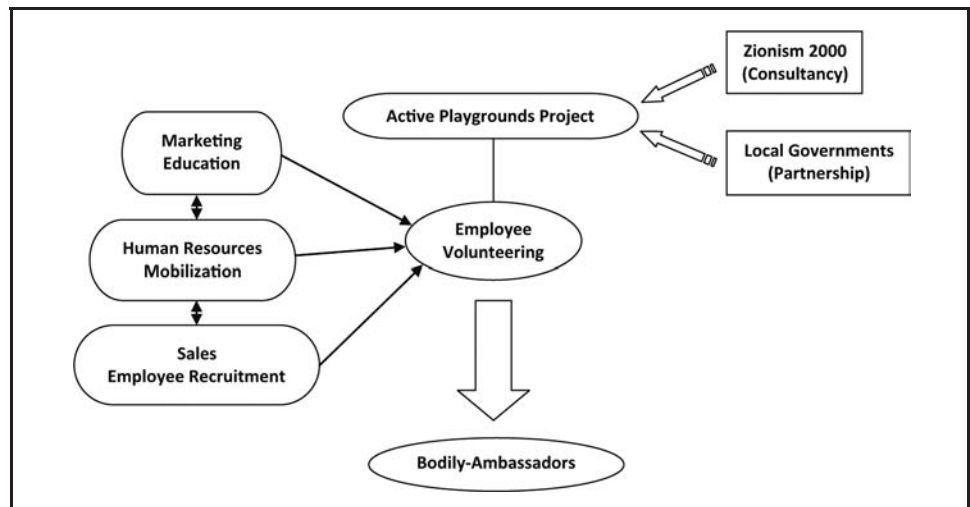
Yet it seems that the implementation of the AHL/CSR program in Coca-Cola Israel took the concept a step further, establishing a direct link between the manual skills of employees and their bodily volunteering capacities. In fact, at no point throughout the process of deliberations concerning the best way to realize the AHL strategy were employees consulted or given the opportunity to have their opinions heard. Union leaders at the firm were also not involved in the project and did not consider it as relevant to their concerns with low wages and general working conditions (PI, August 9, 2005)[15]. Indeed as we shall see in detail below, it was the body of the employee, rather than one's mind, that was conceived as the route to the heart and soul of employees and their tasks as the ambassadors of the company. Approaching the body had also been consistent with the view that that organizational task was to teach employees "to learn to speak the Coca-Cola language" because they were "like kids who [had to] speak their parents' language" (PI, Internal Communications manager; July 26, 2005).

The Active Playgrounds project was designed to mobilize employees to volunteer for two full working days of gardening, painting, and construction that would have put a finish on earlier preparatory infrastructural work that would have been assumed by workers of the relevant local public authorities. The HR department provided employee-volunteers with T-shirts bearing the logo of Coca-Cola and the AHL slogan: "there is sense in active living"[16]. The volunteering hours invested in the project were to be calculated by the company as normal working hours. All in all, the project was thus based on a transformation of routine bodily tasks and their monetary compensation into a fully embodied employee community involvement. Figure 3 displays the organizational chart for assembling the Active Playgrounds project on the ground, bringing together the combined inputs of various departments of the company as well as external agents (i.e. Zionism 2000 and municipal officials). In turn, the diagram outlines the output: the transformation of employees into bodily-ambassadors of the company.

Communicating the project to employees

From the outset, both employees and company executives were acutely aware of the potential tension between the will to volunteer and the low wages and rather harsh working

Figure 3 Assembling the Active Playgrounds project on the ground



conditions of the prospective volunteers. The general popular wisdom in Coca-Cola Israel was that working conditions were unsatisfactory because most employees worked long hours for statutory minimum wages. Accordingly, the primary organizational task the HR department was to address actual and potential employee resentment by offering a variety of fringe benefits and social activities (e.g. family day-trips and household financial counseling). The Active Playgrounds project thus provided the opportunity to mitigate dissatisfaction by instilling a sense of allegiance to the company and solidarity among employees. The company did not excel in payments, but it was to be perceived as one's extended family (PI, HR Manager; July 28, 2005).

The most immediate organizational task had been to sell the project within the firm and to mobilize enthusiastic volunteers. Internal negotiations over the most appropriate way to convey the new strategy and related project to employees provide a literally graphic example of the organizational assembly of AHL/CSR. From a marketing perspective, the view was that the Coca-Cola logo should be used in order to symbolically create the link between the Active Playgrounds projects and the company brand (PO; Project Team Meeting; August 28, 2005). However the Internal Communications manager, offering a view from the standpoint of human resources, insisted that the project should be conceived as one element in the overall purpose of enhancing employee loyalty and sense of identification with the firm. As all other such communications had been conveyed by using a well-established combination of fonts, graphic forms, cartoon figures and expressions, she deemed it essential to stick with the same format (July 26, 2005).

Alongside textual and graphic platforms, company executives deployed a series of lectures, presentations, and launching events at employee company meetings. The community relations coordinator was therefore joined by other senior executives who began to conduct a series of presentations to the company's mid-level executives in order to inspire them to mobilize their employees along these lines. Regional managers were particularly targeted, because they were in most direct touch with company employees. Their task was to recruit employees to volunteer, to plan suitable timetables, and to escort them to the various playgrounds chosen for the project.

At an early stage of the process, a vice president from the Sales Division delivered a speech to mid-level executives in order to inspire them to mobilize the bodies of their blue-collar employees:

You and I belong to the upper echelons of society. Yet many of our employees, as you know, work for a minimum wage. Try and lead this project differently – not with measures and targets as we are all used to, but with your souls. I have a feeling that it's going to be a great experience for us all. I honestly believe that you'll find loads of good and enthusiastic souls among your employees (June 9, 2005).

Another senior executive, on a different occasion, followed suit:

We are promoting physical activities within the firm both for the fun of it and because it is healthy. We have also decided to shift our community involvement activities to focus on promoting sports in Israel. Concretely, we will renovate playgrounds located in poor areas wherein the local government lacks the financial resources for maintaining them. Group by group we will renovate playgrounds all over the country. In each renovated playground we will put up a small sign indicating that it is our contribution to the community. We will make efforts to choose playgrounds suggested by you, so as to make you proud of what you have done for your communities. It is a large budget project on the part of the firm, yet I wish to emphasize that you are by no means obliged to participate in it – it is purely a voluntary activity (May 16, 2005).

Yet appeals to heart and soul were only one side of the internal strategy of selling the project to employees. The other side of the strategy consisted of subtle messages as to the inherent link between the AHL/CSR strategy – now manifested in the form of the Active Playgrounds project – and the actual future ability of employees to hold to their jobs. In formal meetings and informal gatherings, the consistent message had been that the project was part of a company effort to address a crisis in sales that may also lead to salary cuts, a trimming of the firm's welfare programs and fringe benefits, and ultimately in employee layoffs (PO, HR Department Meeting, May 31, 2005).

What we have here is an example of the way the business-case approach to CSR works at floor level. Employees were socialized to accept the inherent link between the global health trend and the specific problem of obesity on the one hand and Coca-Cola's declining sales on the other hand. In turn, the internal implication was that the AHL strategy, worked out on the ground through employee volunteering in the community represented a sound business strategy for retaining the jobs of employees. And as far as blue-collar employees were concerned, this business strategy had been implemented through the mobilization of their bodies. Looked at from this perspective, the Active Playgrounds project had only been one element – however central – in a broader recruitment scheme.

Company executives at all levels, aided by the firm's internal communication outlets, sent the consistent message that employees had to perceive themselves as ambassadors of Coca-Cola. As such, their duties did not end with community volunteering alone. Their mission was to be ongoing and far-reaching. The bodies of employees were also targeted for this more enduring ambassadorial mission: employees were expected to adopt healthy lifestyles so as to actually embody the AHL strategy in their daily lives.

A special issue of the company's monthly newsletter (*Under the Screw Cap*) was dedicated to the introduction of the AHL strategy and had been distributed to all employees. The first section of the newsletter included articles and information about the strategy and its rationale. It concluded with the idea that "it all starts from within, and therefore we are certain that our togetherness, our personal example and our willingness to contribute will be the lever for this move and turn it into a great success" (*Under the Screw Cap*, 2005). The second section of the newsletter was dedicated to a range of physical activities in which the firm was already involved and which employees were encouraged to join. Among these activities was an initiative entitled "sport under your management" which called upon employees to organize any kind of physical activity (ballgame teams, dance classes, cyclists groups etc.) in their communities by promising that the firm would provide them with the necessary equipment: "from now on you can represent us by being our loyal ambassadors for an active lifestyle in your own communities" (*Under the Screw Cap*, May).

The newsletter also included a variety of additional AHL activities such as lectures and personal consultations on healthy nutritional and balanced diet; "a game in action" – designed especially for Coca-Cola's employees encouraging them to engage their families in sports activities; and "Nature with fun" – a hiking trip for employees and their families. In addition, employees were presented with vouchers for gyms and the opportunity to take part in extreme sports and other physical activities at discount prices under the slogan "your employee ID badge is worth more". On some occasions employees were also invited to gather at the end of working days at company venues that had been temporarily converted into a gym with sport mats, spin bikes, workout music and coaches who encouraged employees to take part in ongoing sport-like physical activities. Refreshments included fruit and carbonated beverages and the organizers did not serve water in order to demonstrate that carbonated drinks did not present a health hazard once an active life style was adopted (POs, AHL Launching events; July 3, 17 2005).

Conclusion

The CEO of Coca-Cola Israel, escorted by other senior executives, attended ceremonial events in the playgrounds where employee volunteers concluded their work. Local residents, city officials, and representatives of the press were also routinely present in events that took place under the slogan of "giving the playground back to the community" (PO, August 16, 2005).

From the perspective of both management and employees, the Active Playgrounds project has been considered a great success. Regional managers told the community relations coordinator that volunteering days were overbooked with volunteering employees and that the atmosphere in the region had been improved dramatically in days that followed (PO, February 15, 2006). A union leader concurred:

We are told that we don't sell enough, but in the public eye Coca-Cola is a very rich company. So it's important that people outside realize that Coca-Cola also gives back to the community. I know,

for example, that if the playground in my neighborhood is renovated, the people there will much appreciate it (August 9, 2005).

A vice-president from the HR department concluded that:

The organization already behaves like a family and now we also have to add the element of excellence (PO, May 24, 2005).

Throughout this study, I have showed that it was the inclusion of employee volunteering that was particularly crucial in establishing an organizational link between the external and internal dimensions of AHL/CSR. On the one hand, employees were to execute the healthy lifestyle-cum-socially responsible community projects. On the other hand, the mobilization of employee volunteering corresponded to the business-case model which stipulates that employee involvement in communities “improves the relationship between management and employees, creates solidarity, and enhances employee morale” (PO, Region Managers Meeting; May 10, 2005).

Bodily activity, socially responsible community involvement, a marketing strategy, and a way to mitigate misgivings about low wages were thus all assembled under the same conceptual roof. From an analytical standpoint, we may conclude that the bodies of employees were harnessed to the company’s strategic cause in more than one way: by mobilizing employees to actively perform manual works in communities, by mobilizing employees to engage in physical activities as part of their daily routines, and as ambassadors who had to involve their own families and neighbors in various sport-like activities.

Some analysts in the social sciences have already observed aspects characteristic of the way companies become involved in the construction of the body-employee in post-industrial economies (Gimlin, 2007). While in industrial economies companies had targeted a finite range of workers’ productive capacities, the post-industrial workplace is characterized by more inclusive demands concerning employee loyalty of both body and soul (Wolkowitz, 2006). The implementation of the AHL strategy at Coca-Cola Israel seems to provide a vivid illustration to the argument that “employers no longer allow [their employees] their ‘own’ bodies even at the weekend, expecting them instead to manage their embodiment with work in mind, a move towards the involvement of the ‘whole person’ in work” (Wolkowitz, 2006, 26). In the present case, the management of the body was designed to serve the explicit goal of deploying social responsibility both externally and internally: communicating the firm’s commitment to sustaining healthy communities while simultaneously enhancing employee sense of identification with their workplace as their extended family.

Notes

1. The Global Compact (GC) was launched in January 1999 by the General Secretary of the UN, Kofi Annan, in his address to the World Economic Forum in Davos. The GC is a voluntary initiative aimed at promoting corporate citizenship amongst multinational corporations: www.unglobalcompact.org (accessed 16 October 2010). In signing the GC, firms commit themselves to comply with ten principles in the areas of human rights, labor rights, the protection of the environment and business integrity. Whereas the GC is treated in the literature as an indication of the significant role of multinational corporations within the new global governance (Ruggie, 2001), it is also criticized for not verifying the information provided by firms and thus promoting an anti-regulatory approach as far as human rights and global environmental issues are concerned (Rowe, 2005).
2. The article is based on nearly two years of fieldwork beginning in April 2004. During fieldwork the researcher interviewed managers and employees representing a wide range of professions at all levels of the organization. In addition, to explore the organizational setting and dynamics, the researcher conducted participant observations in formal meetings, company events and informal gatherings. Lastly, fieldwork also included evaluation of printed corporate materials, organizational charts, press clippings and official web pages. To identify the specific research method by which information and direct quotes were collected, the following abbreviations are used in the text: PI – personal interviews; PO – participant observation; PC – personal communication; CC – community communication.
3. The division of white-collar/blue-collar is increasingly depicted in organizational studies as old and outdated (Hodson and Sullivan, 2002). Nevertheless, it seems an adequate presentation of

Coca-Cola's organizational hierarchy, in particular due to big differences in salaries and benefits between management and employees and the fact that the majority of the company's employees earn the statutory minimum wage.

4. Notably, although the Global Compact was launched in January 1999 (see supra note 26), Coca-Cola joined it only in March 2006: www.unglobalcompact.org/newsandevents/news_archives/2006_03_08.html (accessed on 16 October 2010).
5. www.unglobalcompact.org/Issues/Environment/CEO_Water_Mandate/index.html (accessed on 16 October 2010).
6. www.thecoca-colacompany.com/ourcompany/hal_policy_nutritional_labeling.html (accessed on 16 October 2010).
7. www.thecoca-colacompany.com/citizenship/move.html (accessed on 16 October 2010).
8. The initiative had formerly been labeled Active Lifestyle and thus abbreviated to ALS. I have no direct information about why Coca Cola changed the title of the initiative. Yet, there is a possibility that ALS, known as the abbreviation of the Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis disease, seemed less suited for a branding strategy.
9. Interestingly, Coca-Cola Israel has been a cause for political dispute and public pressures even before it received its exclusive franchise in 1968. Influenced by the Arab League's boycott on Israel, The Coca-Cola Company refused to grant a franchise to an Israeli bottler. However, in 1966, following a call from Jewish Community leaders in the US to boycott Coca-Cola, the company promptly announced that it would grant Israel its first franchise, thereby subjecting itself to the Arab boycott (Pendergrast, 1993, pp. 291-2). Since its establishment and until 1995, the Israeli company distributed its products both to Palestinians and Jewish settlements in the occupied territories. This situation changed, however, when following the Oslo Peace accords and the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, a bottling franchise was granted to the Palestinian National Beverage Company. To date, the Palestinian company is responsible for the bottling and distribution of Coca-Cola products in the Palestinian market, while Coca-Cola Israel continues to supply to Jewish settlements in the occupied territories. This divide has rendered Coca-Cola a target for the Boycott Israel Campaign: www.inminds.co.uk/boycott-coca-cola.html (accessed 16 October 2010). It is noteworthy that both the American parent-corporation and the Israeli bottling enterprise have yet to develop a response to these pressures.
10. The term MaNGO refers to an NGO which is usually owned or financed by market actors and works, whether explicitly or not, to associate its corporate owners and affiliates with voluntary and altruistic attributes of civil society (Shamir, 2005, p. 240). MAALA, the facilitator of the abovementioned training course, is a leading non-profit organization in the Israeli field of CSR, specializing in assisting Israeli businesses in developing and implementing a CSR strategy and funded through membership dues, consulting fees and contributions from its members, comprised of Israeli companies: www.maala.org.il/eng/home/about/01/default.asp?ContentID=333 (accessed 16 October 2010).
11. On Coca-Cola's AHL global strategy, see the company's sustainability report (pp. 24-26): www.thecoca-colacompany.com/citizenship/pdf/2007-2008_sustainability_review.pdf (accessed 16 October 2010).
12. www.zionut2000.org.il/site/front/ShowCategory.aspx?ItemId=351&Lang=HE (accessed 16 October 2010).
13. See supra note 35.
14. On the role of Human Resource function in assembling CSR within corporations (see Dirani, 2010).
15. Employees are organized in Coca-Cola Israel in two different unions – the drivers' and the production workers'.
16. In Hebrew the slogan also means "active living tastes good".

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