

## Checklist: What's your level of corporate social responsibility?

by LuAnne Speeter

Corporate social responsibility was virtually unheard of a decade ago. Today, however, most companies are instituting CSR measures to some degree. According to [KPMG International](#), 74% of the top 100 U.S. companies in revenue published corporate responsibility information in 2008, up from 37% in 2005.

The level of commitment to social and environmental issues can vary widely, however. While some companies dedicate a significant amount of time and resources to corporate citizenship, other companies barely scratch the surface with minimal compliance.

What about your business? Do you know how it measures up to other institutions of comparable size or structure when it comes to social responsibility? Below is a quick checklist, broken down into five levels that range from low commitment to high involvement. Check off the practices that best relate to your company to find your level of CSR.

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### Level 1: CS-What?

- Sees no corporate relationship to social or environmental community issues.
- Achieves the bare minimum of social or environmental measures required by law.
- Sets only profit-based corporate goals.

### Level 2: Squeaking By

- Takes a non-strategic, "management by crisis" approach to social or environmental concerns.
- Ensures basic compliance is met regarding environmental, labor, safety and health regulations.
- CSR communications are marketing-based only and not consistent.

### Level 3: Strategic

- Develops a CSR plan with a dedicated budget, but compartmentalized approach.
- CSR objectives are incorporated into business mission, values and vision.
- Selects initiatives that positively affect business outcomes; e.g., environmental efficiency or socially responsible product lines.

### Level 4: Assimilated

- Involves stakeholders in determining CSR initiatives that address emerging social needs.
- Incorporates CSR goals into all business operations and policies.
- Establishes and tracks benchmarks internally and within the industry.

### Level 5: Altruistic

- Primary corporate mission is focused on creating a better society or environment.
- Products and services are aligned to fulfill corporate mission.
- Marketing and communications are dedicated to enhancing community, national or global awareness of causes and affecting public policy.

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How is this checklist useful? First, it can help you pinpoint where your organization is right now regarding corporate social responsibility. Second, it initiates the conversation of how to move to the next level.

Interestingly, these levels have a strong correlation to [Lawrence Kohlberg's levels of moral reasoning](#). In other words, our businesses can and should continue to evolve – just as individuals do – to achieve a higher level of social and ethical responsibility.

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