

## SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND BUSINESS ETHICS

### SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY – MEANING

A business is a part of society. So, a business enterprise should do business and earn money in ways that fulfil the aspirations of the society. Thus, social responsibility relates to the voluntary efforts on the part of the businessmen to contribute to the social wellbeing. The businessmen make use of resources of society and earn money from the members of society so they must do something for the society.

#### Arguments in favour of Social Responsibility:

There is a need for Social Responsibility of business for Existence and Growth:

1. **Justification for Existence and Growth:** Business is the creation of society therefore it should respond according to the demands of the society. To survive and grow in society for long run the business must provide continuous services to the society.
2. **Long term Interest of the firm:** A firm can improve its image and builds goodwill in the long run when its highest goal is to serve the society . If it indulges in unfair Trade Practices e.g. adulteration, hoarding, black marketing, it may not be able to exist for long.
3. **Avoidance of government regulations:** Business can avoid the problem of government regulations by voluntarily assuming social responsibilities.
4. **Availability of resources with business:** Business has valuable financial and human resources which can be effectively used for solving problems of the society.
5. **Better environment for doing business:** It is the social responsibility of business enterprise to provide better Quality of life and standard of living to people. So, business will get better community to conduct business.

6. **Contribution to social problems:** Some of the social problems have been created by business firms themselves such as pollution, creation of unsafe workplaces, discrimination etc, Therefore, it is the moral obligation of business to solve such social problems.

### **Arguments Against Social Responsibility**

Major arguments against social responsibility are:

1. **Profit Motive** – A business is an economic entity that is guided by profit motive. It should not waste its energies and resources in fulfilling social responsibility.
2. **Burden on consumers** – Involvement of business in social responsibilities involve a lot of expenditure which will ultimately be borne by the customers.
3. **Lack of Social Skills** -The business firms and managers have the skills to handle business operation. They are not expert to tackle the social problems like poverty, over population etc. Therefore, social problems must be tackled by social experts.
4. **Lack of public support** – Generally public does not like business involvement in social problems. Therefore, business cannot fulfill social responsibility because of lack of public confidence & cooperation.

### **Reality of social responsibility:**

Reality of social responsibility is that, despite differing arguments relating to social responsibility, business enterprises are concerned with social responsibility because of the influence of certain external forces.

These forces are:

- (i) threat of public regulation,
- (ii) pressure of labour movement,
- (iii) impact of consumer consciousness,
- (iv) development of social standard for businessmen,
- (v) development of business education,
- (vi) relationship between social interest and business interest,
- (vii) development of professional, managerial class.

## KINDS OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

### Economic Responsibility



What is a business? The business itself is an economic activity. Its main function is to earn profits. To earn profits means to understand the needs and demands of consumers whether it be regarding the quality of the product or its price.

While understanding the perspective of the consumer and meeting their needs and demand to earn a profit is the economic responsibility of a business. When a business earns a profit, it also means that the employees earn the profit in terms of incentives. The economic growth of a business is not restricted to itself but affects the society as a whole.

### Legal Responsibility

Legal responsibilities are not only liable to the individuals in the society but also to the businesses in the society. As business is an entity itself, it must also follow laws and rules. Every business has a responsibility to operate within the boundaries set by the various commissions and agencies at every level of the government. These rules and regulations are set for maintaining balance and the greater good of the society.

A law-abiding enterprise is a socially responsible enterprise as well. The business is free to do business however it wants but only within the boundaries of

regulations of various laws such as labour law, environmental law and criminal law. For example, it's a business's duty to pay taxes to the government and keep its account books clean as it helps the government to track the economic state of the company.

### Ethical Responsibility

Ethical responsibilities include the behaviour of the firm that is expected by the society but not codified in law. The factors of ethical responsibility include that the business must be environmentally friendly. The business should always be aware of its activities and how do they affect the environment. It is the moral and ethical responsibility of every human and every business.

### Discretionary Responsibility

Business is one the most important pillar of the society. And therefore it should support and improve the society whenever it can. If a business is making significant profits it is the business responsibility that it should be philanthropic towards the society by donating funds or its goods and services.

It's the philanthropic responsibility of the business to help different groups of the society. It should also work towards providing free education by opening educational institutes and training institutes or helping the people affected by natural calamities such as floods and earthquakes. It is the responsibility of the company management to safeguard the capital investment by avoiding speculative activity and undertaking only healthy business ventures which give good returns on investment.

## SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS VARIOUS INTEREST GROUPS

Business has Interaction with several interest groups such a shareholders, workers, consumers, government and community. Business is responsible to all these groups.



### **1. Responsibility towards shareholders:**

- (i) To ensure a fair and regular return on the investment of shareholders.
- (ii) To ensure the safety of their investment
- (iii) To strengthen financial position of the company.
- (iv) To safeguard the assets of the business.
- (v) To protect the interest of all types of investors in the business.

### **2. Responsibility Towards workers:**

- (i) Providing fair compensation and benefits,
- (ii) Providing good and safe Working conditions,
- (iii) To develop a sense of belongingness.

### **3. Responsibility toward consumers:**

- (i) To supply right quality of goods & services at reasonable prices.
- (ii) To ensure regular and adequate supply of products.
- (iii) To inform them about new products and new uses of existing products.
- (iv) To handle the customers grievance promptly.

### **4. Responsibility Towards Government –**

- (i) To pay taxes honestly

- (ii) To observe rules laid down by the government,
- (iii) to avoid corrupting government employees.

#### **5. Responsibility towards community –**

- (i) To make available opportunities for employment,
- (ii) To avoid polluting the environment,
- (iii) To up lift the weaker sections of society

### **BUSINESS AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION:**

**Meaning of Environment:** The environment is defined as the totality of man's surroundings – both natural and man-made. Natural Resources-all land, water, air and man-made – cultural heritage, socio-economic institutions and the people.

**Meaning of Environmental pollution** – It means injection of harmful substances into the environment. The greatest problem that industries and businessmen are creating is that of pollution – which is the result of industrial production. So, protection of environment is must.

**Causes of Pollution:** Many industrial organizations have been responsible for causing air, water, land and noise pollution.

1. **Air Pollution** – Due to smoke, chemical emitted by factories, vehicle. It has created a hole in the ozone layer leading to global warming.
2. **Water pollution** – Due to chemicals and waste dumped into the rivers, streams & lakes. It has led to the death of several aquatic animals and posed a serious problem to human life.
3. **Land Pollution** – Due to dumping of garbage and toxic wastes which affect the fertility of land and makes it unfit for agriculture
4. **Noise Pollution:** Caused by the running factories and vehicles. Noise pollution can be responsible for many diseases like loss of hearing, violent behaviour and mental disorder.

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## **NEED FOR POLLUTION CONTROL**

- 1. To ensure healthy life** – Many diseases like cancer, heart attack and lung complications all caused by pollutants in the environment. Pollution control is must to keep a check on these diseases.
- 2. To ensure safety** – Due to environmental pollution and smoke, the visibility is reducing due to which chances of accidents have been increasing. To reduce the number of accidents there must be a check on pollution.
- 3. Economic Losses:** Pollutants in the environment bringing heavy economic losses for the country, for example Taj Mahal is losing its beauty due to pollution.
- 4. Improved Public Image:** A firm that adopts pollution control measures enjoys a good reputation as a socially responsible enterprise.

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## **ROLE OF BUSINESS ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION:**

1. Eco-friendly and clean or low waste technology should be used by industrial organization.
2. Industrial Wastes should be recycled as far as possible.
3. Plant and machinery should be modernized to minimize pollution.
4. The business houses should comply with the laws and regulations enacted for prevention of pollution.
5. Positive steps should be taken to save environment. These include plantation of trees, cleaning of rivers, ponds etc.

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**BUSINESS ETHICS:** Refers to the moral values or standards or norms which govern the activities of a businessman. Ethics define what is right and what is wrong. By ethic we mean the business practices which are desirable from the point of view of Society. The purpose of business ethics is to guide the managers and employees in performing their job. Example of business ethics are charging fair price from customers, giving fair treatment to workers, earning reasonable profits and paying taxes to the government honestly.

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### **ELEMENTS OF BUSINESS ETHICS**

- 1. Top management commitment** – The CEO and higher level managers must be committed to ethical norms of behaviour. This would set an example for all employees and encourage them to follow ethical practice.
- 2. Publication of code** – Code of ethics is a formal written document of the principles, values and standards that guide a firm's actions. It may cover areas like honesty, quality, safety, health care etc.
- 3. Establishment of compliance mechanism:** A suitable mechanism should be developed to comply with the ethical standards of the enterprise. The mechanism should be properly communicated to all in the organization.
- 4. Employee involvement:** It is the employees of the lower levels who implement ethical principles so they must be involved in the process of developing ethical code.
- 5. Measuring results:** Although it is difficult to measure the ethical results but it must be verified and audited that work is being carried according to ethical standards



