

# HOW TO CHOOSE AN ETHICAL EMPLOYER

**Will the level of care an organisation exercises with regard to its impact on the environment, its employees, the community, and the future influence your decision to work with it?  
How can you judge employers on these issues?**

## Terms you need to know

### CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR)

A movement not a fad! CSR applies to all aspects of corporate responsibility; community, social, environmental, workplace, governance. CSR practitioners talk about corporate 'opportunity' - highlighting the opportunity/risk dimension of responsible business practice.

### TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE REPORTING (TBL)

A framework for measuring corporate performance against not only economic, but also social and environmental parameters.

### SUSTAINABILITY

An organisation's practices "... that meet the needs of the present without compromising ... the environmental, social and human needs of our descendants." [www.wbcsd.org](http://www.wbcsd.org)

### GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

Implies an organisation's commitment to and awareness of good CSR practices across its operations at all levels, from local to global.

### STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Moving beyond overemphasis on short-term benefits for shareholders to consideration of long-term organisational implications for all stakeholders: shareholders, communities, customers, employees, the environment, the supply chain etc.

### ENLIGHTENED SELF-INTEREST

An organisation's recognition that it is in its own long-term business interest to engage in CSR strategies and sustainable business practices.

## Your turn

There are many things you can do from where you are. Consider your own position. What do you value, and what kind of impact would you like to make through your career? Which areas of CSR do you feel strongly about?

- Environmental** - the environmental impact, direct or indirect, of an organisation's operations, products or services including those of its suppliers.
- Community/Social** - the impact of an organisation's projects, products, services or investments on the community at a local or global level.
- Workplace Practices** - including respectful treatment of employees in: recruitment and selection; diversity and equal opportunity; work/life balance; professional development and progression; managing redundancies; full entitlement to employment rights.
- Marketplace & Business Conduct** - responsible behaviour in developing, purchasing, selling and marketing products and services.
- Ethical Governance** - from board level and throughout an organisation: transparency; risk reporting; effective codes of conduct, codes of ethics and compliance measures.

## Things you can do

1. **Read** the business pages in newspapers. Learn about what is happening in the business world, e.g. corporate strategies and performance, governmental regulations, etc. What kind of **media coverage** does the company get? Are its CSR/ethical initiatives visible? Investigate the same for the public sector if this is your career interest.
2. **Reflect** on the organisation to which you are considering applying. What is its core business or purpose? How does this impact on the environment and the community? Do its products, processes, and services align with your own values?
3. **Research** the organisation through its website and consider its genuine commitment to ethical business practices and CSR strategies using the terms listed above. Look for **Values/Mission Statements, Annual Reports, and Sustainability Reports**. Are its CSR initiatives strategic and integrated rather than just 'bolt on'?
4. **Investigate** whether the company is benchmarking itself against other organisations using robust frameworks such as the Corporate Responsibility Index, the Global Reporting Initiative's (GRI and G3) Sustainability Reporting Guidelines ([www.globalreporting.org](http://www.globalreporting.org)) and the AA1000 Assurance Standards or whether it is using non-standardised reporting. Check out [CorporateRegister.com](http://CorporateRegister.com) ([www.corporateregister.com](http://www.corporateregister.com)) - the world's most comprehensive directory of corporate non-financial environment/social/sustainability/CSR downloadable reports.
5. Look closely at **workplace practices**, e.g. gender mix, diversity policies, staff retention rates, opportunity for staff community volunteering and professional development.
6. **Talk to employers at careers fairs, employer events and even job interviews. Ask them questions. Get the conversations going on these issues. If you ask questions about CSR, an organisation learns that this is an important driver in attracting new staff. It is also an opportunity for them to showcase their initiatives and receive some positive reinforcement.**
7. **Finally**, check out the ratings of organisations to which you might apply (next section).

