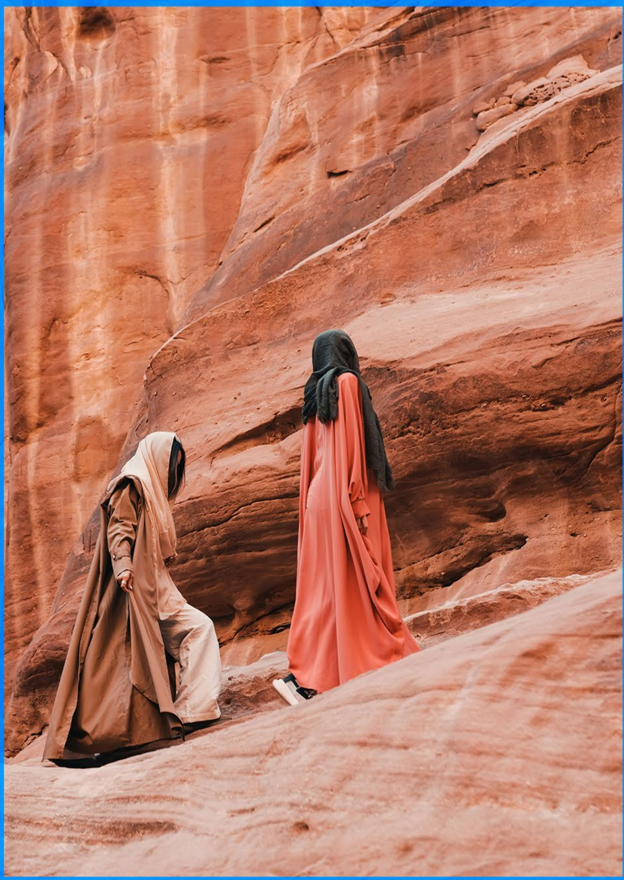
KPMG

New horizons
CSR at the heart of corporate leadership

Business and corporate social responsibility in Saudi Arabia



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Foreword

The private sector in Saudi Arabia is at a critical inflection point. As national priorities shift under Vision 2030, businesses are no longer evaluated solely by profits or market share, but by their contribution to society, sustainability, and inclusive economic growth. This new landscape demands a bold rethink: What role should companies play in shaping a better future for the Kingdom? And how can they build lasting value that extends beyond shareholders?

Since the 1950s, corporate social responsibility (CSR) has evolved from an optional philanthropic activity to a core business strategy. It can increase innovation, resilience, and trust in a brand, with research showing that 77 percent of consumers are willing to pay more for products from companies committed to making the world a better place. Moreover, evidence suggests CSR can improve financial performance—in 92 percent of studies reviewed by HEC Paris, CSR initiatives generated a net financial benefit. Each year, large companies worldwide spend tens of billions of dollars on CSR programs.

In Saudi Arabia, business spending on CSR—the idea that a company should help society and the environment as well as make profits—and on environmental, social, and governance (ESG) initiatives is accelerating, but remains less established than in economies with a longer track record of integrating CSR and ESG into corporate strategy and regulatory frameworks. For example, the ESG investment market in the Kingdom is forecast to grow from about US$673 million in 2024 to US$1.8 billion in 2030, indicating rapid growth off a small base. This paper explores how CSR is evolving from a communications-led or philanthropic function into a more strategic organizational role—one that requires deliberate integration into corporate governance, leadership priorities, and performance frameworks. It assesses the current state of CSR in Saudi Arabia, highlights what is working well and where critical shifts are needed, and outlines practical steps to elevate its strategic role across organizations.

We draw on best practices in CSR from global and regional leaders—from Coca-Cola's sustainability efforts to strategic transformations by Nike, DuPont, Dell Technologies, and TotalEnergies. These cases show how CSR is being embedded into innovation, governance, and risk management frameworks. Regionally, we present in-depth case studies of Zamil Group, Red Sea Global (RSG), and Saudi Telecom Company (stc), demonstrating how Saudi companies are aligning CSR with Vision 2030 priorities to drive both business performance and national development. While the companies featured vary in size and sector, they share a defining characteristic: CSR is no longer treated as a peripheral or charitable activity. Instead, each organization has embedded CSR into its strategic priorities—with leadership buy-in, formal structures, and long-term alignment with business goals and national development agendas. This strategic integration has delivered measurable returns, including enhanced brand reputation, reduced operational and legal risks, and stronger community and employee engagement.

Finally, we take a closer look at the evolving career landscape in CSR—examining the types of roles emerging in the field, the skill sets increasingly in demand, and the educational pathways professionals are pursuing. Through real-life examples from Saudi Arabia, we explore how individuals are entering CSR (often from unexpected backgrounds) and how the function is gaining recognition as a meaningful and dynamic area of practice.

Hanan Alowain
Partner, Government and Public Sector

Introduction to CSR

Global evolution and the local context

From charity to strategy—a brief history

The idea behind CSR is straightforward: a business has responsibilities not only to its shareholders and financial bottom line, but also to the communities, society, and environment around it. The modern concept of CSR began taking shape in the 1950s, when Howard Bowen first coined the term, reflecting a growing recognition that companies should contribute to societal well-being beyond just making profits. Early on, CSR largely meant corporate philanthropy and community volunteering. Over the subsequent decades, however, CSR's scope broadened in response to social and political changes. In the 1960s and 1970s, businesses started to address labor rights, workplace safety, and environmental protection as part of their operations, moving CSR closer to the core of business management. The rise of globalization in the 1990s then expanded CSR to a global stage, with companies increasingly held accountable for their impacts on far-flung communities and ecosystems. By the mid-2000s, thought leaders like Michael Porter and Mark Kramer introduced the concept of "creating shared value," pushing companies to design business strategies that create economic value for the firm and social value for society simultaneously. In recent years, CSR has further matured into the broader paradigm of ESG, emphasizing measurable criteria for environmental, social, and governance performance. Especially over the last decade, investors and regulators have focused intensely on issues like carbon emissions, diversity, and anti-corruption—to the point that sustainability metrics are now a mainstream business concern. Reporting on sustainability has become standard practice among large companies; indeed, as of 2024, 96 percent of the world's largest 250 companies produce sustainability reports, and 95 percent have set specific carbon reduction targets. In some regions (for example, the European Union), regulators are moving toward mandatory disclosure of ESG performance, further cementing these practices into the core of corporate accountability.

Global frameworks: SDGs and the UN Global Compact

As CSR evolved, international frameworks emerged to guide and encourage companies' contributions to sustainable development. Notably, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), established in 2015, provide a universal blueprint for tackling issues like poverty, inequality, education, health, and climate change. Businesses worldwide have increasingly aligned their CSR initiatives with these SDGs, recognizing that corporate resources and innovation can help achieve these global goals.

For example, the UN Global Compact—the world's largest corporate sustainability initiative—now has over 25,000 participants across 167 countries, including more than 18,000 companies that have committed to aligning their strategies and operations with ten universal principles covering human rights, labor standards, environmental protection, and anti-corruption.

By signing onto initiatives like the Global Compact, companies voluntarily pledge to support broader societal goals (the SDGs) through responsible business practices and collaborative projects. This alignment not only benefits society but also provides firms with a clear framework to shape their CSR programs and report progress in a globally recognized way. For instance, Principle 10 of the UN Global Compact calls for businesses to actively combat corruption—directly supporting SDG targets on peace, justice, and strong institutions.

Such frameworks have helped standardize what effective CSR looks like and encouraged companies to move beyond ad-hoc charity toward integrated sustainability strategies.

96% of the world's 250 largest companies publish sustainability reports.

95% have set carbon reduction targets in 2024.

Saudi Arabia's transformation and Vision 2030

In Saudi Arabia, CSR is gaining momentum, catalyzed by the Kingdom's national agenda, Vision 2030, which was launched in 2016 as a transformative roadmap to diversify the economy beyond oil. It aims to foster a more inclusive and sustainable model of development. Central to this vision is the empowerment of the non-for-profit sector as a meaningful contributor to GDP. This is being pursued through a variety of mechanisms, including expanding civic engagement via increased volunteerism and deepening corporate commitment to social responsibility. The goal is ambitious: by 2030, 90 percent of companies are expected to be actively engaged in CSR initiatives. This marks a significant evolution in the role of the private sector. Companies are no longer viewed solely as economic engines, but as essential partners in national transformation. CSR is emerging as a key channel through which this broader purpose is realized.

In recent years, government institutions have taken steps to nurture a stronger CSR culture in line with Vision 2030. The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (MHRSD), which serves as the steward of the Kingdom's CSR agenda, developed a national strategy for social responsibility to reduce barriers and incentivize corporate engagement. MHRSD has run campaigns encouraging businesses to dedicate time, expertise, and resources to causes aligned with national development priorities. Initiatives under this umbrella include promoting corporate volunteering, facilitating public-private partnerships in community projects, and instituting awards to recognize outstanding CSR efforts. The launch of the first Saudi National CSR Award in 2024, for example, aims to raise public awareness and celebrate companies that excel in social responsibility.

These efforts are already bearing fruit. According to the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, Eng. Ahmed bin Sulaiman Al Rajhi, the share of corporate spending directed toward social responsibility rose from approximately 1 percent in 2019 to 4 percent by the end of 2023. Similarly, the proportion of major companies offering CSR programs jumped from 30 percent in 2018 to 71.7 percent in 2024. This surge in engagement is also reflected in international benchmarks: Saudi Arabia rose from 41st place in 2021 to sixteenth globally in the Social Responsibility Index published in the 2024 IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook. By shining a spotlight on success stories and embedding CSR into national policy, the government is shifting both consumer and corporate expectations—encouraging companies to embed sustainability and social value into their core operations.

All of these efforts reflect an understanding that CSR, when aligned with Vision 2030, can be a strategic enabler—helping diversify the economy, spur social development, and build a sustainable future for society.

41st to 16th

Saudi Arabia jumped in the global Social Responsibility Index between 2021 and 2024.

The business case for CSR

Why doing good is good business

> We focus on sustainability not because we're environmentalists, but because we are capitalists and fiduciaries to our clients. That requires understanding how companies are adjusting their businesses for the massive changes the economy is undergoing.

Larry Fink, chairman and CEO of asset management company BlackRock, in his 2022 "Letter to CEOs"

Mounting evidence shows that robust CSR practices are linked to strong business performance. Far from being a charitable cost center, strategically implemented CSR can drive financial returns, enhance brand value, mitigate risks, and fuel innovation. This section outlines the key reasons why investing in CSR creates business value, supported by data and real examples from both global companies and Saudi firms in Saudi Arabia.

Financial performance and investor confidence

A growing body of research indicates that companies with strong sustainability credentials often outperform their peers. The positive correlation between CSR and financial results is evident in numerous studies—as noted earlier, 92 percent of academic studies have found CSR contributes a net benefit to financial performance. Investors have taken notice. Global capital is flowing into ESG investments at record levels, signaling that sustainability is now seen as integral to long-term profitability. In fact, ESG-focused assets are on track to exceed US$50 trillion by 2025, which would represent about one-third of all global assets under management. This stunning figure reflects an investor consensus that companies managing environmental and social factors well are likely to be better long-term bets. In parallel, surveys show that roughly 73 percent of investors factor a firm's environmental and social initiatives into their decision-making. Among younger investors, the sentiment is even stronger—about 41 percent of millennial investors say they actively prioritize companies with solid CSR performance when building their portfolios. The market rewards responsible business: companies that lead in CSR can attract a broader base of investors and often enjoy a lower cost of capital, as they are perceived as less risky and more future-ready. Conversely, poor CSR can repel investors; approximately 22 percent of investors now voice a "zero tolerance" stance on unethical corporate behavior, avoiding companies with questionable social or environmental records. In short, in today's capital markets, doing good is increasingly a prerequisite for doing well.

73% of investors factor in ESG/CSR in decision-making.

41% of millennial investors prioritize strong CSR when investing.

Consumer trust and brand loyalty

What a company stands for socially and ethically has become a major driver of brand equity. Consumers—especially in the age of social media—are quick to reward or punish companies based on their social impact. A majority of consumers are willing to vote with their wallet: surveys find that 77 percent of consumers would pay more for a product from a company committed to making the world a better place. This indicates that CSR initiatives can translate into premium pricing, higher sales, and greater customer loyalty. On the flip side, consumers are increasingly unforgiving of unethical practices; about one in four consumers adopts a zero-tolerance approach to companies involved in scandals or irresponsible behavior. By proactively acting as good corporate citizens, businesses can differentiate themselves, strengthen their reputations, and build a reservoir of goodwill that helps sustain customer loyalty even during tough times. We have local examples of this dynamic: stc reports that its community and sustainability programs have strengthened customer loyalty and enhanced public perception of the brand, solidifying stc's image as a responsible corporate citizen. In essence, CSR can be a powerful brand-building strategy. Companies like Coca-Cola illustrate this well—facing global concerns over water scarcity and plastic waste, Coca-Cola integrated environmental sustainability into its core business strategy. The company's ambitious Water Stewardship initiative (to replenish 100 percent of the water it uses by 2020) and its "World Without Waste" commitment (to make all packaging recyclable by 2025) were not only socially responsible moves, but also shrewd business bets. These programs helped Coca-Cola reduce operational risks (ensuring water availability in its supply chain and staying ahead of regulatory pressures on plastics) and boosted its brand reputation and consumer trust as a sustainability leader. Coca-Cola's experience shows how aligning CSR with core products and stakeholder concerns can reinforce a company's market position and customer loyalty over the long term.

77% of consumers are willing to pay more for products from socially responsible companies.

1 in 4 consumers use a zero-tolerance policy toward unethical companies.

Operational efficiency and risk management

Many CSR initiatives lead directly to operational improvements and risk reduction, which save costs or prevent losses for the business. Environmental efficiency measures—reducing energy use, waste, or water consumption—often lower operating expenses. Social initiatives like improving labor conditions or community relations can preempt conflicts and disruptions that might otherwise impact production or sales. A clear example comes from TotalEnergies, one of the world's largest energy companies, which faced a complex challenge managing human rights risks across its vast supply chain. In response, TotalEnergies redesigned its procurement processes through a CSR lens: it conducted workshops to educate its procurement teams on human rights issues and deployed a sustainable procurement tool to assess supplier risk, aligning with France's strict "Duty of Vigilance" law on corporate human rights and environmental due diligence. The benefits of this strategy were tangible. TotalEnergies' procurement teams became far more attuned to human rights considerations—these criteria became embedded in everyday procurement decisions—and the company significantly reduced its legal and reputational risks related to suppliers. In essence, by proactively addressing a social risk (human rights in the supply chain), the company not only did the right thing ethically but also shielded itself from potential lawsuits, boycotts, or supply disruptions. Many firms have similar stories: integrating CSR often means integrating risk management into the business. This is especially pertinent in an era where stakeholders quickly call out companies for lapses—a robust CSR approach acts as a form of insurance, building resilience. It's no surprise that 95 percent of business leaders in one recent international survey agreed that their company is willing to invest more to use ESG as a competitive advantage (up sharply from 60 percent a year earlier), recognizing that sustainable practices can fortify a business against a wide range of risks.

Innovation and growth opportunities

Embracing CSR can spur innovation by pushing companies to rethink products, services, and business models in ways that create new value. When a company sets bold CSR goals (for example, around sustainability or social impact), it often has to innovate to achieve them—and these innovations can yield competitive advantages. Consider DuPont, the science and materials company. Traditionally, DuPont's sustainability efforts were siloed and compliance-driven, focused on minimizing harm. But in recent years, DuPont made a strategic shift: it combined its chief innovation officer role with its chief sustainability officer role, effectively uniting sustainability and R&D under one leadership umbrella. The company also integrated climate-related risk assessment into its enterprise risk management, aligning with frameworks like the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD). This governance overhaul meant that sustainability was no longer an afterthought—it became a core criterion in product development and innovation processes. The results were striking. DuPont's integration of "sustainability thinking" into its innovation pipeline led to new products and solutions that reduced environmental impact while driving profitability. By pursuing an "innovate for good" strategy, DuPont not only bolstered its environmental credentials but also opened up new market opportunities, enhanced stakeholder trust, and demonstrated measurable operational improvements (for instance, more efficient use of resources).

In a similar vein, Nike responded to past criticisms over labor and environmental issues by reshaping its entire approach to innovation. Nike established a dedicated corporate responsibility, sustainability and governance board committee and gave its sustainability chief a direct reporting line to the CEO as well as the head of innovation. This top-level commitment enabled major initiatives like Nike's Move to Zero campaign (aimed at zero waste and carbon neutrality), which in turn led to the development of new sustainable materials and product lines. The payoff has been multifaceted: Nike has achieved significant progress on its five-year sustainability targets, attracted environmentally conscious consumers, and strengthened brand loyalty—all while aligning its growth trajectory with a more sustainable future. These cases show that CSR can be a powerful engine for innovation, pushing companies to create better processes and products that meet emerging societal needs (like green technologies or inclusive services) and giving those companies a first-mover advantage in new markets.

CSR as a strategic lever

Dr. Mubarak Albogami, Director General for Corporate Social Responsibility at MHRSD – with previous roles as Head of CSR at the Saudi Central Bank (SAMA) and stc – finds that a CSR function is not meant to sit on the sidelines. "When done right, it becomes a strategic lever that ties directly to an organization's mission and vision, while also sparking growth, innovation, and competitive advantage."

CSR has the ability to mobilize people, it can create a movement making others – whether customers, employees, investors – to join in and get on board with the organization.

Dr. Albogami: "CSR is no longer a marginal activity; it became an integral part of the strategies. It is a mechanism for translating a company's mission and vision into tangible impact."

From a national perspective, MHRSD empowers the private sector to incorporate CSR into their commitments to support the Kingdom's broader development goals. "When an organization positions sustainability, innovation, and community well-being at the heart of its vision, CSR becomes the practical tool to orchestrate the business objectives with development needs."

> **"When done right, CSR becomes a strategic lever that ties directly to an organization's mission and vision, while also sparking growth, innovation, and competitive advantage"**

Dr. Mubarak Albogami,
Director General for Corporate Social Responsibility at the Ministry for Human Resources and Social Development

Employee engagement and talent attraction

Companies often cite their people as their greatest asset—and CSR can dramatically affect how those people feel about their employer. Today's employees, especially younger generations, want to work for companies that stand for something beyond profit. According to Porter Novelli 2020 Purpose Tracker, a striking 95 percent of employees surveyed in the US say they believe businesses should benefit all stakeholders—including employees, customers, and communities—not just shareholders. When employees see their company living up to positive values, it boosts morale, pride, and loyalty. Engaged employees are more productive and less likely to leave, directly impacting a company's performance. CSR programs can also provide meaningful opportunities for staff development and team building (for example, volunteering initiatives or cross-departmental projects on sustainability).

In Saudi Arabia, we have seen how CSR efforts can galvanize the workforce. Zamil Group, a large family-owned conglomerate, reports that since it formalized a more structured CSR framework, its employees have actively participated in community development projects, fostering a strong sense of purpose and engagement among the staff. Employees often take pride in these initiatives, which in turn improves their satisfaction and commitment to the company. Additionally, a strong CSR reputation helps attract talent in the first place. In competitive job markets, candidates (especially skilled Saudi youth) may favor employers known for their positive impact and ethical practices. A company deeply involved in, say, educational programs or environmental projects is likely to be viewed as more attractive and forward-thinking by prospective hires. In short, CSR is increasingly part of the employee value proposition. By aligning business with a social purpose, companies not only do good externally but also create a more motivated, loyal, and high-performing team internally.

Local and global examples of value creation

The business benefits of CSR outlined above aren't just theoretical—they are backed by the real experiences of companies both worldwide and in Saudi Arabia. For instance, RSG, a Saudi developer of sustainable tourism destinations, explicitly views its extensive CSR programs as long-term investments in the company's success. RSG's initiatives in community development and environmental conservation are designed not for short-term publicity, but to yield sustained returns such as stronger community relationships, enhanced brand differentiation in the eco-tourism market, and even financial payback through efficiency gains and new business opportunities (e.g. eco-innovation).

At stc, executives have noted that their CSR and sustainability efforts (which range from education grants to environmental projects and volunteerism) translate into concrete business gains: CSR has strengthened stc's customer loyalty and public image, contributing to its competitive edge in the telecom sector. On the global stage, we have seen how proactive CSR helps avoid costly pitfalls—for example, companies that took early action to ensure fair labor practices in their supply chains (often prompted by CSR concerns) avoided the reputational and legal crises that befell less responsible competitors. And when unexpected crises do hit, companies with a track record of good corporate citizenship often fare better at maintaining stakeholder support. In sum, companies are finding that purpose and profit go hand in hand.

95%

of employees believe businesses should benefit all stakeholders, not just shareholders (US survey).

The data and cases make a compelling argument: treating CSR as a core business strategy leads to multiple avenues of value creation—from higher revenues and lower costs, to stronger brands, loyal customers, engaged employees, and more resilient operations.

Having established why CSR makes good business sense, the next question is how companies are putting this into practice. The following section examines the strategic shifts underway as businesses integrate CSR into their core governance and leadership structures, ensuring that the pursuit of social value is embedded in how they operate.

The strategic shift

Embedding CSR into core strategy and governance

With clear evidence that CSR drives business value, leading companies are moving beyond ad-hoc charitable projects to fully integrate CSR into their corporate DNA. This section explores how organizations are making CSR a central part of strategy and governance—backed by case studies from both Saudi firms and global industry leaders. The common theme is a shift toward treating CSR not as a side activity, but as a strategic function with executive oversight, formal structures, and accountability at the highest levels of the company.

From the periphery to the C-suite

Traditionally, CSR was often managed by a small team separate from core operations—sometimes in a PR or HR department—and leadership involvement was limited. That model is rapidly changing. An increasing number of companies now embed sustainability and CSR directly into the C-suite and boardroom. Many businesses have created dedicated executive roles such as chief sustainability officer (CSO) or vice president of CSR, signaling that social impact and environmental stewardship are top priorities on par with other C-level functions. These executives are frequently given direct lines to the CEO or are part of the executive committee, ensuring that CSR considerations inform major business decisions. In addition, some companies have established board-level committees focused on sustainability or ESG matters, to provide governance oversight and integrate CSR into corporate risk management and strategy. This structural elevation of CSR means that issues like climate risk, community relations, and ethical governance are discussed alongside financial targets and business development plans, rather than in siloes.

Global corporate examples illustrate this strategic shift well. DuPont, for instance, underwent a governance transformation to entwine sustainability with its core business strategy. As mentioned earlier, DuPont combined the roles of chief sustainability and chief innovation officer, effectively marrying its sustainability agenda with its innovation pipeline. This move, along with aligning sustainability efforts with the company's enterprise risk management, ensured that climate considerations and resource efficiency were embedded in every new product design and investment decision. The payoff was significant: sustainability became a driver of innovation, leading to breakthrough products that not only advanced DuPont's environmental goals but also opened new revenue streams—a clear example of CSR integration fueling long-term success. Another example is Nike, which in the wake of early 2000s reputational challenges (around labor practices) took bold steps to integrate CSR at the highest levels. Nike created a corporate responsibility and sustainability committee on its board of directors and restructured its sustainability leadership so that the CSO reports directly to the CEO and also to the President of Innovation. By linking the sustainability team with the innovation team, Nike ensured that its CSR goals (such as reducing waste and eliminating hazardous materials) were tightly coupled with product development decisions. This governance shift helped institutionalize a culture of sustainability within Nike, yielding initiatives like the Move to Zero campaign and accelerating progress toward the company's public environmental targets. The results have been powerful: Nike strengthened its reputation as a sustainability leader, won back consumer trust, attracted environmentally conscious customers, and ultimately saw the benefits in sales growth and brand loyalty.

A third case, Dell Technologies, further highlights the trend. Dell initially treated CSR as a peripheral, marketing-oriented function reporting to the Chief Marketing Officer, but more recently it overhauled its approach by establishing cross-functional ESG committees and even tying a portion of executive compensation to ESG performance. Dell's ESG Steering Committee and similar governance mechanisms ensure that all parts of the business are accountable for sustainability metrics. This has led to more consistent execution of CSR initiatives across the company and improved transparency in reporting results. Importantly, by making executives financially accountable for progress on ESG goals, Dell catalyzed a company-wide commitment to achieving those goals. The company credits this integrated approach with boosting its reputation among investors and customers, driving innovation (e.g. in designing energy-efficient products), and even achieving cost savings through efficiencies—once again proving that what gets measured (and incentivized) gets managed, even in CSR.

Saudi companies leading by example

In Saudi Arabia, we are witnessing a similar shift as CSR moves into core business strategy—particularly among forward-thinking organizations that align with Vision 2030's ethos. Take Zamil Group, a prominent family-owned conglomerate. CSR has been part of Zamil's identity since its founding (rooted in the charitable philosophy of its founder), but in recent years the group consciously modernized and structured its CSR approach. The CSR push at Zamil is championed directly by the company's leadership, rather than being left to a standalone department. Zamil's business leaders have ensured that CSR efforts are aligned with the company's values and annually identified priority themes (like education, social welfare, or environmental sustainability) that complement the group's business objectives. By allocating dedicated budgets and integrating CSR planning into the yearly business cycle, Zamil's leadership effectively treats CSR like any other strategic business unit—setting goals, measuring outcomes, and adjusting programs for greater impact. This leadership-driven model has paid off: Zamil's initiatives have not only delivered community benefits (e.g. improved education access for underserved groups) but also enhanced the company's relationships with stakeholders. The group reports that its active outreach and partnership-building via CSR have positioned it as a reliable, socially responsible partner in the eyes of major organizations and government bodies. In other words, strategic CSR has strengthened Zamil Group's social license to operate and opened doors for collaboration that are mutually beneficial.

RSG also stands out in their way of embedding CSR from the ground up. RSG is developing luxury tourism projects on the Kingdom's Red Sea coast, and sustainability is at the heart of its business model. The company's senior leadership views CSR and environmental stewardship as foundational to RSG's long-term success. Practically, this means RSG's leadership insists on thorough planning and baseline studies before launching any CSR initiative, to ensure projects address real community needs and align with sustainable development goals. CSR considerations (such as protecting marine ecosystems or supporting local communities through training and jobs) are woven into project design and execution, not tacked on later. Notably, RSG's top executives sponsor and monitor CSR progress closely—treating metrics like community satisfaction or ecological impact as key performance indicators alongside financial metrics. This approach reflects Vision 2030 principles by balancing "people and planet" outcomes with profit. One innovative example of RSG's stakeholder-centric strategy is the launch of Jewar, a digital platform (mobile app) that allows local community members to communicate needs, feedback, or concerns directly to the company. By institutionalizing such two-way engagement, RSG's leaders reinforce transparency and trust, which are invaluable for a company developing in remote, sensitive areas. The business benefits RSG anticipates include not only goodwill and brand differentiation, but also tangible financial returns through risk avoidance (e.g. preventing delays or conflicts by addressing community issues early) and the cultivation of a loyal talent pool from local communities. RSG exemplifies how a young Saudi company can bake CSR into its governance and reap strategic advantages.

A third example, stc, underscores how established corporates in Saudi Arabia are elevating CSR to the leadership level. As one of the Kingdom's largest companies, stc has undertaken a broad range of CSR and sustainability initiatives in alignment with national priorities. Importantly, stc in recent years restructured how these efforts are governed internally. In 2019, stc transformed its ESG/CSR function into a standalone sustainability department and created a high-level sustainability committee led by the group CEO. This effectively puts CSR on the agenda at the very top—the CEO's involvement signals that sustainability is core to stc's identity and future. The sustainability committee (which includes other senior executives) integrates CSR considerations into corporate strategy discussions and oversees the execution of stc's sustainability strategy. Additionally, stc began issuing formal sustainability reports (the first published in 2020 following Global Reporting Initiative standards) to transparently track and communicate its ESG performance. By instituting these governance mechanisms, stc ensures that its numerous CSR programs—from digital education for underserved communities, to environmental initiatives like e-waste recycling, to extensive employee volunteering efforts—are not isolated acts of goodwill, but part of a coherent strategy tied to the company's growth and risk management frameworks. The outcome has been a more coordinated and impactful CSR portfolio, which, as mentioned earlier, has reinforced stc's brand strength and stakeholder trust. stc's approach illustrates a broader trend in Saudi Arabia: more companies are realizing that to maximize the impact of CSR (for society and for the business), such efforts must have executive sponsorship, clear governance, and integration with the company's core strategy rather than operating at the margins.

In summary, the strategic shift in CSR is characterized by leadership and integration. Companies that treat CSR as a strategic function—with proper governance structures, C-suite and board oversight, and alignment with business goals—tend to achieve far greater impact than those that treat it as a checkbox or marketing exercise. The cases we discussed all show that when CSR is driven from the top, it permeates the organization's culture and decision-making. This leads to sustained initiatives that deliver value both to society and to the company's own bottom line. As more Saudi businesses follow this path, we can expect CSR to become ingrained in corporate governance norms across the Kingdom. The next piece of the puzzle, then, is talent: who will lead and staff these strategic CSR functions? We turn now to the emerging career pathways in CSR and how companies can build the human capital needed to support their social responsibility ambitions.

CSR at KPMG

What key areas is KPMG Middle East focusing on?

"We focus on five key SDGs that align with our capabilities – climate action, decent work and economic growth, quality education, gender equality, and strategic partnerships. We operate under four main pillars: planet, people, prosperity, and governance. This integrated approach enables us to maximize our impact."

What CSR trends are emerging in Saudi Arabia?

"There is a shift towards more integrated and strategic CSR practices. As businesses recognize the importance of sustainability, we expect to see greater emphasis on transparency and accountability in reporting ESG metrics. In Saudi Arabia, the alignment with Vision 2030 will continue to drive initiatives that focus on economic diversification and social welfare. Moreover, there's a growing expectation from consumers and stakeholders for businesses to take a stand on social issues."

Can you share an example of a successful CSR initiative KPMG has implemented in Saudi Arabia?

"One example is our house restoration initiative, in partnership with Seen Foundation. This project improves the living conditions of underprivileged families by restoring homes and promoting social cohesion. Over 180 KPMG employees volunteered to help repair houses, demonstrating our long-term commitment to sustainable community development.

Another impactful initiative is 'Run for Children with Cancer,' launched with the Sanad Association. For every kilometer run by our KPMG running club, donations are made to support children undergoing cancer treatment. We also sponsored a classroom in the hospital to ensure continuity of education for young patients.

KPMG measures CSR success through both community and business impact. Social metrics include individuals supported, volunteer hours, and stakeholder feedback, while business indicators cover employee engagement and satisfaction. We conduct an annual materiality assessment to identify our most relevant ESG priorities. Our KPIs are structured under three pillars: under 'Prosperity,' we track social initiatives; under 'Planet,' we measure environmental impact; and under 'People,' we focus on inclusion, diversity, women's empowerment, and disability inclusion. All results are captured under 'Governance' in our impact plan reporting framework."

Download KPMG's **Our Impact Plan 2024**

Kholoud Mousa
Partner and Head of Our Impact Plan
KPMG Middle East

Career pathways in CSR
Building the talent for sustainability

The rise of CSR as a strategic function has created a booming demand for professionals skilled in sustainability and social impact. A decades-long global expansion of CSR has, in effect, spawned a sizeable industry of its own—one that offers varied and fulfilling career opportunities.

For Saudi Arabia, nurturing local CSR talent is critical to sustaining the momentum of corporate responsibility and embedding it within organizations. This section outlines typical CSR roles and career paths, the skills needed to excel in this field, real examples of Saudi professionals in CSR, and the education and training avenues available for those aspiring to join their ranks.

Roles and progression in CSR

CSR careers span multiple levels, often mirroring the hierarchy of other business functions. At the entry level, common job titles internationally include CSR coordinator, sustainability analyst, or CSR specialist—roles focused on supporting projects, collecting data, and executing programs. In Saudi Arabia, a new graduate might start as a CSR officer or junior sustainability specialist, often in a company's CSR department or sustainability team. As professionals gain experience, they move into mid-level positions such as CSR manager, sustainability manager, or community relations manager, where they might oversee specific programs or a team and coordinate cross-functional initiatives.

In the Kingdom, titles like CSR manager or sustainability manager are now seen in many large firms, indicating a dedicated person responsible for driving the agenda internally. At the senior management tier, roles typically include CSR director or head of sustainability, involving strategy formulation, stakeholder engagement at higher levels, and supervision of the full portfolio of CSR activities. Finally, at the executive (C-suite) level, many global companies appoint a CSO or vice president of sustainability/CSR. This trend is emerging in Saudi Arabia as well, especially in organizations that have made sustainability a core pillar—we are beginning to see executive titles like CSO or VP of sustainability in leading enterprises in the Kingdom. The presence of a CSO signals that the company treats sustainability as a top strategic priority. Overall, a professional can now realistically aspire to a full career in CSR, from an entry-level coordinator to potentially becoming a CSO guiding company-wide strategy. This is a remarkable change from a decade or two ago when CSR roles were relatively rare and often not on the leadership track.

Skills and competencies

CSR roles are inherently cross-disciplinary, requiring a blend of soft and hard skills. Based on interviews conducted with CSR professionals across leading Saudi companies, several key competencies have emerged as vital for success in the field.

One major area is community engagement and stakeholder management. CSR professionals must effectively engage with a wide range of stakeholders—from community members and nonprofit partners to government entities and internal teams. This requires strong communication skills, cultural awareness, and the ability to build trust and maintain collaborative relationships.

Impact measurement and reporting is widely recognized as an essential skillset. CSR initiatives need to be monitored, evaluated, and communicated credibly to both internal leadership and external stakeholders. Professionals in this space must be proficient in data analysis, monitoring and evaluation, and clear reporting. These capabilities are increasingly linked to strategic decision-making and organizational performance, particularly as companies face growing demands for transparency and disclosure.

Strategic integration and business acumen are also critical, especially as CSR evolves from a support function into a strategic lever for growth and risk mitigation. CSR professionals must be able to align their programs with core business objectives, articulate value creation, and translate social or environmental outcomes into tangible business benefits—such as cost savings, regulatory compliance, or market differentiation.

Creative problem-solving is often required, particularly when designing scalable programs that create shared value. Whether through social enterprises, community investments, or eco-efficient practices, CSR teams are expected to find innovative ways to deliver business and societal impact simultaneously.

Finally, passion and advocacy are intangible but fundamental qualities. CSR professionals often serve as internal champions, driving awareness, challenging outdated thinking, and guiding change across the organization. As Dr. Basmah Al Zamil, a leading board member and CSR advocate, puts it: "CSR is ultimately about giving back. When you genuinely believe in it, you naturally embody and represent our corporate values—that's what truly sets our people apart."

Ultimately, the most effective CSR professionals tend to be T-shaped individuals—those with broad skills across communication, analysis, and strategy, and deep expertise in areas such as sustainability reporting, social development, or environmental management depending on their company's focus.

CSR experience itself today offers a broad career spectrum as well, according to Maha Taher, Head of Corporate Affairs and Sustainability at Nestlé Saudi Arabia: "continued opportunities and skills range from sustainability strategy, corporate communications, public affairs, ESG reporting, to social innovation and stakeholder engagement. Many professionals transition into senior corporate affairs roles or into specialized sustainability leadership positions."

Diverse pathways into CSR

There is no single path into a CSR career. In fact, many professionals transition from other domains, enriching the function with diverse knowledge and operational insight.

Some of the interviewed individuals has entered the CSR domain from backgrounds such as finance, engineering, marketing, or operations—bringing with them analytical thinking, project management skills, or stakeholder engagement experience. Others pivot into CSR driven by personal values or exposure to impactful community projects. This diversity of experience strengthens CSR teams, allowing them to approach problems from different perspectives and collaborate across departments more effectively.

However, this variety also presents a common challenge: the need to continuously educate others within the organization about the value of CSR. Professionals entering the space often find themselves advocating for sustainability initiatives, framing them in business-relevant terms, and driving alignment with strategic goals. Success in this environment requires not just technical CSR knowledge, but also internal influence and change management capabilities.

Career development and fulfillment

As CSR becomes more central to corporate performance, roles in this field are evolving into strategic positions that combine social impact with long-term business value. Companies increasingly view CSR professionals not just as compliance leads, but as key contributors to innovation, stakeholder trust, and brand strength.

Many professionals highlight a deep sense of fulfillment as a major reason for choosing this path. CSR offers a unique opportunity to align personal values with career goals, making it possible to contribute meaningfully to society while advancing professionally.

To succeed in the field, practitioners emphasize the importance of building hands-on experience—through volunteering, managing local initiatives, or working on sustainability projects. This practical exposure helps professionals understand the broader impact of business on social and environmental systems.

It is also important to stay fluent in evolving global frameworks and standards, including ESG reporting tools and impact measurement methods. Technical skills in data analysis, strategy, and reporting are highly sought after. Just as essential are soft skills such as empathy, communication, and internal advocacy, especially when managing change or building coalitions across departments.

In the GCC, CSR roles have also become more financially attractive. A regional recruitment firm reports that salaries for CSR-related positions rose by approximately 8 percent between 2023 and 2024, particularly in Saudi Arabia and the UAE. This reflects a growing recognition of the strategic value CSR brings—and the increasing investment companies are making in the talent driving it.

Salaries for CSR-related positions in Saudi Arabia and the UAE rose by 8% between 2023 and 2024

Education and training opportunities

As the CSR field matures, formal education and training programs have expanded globally—and Saudi Arabia is no exception. In the past, a sustainability professional might have had to learn on the job or through self-directed study, but now there are numerous academic and professional courses to build CSR expertise. Many leading universities worldwide have integrated CSR and ESG topics into their curricula. Top MBA programs (such as those at Harvard, Yale, INSEAD, and others) include modules on responsible leadership, sustainable business, and ESG investing. Specialized master's degrees in sustainability management, social enterprise, or environmental policy have also proliferated. Regionally, universities in Europe (e.g. Erasmus University Rotterdam School of Management, IE Business School in Madrid, London Business School) offer renowned programs focusing on sustainability and corporate responsibility.

In Saudi Arabia, careers in CSR have progressed from voluntary philanthropic practices to strategic functions that directly contribute to national transformation. Anchored in Vision 2030 and guided by the National CSR Strategy (2024), the sector is witnessing the emergence of specialized roles in sustainability, ESG compliance, social impact assessment, and stakeholder engagement.

Dr. Albogami: "To fully realize this potential, investment in human capital development is essential—through academic programs, professional certifications, and structured training opportunities that are complemented by practical industry experience and rooted in the Kingdom's cultural and ethical values. This responsibility is shared: the government provides enabling policies and incentives, academic institutions embed CSR within curricula, the private sector elevates CSR to strategic leadership levels and invests in upskilling, and professionals embrace continuous development. By strengthening this ecosystem, CSR will not only enhance corporate competitiveness but also advance the Kingdom's aspirations for sustainable development."

In Saudi Arabia, educational institutions are rising to the occasion by developing programs tailored to CSR and ESG. For instance, Tharwah Academy in Riyadh offers a diploma in Environmental, Social, and Governance management—a practical program that equips participants with skills to implement ESG strategies in organizations. There are also short courses and certifications: The Knowledge Academy, a training provider, has courses on CSR and ESG in major Saudi cities, including a one-day intensive ESG training and a dedicated CSR management course covering how to integrate CSR into business strategy. Similarly, SGS Academy (affiliated with the Saudi Geological Survey) runs an ESG training program in Jubail focusing on sustainability awareness and implementation. On the academic side, several Saudi universities incorporate CSR and sustainability into their business and engineering programs. For example, Alfaisal University and Effat University include CSR and sustainable business modules in their MBA and business administration curricula, ensuring that future managers understand these concepts. Moreover, Alfaisal University has launched a master program in CSR and Sustainability for which admission has already opened in the summer of 2025. Prince Sultan University (PSU) in Riyadh has infused sustainability topics into its courses and promotes research on corporate responsibility. For those looking at advanced degrees, King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) offers graduate programs that, while centered on science and engineering, emphasize innovation in environmental and social contexts—effectively training students in solving sustainability challenges through technology. King Saud University (KSU) in Riyadh has introduced master's programs in areas like Environmental Sciences and Renewable Energy, which align closely with the sustainability agenda and can lead to careers in corporate sustainability (especially in industries like energy, where environmental expertise is crucial). In short, whether through a formal degree, an executive education course, or a professional workshop, aspiring CSR professionals in Saudi Arabia have more avenues than ever to gain the knowledge and credentials needed. The incorporation of CSR into education is not only building a pipeline of qualified talent for companies, but also signaling to the business community that sustainability is now a fundamental component of professional training—just like finance or marketing.

As companies in Saudi Arabia elevate CSR to a strategic level, they would do well to tap into this growing talent pool and continuous learning ecosystem. By hiring skilled CSR practitioners and investing in ongoing training for their teams, businesses can ensure they have the human capital to design, execute, and scale impactful CSR initiatives. The momentum in CSR careers and education ultimately reinforces the broader message: CSR is here to stay, and it is becoming an integral part of how business is done.

CSR professionals in the spotlight

Dr. Basmah Al Zamil
Family Business Advisor,
Lansberg Gersick Advisors

Dr. Basmah Al Zamil's career progression from contributor to leadership within CSR demonstrates the upward mobility within the field. Her work is driven by a deep sense of purpose, and she believes CSR leaders should embody the values they promote. Her trajectory showcases how passion and consistency can translate into senior leadership roles in CSR.

"CSR is all about giving back, and if you feel it, you can represent our corporate values. That's what makes our people stand out."

Dr. Basmah emphasizes that CSR must go beyond compliance and corporate reputation—it requires heartfelt engagement. She argues that strong leadership in CSR comes from authenticity, personal investment, and the ability to convert ideas into tangible achievements.

"There's no better feeling than seeing a planned initiative come to life—transforming it from words on paper into real impact that gives back to others."

Ahmad Aljohani
Senior sustainability specialist
in the private sector

Ahmad Aljohani transitioned from a finance background into CSR and sustainability after discovering the alignment between corporate finance and the growing demand for transparent reporting in ESG and sustainability. He has worked across government entities and the private sector, taking on diverse roles ranging from advancing the achievement of the SDGs in Saudi Arabia to developing corporate sustainability strategies and leading sustainability reporting efforts.

"I believe CSR and sustainability are truly promising fields. It's gaining rapid recognition and growing in importance for both companies and stakeholders. It offers meaningful, impactful work—professionally rewarding and personally fulfilling through the opportunity to make the world a better place, one step at a time."

Ahmad stresses that the sustainability field is rapidly evolving and demands continuous learning. He points to stakeholder engagement, data analysis, and strategic alignment as key skills that enable CSR and engagement professionals to communicate impact effectively and influence decision-making. Ahmad's path underscores how traditional business skills can be applied in impactful new ways within CSR and engagement roles.

Manar Alraddadi
Corporate Communication and CSR Manager at Dow Saudi Arabia

Through her work in communications and CSR, Manar Alraddadi has seen how well-designed programs foster a sense of pride and belonging—not only within the community but also among employees. "They boost engagement, demonstrate that when we invest in people, we build organizational resilience, and create a stronger connection between corporate purpose and social good."

"Investing in youth and community-focused programs has significantly strengthened both trust and reputation for the organizations I've been part of. Initiatives in employability, mentoring, innovation camps, and leadership readiness have empowered local communities while also shaping a more capable and inclusive workforce."

Manar has been an active member of the volunteering community and is a member of the Khobar Hub of the Global Shapers Community. "This has shown me the power of collaboration between companies and communities. By building partnerships with organizations, we can co-create opportunities that amplify impact, empower young leaders, and contribute to long-term social progress."

"For me, the future of CSR lies in creating programs that are impactful today and sustainable for generations to come. I want CSR to evolve into a core part of business strategy — shaping how we grow, innovate, and build value for both the organization and the communities we serve."

Her aspiration is to design initiatives that scale and last. "That means embedding employability, inclusion, sustainability, and mentorship into the heart of how we operate, so that supporting youth, women, and underrepresented groups is not a side project, but a sustained commitment."

"Sustainability goes beyond environmental practices; it's about building systems that empower people consistently. Through career readiness programs, leadership development, and inclusive partnerships, I hope to leave behind a legacy of empowerment that is resilient and future-proof."

Maha Taher
Head of Corporate Affairs and Sustainability at Nestlé Saudi Arabia

Maha Taha's role, which also includes being the Head of Nestlé Academy, sits at the intersection of business strategy and stakeholder engagement, and her responsibilities include representing CSR and sustainability priorities within the executive agenda and ensuring the direction aligns with global commitments and local business strategy. The team doesn't work in a silo so cross-functional integration with other teams is critical, while the function also acts as a strategic enabler – amplifying brand equity, safeguarding its license to operate, and ensuring that business growth supports societal and environmental resilience. "This integrated model ensures CSV is embedded in 'how we do business,' rather than being seen as philanthropy alone."

"At Nestlé Saudi Arabia, our approach to CSR is deeply rooted in Creating Shared Value (CSV), the belief that business success and societal progress should reinforce each other. By focusing on nutrition, youth empowerment, sustainability, and community support, we have been able to enhance community well-being – through nutrition education, youth employability programs, or emergency relief donations; strengthen our brand trust and reputation – particularly by embedding sustainability and social impact into product innovation and communication; and drive business resilience – our sustainability commitments: decarbonization, regenerative agriculture, circular packaging, ensure that we are growing responsibly while safeguarding resources critical to our value chain."

"I am personally driven by the conviction that business has the responsibility and privilege to shape a better society. In Saudi Arabia and the wider region, where young populations face opportunities and challenges in equal measure, our work can make lasting generational impact."

Over the years, her approach has evolved from philanthropy to systemic impact. "Initially, CSR/ CSV at many organizations was focused on donations and relief efforts. Today, through CSV, we focus on long-term, strategic initiatives such as empowering youth through the Nestlé Academy, supporting local farmers via agri-preneurship programs, and embedding sustainability into every stage of our value chain. This evolution reflects a shift from 'giving back' to 'investing forward' — ensuring that our actions create measurable, lasting value for both Nestlé and society."

Call to action
Elevating CSR to the core of business strategy

CSR is often described as creating a "win-win" scenario—delivering benefits for both society and business. The analysis in this paper bears that out. When companies in Saudi Arabia engage seriously with CSR, they contribute to inclusive economic growth, job creation, and social development in the Kingdom, all of which support GDP and national prosperity. Simultaneously, those companies position themselves for sustainable success: they build stronger brands, mitigate risks, spark innovation, and cultivate loyalty among customers, employees, investors, and communities. Recognizing this dynamic, Vision 2030 explicitly calls for the private sector to step up its social responsibility, viewing CSR as a strategic enabler of the country's economic diversification and long-term prosperity. In short, doing good is no longer separate from doing well—it's a key part of how Saudi businesses can thrive in the coming decades.

For business leaders in Saudi Arabia, the imperative now is to act. The time has come to treat CSR as a core business function, woven into the fabric of company strategy and governance. Below are concise recommendations and action points for companies to elevate CSR to the leadership level and fully institutionalize it in their organizations:

- **Integrate CSR into leadership and governance**
  Make sustainability and social responsibility a C-suite and boardroom agenda. Assign clear executive ownership for CSR—for example, appoint a CSO or empower an existing senior executive to lead—and establish board oversight (a committee or regular reviews) to ensure CSR goals are aligned with corporate strategy. When CSR has top-level champions, it permeates decision-making across the business.

- **Embed CSR in strategy and treat it as a strategic investment**
  Shift the perception of CSR from a charitable cost or PR exercise to a strategic investment that drives competitive advantage. Incorporate CSR objectives into your business plans, KPIs, and risk management frameworks. Just as you would invest in a new market or product line, invest in CSR initiatives that generate tangible value—whether by opening new revenue streams (e.g. sustainable products), reducing costs (e.g. via energy efficiency), or strengthening your brand and stakeholder relationships. The evidence is clear that companies which leverage CSR strategically outpace those that don't.

- **Leverage partnerships and national initiatives**
  Don't do it alone. Collaborate with government bodies, industry peers, and non-profits to amplify the impact of CSR programs. Public-private partnerships can be especially powerful in addressing national challenges—for instance, partnering with a ministry on an education or health program can combine your company's resources with public sector scale and credibility. Engage with initiatives under Vision 2030 that seek private sector participation, and align your CSR focus areas with the country's development priorities (such as digital education, renewable energy, or community health). These partnerships not only increase impact but also build goodwill with regulators and the public.

- **Adopt industry-specific CSR focus**
  Tailor your CSR strategy to the material issues of your sector. Every industry has unique social and environmental challenges—identifying and addressing these will make your CSR efforts more relevant and effective. For example, an oil & gas company should prioritize environmental management and safety, a retail or manufacturing business might focus on supply chain ethics and labor standards, and a tech company could emphasize digital inclusion and data privacy. Developing sector-specific CSR standards or best practices (perhaps in coordination with industry associations) can help raise the bar across the board. By tackling the issues most pertinent to your industry, you also proactively manage risks that could otherwise threaten your license to operate.

- **Invest in CSR capabilities and culture**
  Building a sustainable company requires nurturing the right expertise and mindsets internally. Invest in training programs to upskill your employees and leaders on sustainability principles and CSR project management. This might include workshops on ESG topics, sending high-potential staff to CSR certification courses, or bringing in experts to share best practices. Hiring dedicated CSR professionals or consultants can also jump-start your capabilities. At the same time, cultivate a culture of responsibility among your workforce. Encourage and reward employee involvement in CSR—for instance, establish volunteering days, recognize teams that achieve social impact milestones, or include sustainability objectives in performance evaluations. Consider incentive mechanisms as well: some companies have seen success with small grants or internal "innovation challenges" to fund employee-driven CSR ideas, and externally, there are moves to offer benefits like tax breaks or awards for companies excelling in CSR. By embedding CSR into everyday culture and incentives, it becomes part of "how we do business" rather than a one-off campaign.

- **Measure, report, and communicate impact**
  To truly institutionalize CSR, treat it with the same rigor as financial performance. Set clear targets for your CSR initiatives and measure progress regularly. Establish Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)—for example, reduction in carbon footprint, number of community members benefited, improvements in diversity metrics, etc. Use recognized reporting frameworks (such as the Global Reporting Initiative standards or integrated ESG reports) to track and disclose your performance. Transparent reporting serves two purposes: it holds your organization accountable and it builds trust with stakeholders by showing that you're serious about results. Many consumers and investors in Saudi Arabia are still developing awareness of CSR, so communicating your impact stories is key to shaping expectations. Publicize your successes (and lessons learned) through annual sustainability reports, your website, and media—this not only enhances your brand but also inspires other companies. Notably, the government's introduction of a national CSR Award is an opportunity: by striving for such recognition, you signal to all stakeholders that your company aims to lead in positive impact.

- **Align with global standards and networks**
  Finally, anchor your company's CSR efforts in global best practices. Joining international networks like the UN Global Compact can provide guidance and credibility—when you commit to its principles and SDG targets, you align your strategy with what thousands of leading companies worldwide are doing. Similarly, stay informed on evolving global standards (for instance, ISO 26000 guidance on social responsibility or the upcoming ISSB sustainability accounting standards). Engaging with global frameworks helps future-proof your CSR approach, ensuring that as regulations tighten or stakeholder expectations rise, your company will already be meeting high standards. It also opens up opportunities for learning and collaboration beyond Saudi Arabia's borders. In a global economy, a company seen as meeting international CSR benchmarks is more likely to attract foreign investment and partnerships.

By taking these steps, Saudi businesses can move from simply having a CSR department to truly being socially responsible organizations in all aspects. The call to action is clear: elevate CSR to the strategic level where it belongs. When CSR has strong leadership, adequate resources, integration with strategy, and a culture behind it, the returns are substantial—for the company, for its stakeholders, and for the nation.

In conclusion, corporate social responsibility in Saudi Arabia is no longer an optional add-on; it is fast becoming a defining attribute of successful, future-ready businesses. Companies that act now to embed CSR into their core will not only support the Kingdom's Vision 2030 goals but will also gain a competitive edge through building trust, resilience, and innovation capacity that set them apart in the market. The journey to strategic CSR is a transformative one, requiring commitment from the top and engagement at all levels, but the rewards are a true win-win. By aligning profit with purpose, Saudi businesses can secure enduring growth and contribute to a sustainable and inclusive future for the country. Now is the time to make CSR a pillar of corporate leadership—a catalyst for business excellence and national development hand in hand.

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