



Final Report

Workshop: “Awareness to Action: How to Implement CSR in SMEs”

Guadalajara, Mexico

25-26 March 2014

I. Workshop Overview

Objectives:

- Understand the opportunities that CSR can generate for SMEs, especially by improving competitiveness and providing access to new markets.
- Provide an overview of the current state of CSR, including CSR principles.
- Develop a tailored CSR action plan for each SME that can be implemented over a period of six months.

Key materials covered:

- Overview of CSR principles and advantages.
- How to develop and implement a CSR action plan for an SME; this includes: mapping stakeholders, diagnosis, benchmarking, strategic planning, implementation strategy, evaluation and communication.
- How to take initiative once an action plan is developed.

Workshop structure:

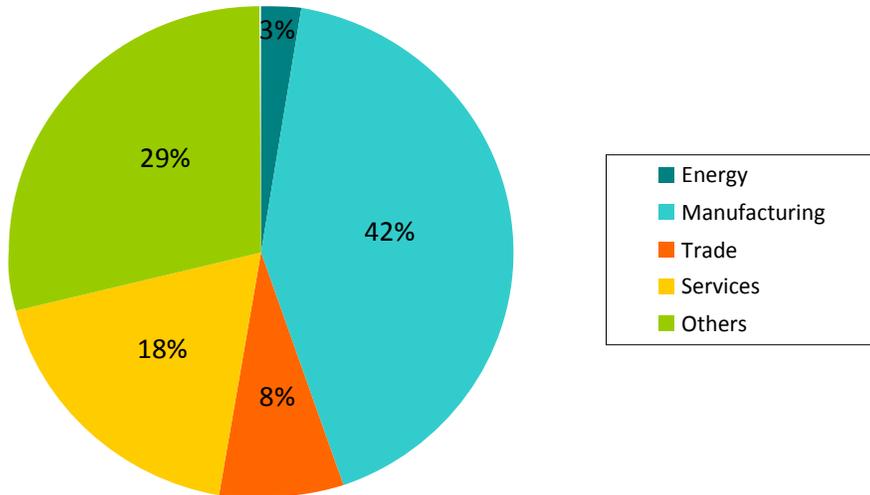
- Introduction: objectives, expectations, introducing participants.
- CSR awareness: current state of CSR, benefits and obstacles of implementing CSR in SMEs, CSR and becoming more competitive; *interactive sessions: CSR in an SME, benefits of CSR.*
- Overview of CSR principles: internal public, external public, suppliers, environment, responsible marketing and community relations; gender and human rights; *interactive session: responsible practices in my SME.*
- Implementing CSR in an SMEs business strategy: developing a mission, vision and values; mapping stakeholders; CSR diagnosis, incentives, opportunities and challenges; strategic analysis; creating an action plan; evaluation; communication; *interactive sessions: mapping stakeholders, diagnosis and benchmarking; business case for key CSR principles; and presenting action plans.*
- Follow up and conclusion: next steps for developing a tailored action plan, OAS role and support; present diplomas.

Workshop participants:

- 59 participants from various sectors including: manufacturing, energy, trade, services, etc. Of the 59 participants, 35 were women and 24 were men.



SMEs by Sector



II. Workshop Results

Emerging themes:

During the two day workshop, the Mexican SMEs demonstrated strong interest and commitment to learning about how to implement CSR in their business strategies. The SMEs indicated that the session about the business case for CSR and how to communicate it to the board of directors was of particular interest; several SMEs had not made the connection between CSR and improving their competitiveness and reputation.

The workshop generated an excellent exchange of CSR practices among the participants, which was of great value because it illustrated the creativity and perseverance of SMEs in the face of limited resources and adverse conditions. For example, one of the companies had developed a recycling program despite the fact that the local municipality did not collect separated waste. The SME independently identified a supplier that separates and recycles waste and hired them to manage their waste.

Most SMEs had pre-existing knowledge of CSR and some were already implementing isolated CSR practices but they did not have a clear idea of how CSR was linked to the business case and how it can add value to their products and/or services. During a benchmarking exercise, the SMEs demonstrated relatively good practices in the following areas: internal audience (67%), public policies (65%), supplier practices (65%), responsible marketing (63%), and governance (62%); and weak practices in community (47%) and environment (40%).

All of the SMEs were very enthusiastic until the end of the workshop and expressed great satisfaction with the methodology. SMEs were eager to continue the strategic planning that they begun during the workshop with their own personnel; this will ensure that the resulting action plans will reflect the ideas of the employees, in addition to those of the president and/or director general.



The gender and human rights component of the workshop was very well received. Many of the SMEs commented about the barriers for women entrepreneurs in the State of Jalisco, in both large and small companies, and how SMEs can overcome challenges in this area.

Results and participant feedback:

- The SMEs indicated that they were very satisfied with the methodology, stating that it was innovative, practical and easy to apply. They also valued that it was tailored to the specific needs of small and medium enterprises.
- Participants’ knowledge of CSR increased by 30% over the course of the workshop, according to the survey that was administered prior to and following the workshop.
- The SMEs were already aware that in implementing CSR, they should include gender sensitive practices. According to the survey, this perception increased by 38% over the course of the workshop. The SMEs found that the tangible suggestions and solutions that were put forth during the workshop allowed them to have a better understanding of how to incorporate gender sensitive practices into their SMEs.
- At the end of the workshop, participants were very motivated to work on their CSR strategies. The SMEs indicated that the tools that they had acquired could provide them with a better long term vision and more socially responsible business plan.
- Participants valued the practical and interactive nature of the workshop because they felt they could learn from one another. The instructor’s extensive knowledge and clear explanations facilitated participation and generated rich discussion. In particular, the participants felt that they learned a great deal from the wealth of examples that the instructor provided throughout the workshop.
- Prior to the workshop, participants were more inclined to believe that CSR was for large corporations, not for SMEs; however, at the end of the workshop, they were firmly convinced that CSR could be implemented by SMEs.

Next steps:

The OAS will be following up with the Mexican SMEs over the next six months. The SMEs will have to submit the action plans that they developed during the workshop for OAS review and recommendations. Thereafter, the SMEs will select a few key aspects of the action plans that they will implement over the next six months, with support from the OAS. The training, as well as the six month follow up, should provide the SMEs with a solid idea of how to develop future CSR action plans.

The OAS CSR Program will also be holding CSR workshops for SMEs in the following countries:

1. Montevideo, Uruguay (14-15 May 2014)
 - Confirmed.
2. Panama City, Panama (21-22 May 2014)
 - Confirmed.



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III. Workshop Pictures

