

## **Student's Guide to Corporate Social Responsibility in Sport Public Relations**

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*Lessons from the Arthur W. Page Center for Ethics and Integrity in Public Communication*

### **Rationale: Why Study Corporate Social Responsibility in Sport Public Relations?**

If you Google *corporate social responsibility* (CSR), you will find a variety of descriptors from the environmentally conscious, to a mantra that encourages you to “do something good every day,” to a picture of Superman flying through the sky. Though the term is broadly defined, CSR has received increased attention, even in sport. It’s as common to see an athlete reading to underprivileged children as to see him/her scoring the winning goal. But what exactly is CSR in sport, and how does it translate into daily sport public relations?

### **Overview**

This module consists of four objectives to be completed either consecutively as a comprehensive module or separately as four independent units. Each unit is presented independently with specific instructions provided for you when completing the comprehensive module.

Each objective includes specific resources and activities to encourage critical thinking on CSR in sport public relations. The comprehensive module also includes a long-term assignment; a reflection paper that effectively summarizes the four units. The module concludes with a list of additional resources.

### **Learning Objectives**

This module will examine the role of CSR in sport public relations through four objectives. The following objectives also outline the four units of this module:

Objective 1: To define CSR and its role in sport public relations.

Objective 2: To understand the practice of CSR in sport public relations.

Objective 3: To examine the current practice of CSR in sport public relations.

Objective 4: To create a CSR program in sport public relations.

## **Resources Employed**

Our discussion of CSR in sport public relations will be grounded in the public relations philosophy of Arthur W. Page. We will use several of his speeches and interviews with influential public relations practitioners to guide our discussion and understanding of CSR. The Page Center offers a variety of resources on their website, including archives of [Arthur W. Page speeches](#) and the [oral history collection in public relations ethics](#). During this unit, you will be directed to review specific speeches and interviews.

## **Module Activity: Optional Long-term Assignment for the Comprehensive Module**

As you begin the comprehensive teaching module on CSR in sport public relations, you will be assigned a reflection paper to compare current professional CSR practice to the academic understanding of CSR. At the end of the unit, you will turn in the paper and present your findings. This long-term assignment is part of the comprehensive teaching module.

### *Reflection Paper Requirements*

For this assignment, you will examine how public relations professionals view CSR. To do so, you will interview a sports professional about his/her use of CSR in sport. You must interview a current sports public relations professional, and the interview must be conducted via telephone or face-to-face. You **MAY NOT** conduct the interview via email. You will present your paper to the class on the noted due date.

The following questions can serve as a guide for your interview.

1. What is your job title and job description?
2. How would you describe working in sports information?
3. What are the primary tasks that you perform?
4. What was your educational background, and how did it prepare you for this job?
5. How do you define corporate social responsibility in the sport profession?
6. Does your organization have a CSR philosophy or guiding principles? If so, what is it?
7. Who is in charge of these activities in your organization? If applicable, what other job duties does this person perform?

8. What activities comprise CSR in your organization?
9. How often are CSR activities conducted?
10. In your opinion, how important is CSR to your organization?
11. What do you consider the biggest advantage and challenge about CSR activities in sport?
12. What advice do you have for those interested in this aspect of a sports career?
13. Is there anything I should have asked but didn't?

Following the interview, prepare a 4 to 5 page reflection paper that summarizes the interview and compares it to the CSR readings/discussion presented in class. Specifically, your paper should include the following:

- Define current CSR practices in sport public relations, who is involved in those practices, what activities comprise CSR, and the level of importance of CSR in the organization.
- Identify the similarities and differences between current CSR practices. Make sure to include specific examples from the interview and class readings.

Remember the reflection paper is a formal paper and should have a clear introduction, conclusion, and reference page. Do not use a Q&A format. The reflection must be free of spelling, typographical, and grammatical/punctuation errors.

### **Opening Module Activity: Arthur W. Page**

Before beginning the activities associated with the four learning objectives, read the overview [Page Promoted Social Responsibility in the 1920s](#) and answer the following questions.

1. Who is Arthur W. Page?
2. What are the Page Principles?
3. Explain Page's position on social responsibility.

### **Module Activity: Objective 1 Unit**

This assignment portion of the module is based on the first objective: To define CSR and its role in sport public relations.

*Opening Activity for the Comprehensive Module and the Objective 1 Unit*

What words come to mind when you hear the term *corporate social responsibility*?

*Directions and Discussion Questions for the Comprehensive Module and Objective 1 Unit*

Read [Page's speech to the Continental Oil Company](#) and the article *Beyond the Game: Perceptions and Practices of Corporate Social Responsibility in the Professional Sport Industry* by Sheth and Babiak (2010). Also, watch the [interview with Peter Debreceeny](#) on an organization's code of ethics and answer the following questions.

1. How does Page define CSR?
2. How closely did Page's definition fit the words identified in the opening activity?
3. According to Debreceeny, can you build an effective CSR program on an organization's code of ethics? Explain why.
4. In Debreceeny's interview, he refers to Marks and Spencer. What do Marks and Spencer mean when they say there is no plan B? How does this approach foster an effective CSR program?
5. Can CSR be considered a sport public relations function, and if so, how?
6. Why is CSR important in sport?
7. How do sport organizations "give back" to the community, and in your opinion, do these activities meet public expectations?

*Objective 1 Assignment for the Comprehensive Module and Objective 1 Unit*

Based on the readings and class discussion, develop your own definition of CSR in sport public relations and provide a current example of CSR in sport that fits your definition.

*Objective 1 References*

Debreceeny, P. (2009, September 12). *Interview*. Interview on Trust and Credibility. Retrieved from Page Center website: <http://pagecenter.comm.psu.edu/index.php/oral-history-collection/finding-index/357-oral-history-with-peter-debreceeny>

*Page promoted social responsibility in the 1920s*. Retrieved from Page Center website: <http://pagecenter.comm.psu.edu/index.php/component/content/article/1-latest-news/373-page-promoted-social-responsibility-in-the-1920s>.

Page, A. W. (1951, March 26). *Speech 36 - Continental Oil Company*. Retrieved from Page Center website: <http://pagecenter.comm.psu.edu/index.php/research-resources/page-speeches/390-speech36>

Sheth, H. & Babiak, K. M. (2010). Beyond the game: Perceptions and practices of corporate social responsibility in the professional sport industry. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 91, 433-450.

### **Module Activity: Objective 2 Unit**

This assignment portion of the module is based on the second objective: To understand the practice of CSR in sport public relations.

#### *Opening Activity for the Comprehensive Module*

Present your definition of CSR in sport public relations and the current example that you identified in the first unit. Compare your CSR definition and your example with others.

#### *Opening Activity for the Objective 2 Unit*

Based on the readings and class discussion, develop your own definition of CSR in sport public relations and provide a current example of CSR in sport that fits your definition.

#### *Discussion Questions*

CSR researchers have provided a variety of models of CSR. (For a broad overview, see Walter's (2009) research on the community trust model, Wood's (1991) model of corporate social performance, and Clark's (2000) discussion of the communication management model. These references are provided in the additional readings at the end of the comprehensive module.) This unit will not consider these models, but will build from these to examine three broad approaches to CSR in sport public relations: philosophy approach, publicity approach, and partnership approach. The discussion questions are organized to examine each of these approaches.

#### *Directions for the Comprehensive Module: Philosophy CSR Approach*

Read [Dave Copeland's article NCAA Takes Pressure Off Schools to Monitor Social Media](#) and watch the [oral interview with Bob Ehinger](#), particularly the segment where he discusses values and ethical decision making (approximately the eight minute mark). Also, review Sheth and Babiak's (2010) article on perceptions and practices of CSR in sport and the [interview with Peter Debreceeny](#) on an organization's code of ethics. Then answer the following questions on the philosophy CSR approach.

*Directions for the Objective 2 Unit: Philosophy CSR Approach*

Read Sheth and Babiak's (2010) article on perceptions and practices of CSR in sport and [Dave Copeland's article NCAA Takes Pressure Off Schools to Monitor Social Media](#). Also watch the [interview with Peter Debreceeny](#) on an organization's code of ethics and the [oral interview with Bob Ehinger](#), particularly the segment where he discusses values and ethical decision making (approximately the eight minute mark). Then answer the following questions on the philosophy CSR approach.

*Discussion Questions on the Philosophy CSR Approach*

1. Sheth and Babiak (2010) found sport organizations are most concerned with ethical issues in CSR, primarily maintaining rules and code of ethics. This approach could be termed a philosophy approach to CSR. Organizations often develop their philosophy of CSR by developing codes of ethics and abiding by the law. What are the advantages of a philosophy approach to CSR in sport public relations?
2. How do Debreceeny and Ehinger view the value of a code of ethics?
3. Based on the readings and discussion, what do you consider a potential disadvantage of a philosophy approach to CSR in sport public relations?
4. Discuss Dave Copeland's article on NCAA monitoring of social media from a philosophy CSR approach.

*Directions for the Comprehensive Module and Objective 2 Unit: Publicity CSR Approach*

Read [Page's speech to the Montreal Chambre de Commerce](#) and answer the following questions on the publicity CSR approach.

1. How is publicity a CSR approach in sport public relations?
2. What is the advantage of the publicity approach in CSR?
3. What is the disadvantage of the publicity approach in CSR?
4. How do the philosophy approach and the publicity approach provide a glimpse of CSR?

*Directions for the Comprehensive Module and Objective 2 Unit: Partnership CSR Approach*

Reflect on the readings and interviews from the philosophy and publicity approaches and watch the [oral interview with Al Golin](#). Answer these questions on the partnership CSR approach.

1. How is partnership a CSR approach in sport public relations?
2. What is the advantage of a partnership approach in CSR?
3. What is the disadvantage of a partnership approach in CSR?
4. How do the philosophy approach and the publicity approaches provide a glimpse of CSR?

*Objective 2 Assignment for the Comprehensive Module and Objective 2 Unit*

Consider the following case studies. Identify which CSR approach is the most apparent and explain your reasoning for that conclusion.

- The Chief Illiniwek Tradition: Read the background of [The Chief Illiniwek Tradition](#), and watch the video, [Chief Illiniwek Last Dance, Tribute](#). In your opinion, which CSR approach is most evident in this example? Explain your answer.
- Read the following articles that tell the story of baseball shortstop Tony Stevens: [Local Player Surrenders Baseball for Marines](#), [Marines Tale of Survival](#), [Minnesota Twins news release \(see Sunday, April 10\)](#), and [Here's A Hero for You](#). The Minnesota Twins baseball organization has honored Stevens with ceremonial pitches and bobble heads. In your opinion, which CSR approach is most evident in this example? Explain your answer.
- Josh Hamilton is one of baseball's elite players, but is also plagued with off-field issues. Read [Josh Hamilton: 'Weak moment' led to drinking incident](#) and [Josh Hamilton's History Should Overshadow 2012 Heroics](#). In your opinion, which CSR approach is most evident in this example? Explain your answer.

- Watch the video of a [football visiting a children's hospital](#). Although the video highlights a particular team, this practice is common throughout sports. In your opinion, which CSR approach is most evident in this example?

### *Objective 2 References*

Copeland, D. (2012, March 12). NCAA takes pressure off schools to monitor social media.

*ReadWriteWeb*. Retrieved from [http://www.readriteweb.com/archives/ncaa\\_takes\\_pressure\\_off\\_schools\\_to\\_monitor\\_social.php](http://www.readriteweb.com/archives/ncaa_takes_pressure_off_schools_to_monitor_social.php)

Debreceeny, P. (2009, September 12). *Interview*. Interview on Trust and Credibility. Retrieved from Page Center website: <http://pagecenter.comm.psu.edu/index.php/trustcredibility/371-trustcredibility>.

Ehinger, B. *Interview*. Oral history with Bob Ehinger. Retrieved from Page Center website: <http://pagecenter.comm.psu.edu/index.php/component/content/article/42-video-and-transcript/682-oral-history-with-bob-ehinger>

Golin, A. *Interview*. Oral history with Al Golin. Retrieved from Page Center website: <http://pagecenter.comm.psu.edu/index.php/oral-history-collection/finding-index/104-oral-history-with-al-golin>

Page, A. W. (1946, February 7). *Talk*. Speech presented to the Montreal Chambre de Commerce, Montreal, QA, Canada. Retrieved from Page Center website: <http://pagecenter.comm.psu.edu/index.php/research-resources/page-speeches/391-speech35>

Sheth, H. & Babiak, K. M. (2010). Beyond the game: Perceptions and practices of corporate social responsibility in the professional sport industry. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 91, 433-450.

### **Module Activity: Objective 3 Unit**

This assignment portion of the module is based on the third objective: To examine the current practice of CSR in sport public relations.

*Case Study Assignment for the Comprehensive Module and Objective 3 Unit*



Choose a sport organization and examine its CSR practices by doing at least three of the following: (1) attend a sport organization event; (2) read/watch the mass media news story regarding the sport organization over the last two weeks; (3) review the team's website; or (4) monitor the sport organization's social media posts on Facebook and Twitter for the last two weeks. Based on class readings and discussion, describe this organization's approach to CSR. In your opinion, what is the greatest advantage of their CSR program? In your opinion, what is the greatest area for CSR improvement?

Bring your completed assignment to class. We will use it to discuss the current practice of CSR in sport public relations.

#### **Module Activity: Objective 4 Unit**

This assignment portion of the module is based on the fourth and final objective: To create a CSR program in sport public relations.

#### *Directions for the Comprehensive Module*

Read [Page's speech to the Membership of the Institute of Life Insurance](#) and review [Page's speech to the Continental Oil Company](#). Then answer the following questions.

#### *Directions for the Objective 4 Unit*

Read [Page's speech to the Membership of the Institute of Life Insurance](#) and [Page's speech to the Continental Oil Company](#). Then answer the following questions.

#### *Discussion Questions*

1. According to Page, what are the components of a CSR program?
2. What is an employee's role in an organization's CSR efforts?
3. Who is responsible for CSR in an organization?
4. According to Page, why is CSR important to business success?

#### *Objective 4 Activity: Fantasy Public Relations Scenario*

*Directions for the Comprehensive Module and Objective 4 Unit*

You're familiar with fantasy sports, the ability to create your own team using current athletes. This activity gives it a public relations twist by asking you to respond to a specific CSR issue/problem for your fantasy sport team. If you do not have a fantasy team, you will first need to identify the sport and the players that comprise your fantasy team. You will then be assigned one of the scenarios below and asked to develop the best response for your fantasy team. Bring your completed response to class, and be ready to share with your classmates.

Fantasy Public Relations Scenarios

1. Your team is on a significant losing streak, and fan support is dwindling. The athletic director has told you to "fix" the fan-support problem. Using CSR, how would you respond? In your response, please address the following:
  - a. Your definition of CSR
  - b. Your CSR response
  - c. The potential advantages/disadvantages of your response
2. The athletes of your professional sport team are in the midst of a lockout, delaying the start of the sport season. Although the lockout is about many issues, the most publicized is the athletes' push for higher salaries, which the public believes are already too high. You fear this event will negatively impact your sport organization. Using CSR, how would you respond? In your response, please address the following:
  - a. Your definition of CSR
  - b. Your CSR response
  - c. The potential advantages/disadvantages of your response
3. Your sport organization wants to expand its fanbase into a new community. In preliminary research, you learn that not only is your organization relatively unknown in the community, but your organization's sport is not well understood. You want to help fans understand your sport, and increase your organization's fanbase. Using CSR, how would you respond? In your response, please address the following:
  - a. Your definition of CSR
  - b. Your CSR response

- c. The potential advantages/disadvantages of your response
4. Your community has been ravaged in recent storms. Families have lost homes and possessions, and schools have been closed due to the storm's effects. The storms come at a horrible time. Your sport team is headed to its national tournament and is on a tight schedule. Using CSR, how would you respond? In your response, make please address the following:
- a. Your definition of CSR
  - b. Your CSR response
  - c. The potential advantages/disadvantages of your response

#### *Objective 4 References*

- Page, A. W. (1942, December 2). *Some Remarks on Public Relations*. Speech presented to the Membership of the Institute of Life Insurance, Fourth Annual Meeting, New York, NY. Retrieved from Page Center website: <http://pagecenter.comm.psu.edu/index.php/component/content/article/36-research-resources/398-speech29>
- Page, A. W. (1951, March 26). *Speech 36 - Continental Oil Company*. Retrieved from Page Center website: <http://pagecenter.comm.psu.edu/index.php/research-resources/page-speeches/390-speech36>

#### **Additional Readings**

- Bartlett, J.L. (2011). Public relations and corporate social responsibility. In Ihlen, J.L. Bartlett & S. May (Eds), *The handbook of communication and corporate social responsibility*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Clark, C. E. (2000). Differences between public relations and corporate social responsibility: An analysis. *Public Relations Review*, 26(3), 363-380.
- Levermore, R. (2011). The paucity of, and dilemma in, evaluating corporate social responsibility for development through sport. *Third World Quarterly*, 32(3), 551-569.
- May, S., Cheney, G. & Roper, J. (2007). *The debate over corporate social responsibility*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Plewa, C. & Quester, P. G. (2011). Sponsorship and CSR: Is there a link? A conceptual framework. *International Journal of Sports Marketing & Sponsorship*, July, 301-317.

Waller, R. L. & Conaway, R. N. (2011). Framing and counterframing the issue of corporate social responsibility: Communication strategies of Nikebiz.com. *Journal of Business Communication*, 48(1), 83-106.

Walters, G. (2009). Corporate social responsibility through sport: The community sports trust model as a CSR delivery agency. *Journal of Corporate Citizenship*, Autumn, 81-94.

Wood, D. J. (1991). Social issues in management: Theory and research in corporate social performance. *Journal of Management*, 17, 383-406.