

CSR Managers as Champions of Change

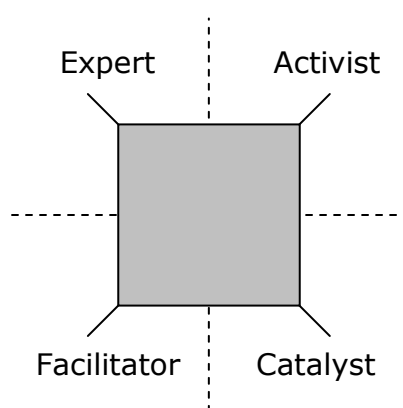
By Wayne Visser

The idea of CSR managers being champions of change is not a new one. Previously, HR champions had been identified as human resource managers who combined the roles of catalyst, sponsor, facilitator and demonstrator. More recently, the concept has been applied to environmental champions and social champions in organisations. So what would a CSR champion look like?

Typically, CSR champions would be good at identifying, packaging and selling CSR ideas in their organisation and among their stakeholders. It helps if their own personal values are aligned with the CSR agenda, and if these in turn are in line with the company's values. Top leadership support is also crucial in making a CSR champion's role as a change agent more effective.

But change in organisations towards a CSR agenda does not happen in only one way. My research suggests that there are four main types of CSR champions: Experts, Facilitators, Catalysts and Activists. It is expected that any individual CSR champion will embody elements of all of these types, but that each person will gravitate more naturally to one role. This represents the mode of operating in which they feel most comfortable, fulfilled or satisfied.

Four Types of CSR Champions



Let's look at some of the characteristics of these different types of CSR Champions:

The **Expert** is most strongly aligned to *specialist input* as a source of meaning and is concerned mainly with the *individual* level; they derive satisfaction from focusing on *personal development* and delivering *quality input* through their work; skills are mainly *technical* in nature and emphasise *specialist knowledge*, and the legacy they wish to leave behind is successful *work projects*.

A typical quote from an Expert-type CSR champion (taken from my research interviews) would be: "There were a couple of projects that I did find very exciting ... It was very exciting to get all the bits and pieces in place, then commission them and see them starting to work."

The **Facilitator** is most strongly aligned to *people empowerment* as a source of meaning and is concerned mainly with the *group or team* level; they derive satisfaction from focusing on *staff development* and *effective facilitation* through their work; skills are mainly *managerial* in nature and emphasise *generalist knowledge*, and the legacy they wish to leave behind is the extent of their *staff or team's achievements*.

A typical Facilitator-type CSR champion might say: "If you enjoy working with people, this is a sort of functional role that you have direct interaction, you can see people being empowered, having increased knowledge, and you can see what that eventually leads to."

The **Catalyst** is most strongly aligned to *strategic input* as a source of meaning and is concerned mainly with the *organisational* level; they derive satisfaction from focusing on *organisational development* and *strategic change* in their work; skills are mainly *visionary* in nature and emphasise *future trends*, and the legacy they wish to leave behind is the extent of their *organisation or industry's transformation*.

A typical Catalyst-type CSR champion may claim: "The type of work that I'm doing is ... giving direction in terms of where the company is going. So it can become almost a life purpose to try and steer the company in a direction that you believe personally is right as well."

And finally, the **Activist** is most strongly aligned to *societal contribution* as a source of meaning and is hence obviously concerned mainly with the *societal* level; they derive satisfaction from focusing on *community development* and *social change* in their work; skills are mainly *collaborative* in nature and emphasise *society's needs*, and the legacy they wish to leave behind is a more *sustainable environment and equitable society*. Table 8.4 gives examples.

A typical Catalyst-type CSR champion quote is: "It's also about the issue of being poor. If you are poor, you don't have the options. ... You see those kind of things, it sort of hits you, and you kind of think, what can you do?"

The table below summarises the features of CSR champions.

Features of CSR Champions

Feature	Expert	Facilitator	Catalyst	Activist
Primary source of meaning	Specialist input	People empowerment	Strategic input	Societal contribution
Level of concern	Individual	Group or team	Organisation	Society
Source of work satisfaction	Personal development, quality input	Staff development, effective facilitation	Organisational development, strategic change	Community development, social change
Skills	Technical	Managerial	Visionary	Collaborative
Knowledge	Specialist	Generalist	Future trends	Society's needs
Legacy	Successful work projects	Staff or team's achievements	Organisation or industry transformation	Sustainable environment & equitable society

This typology of CSR champions has various potential applications. For CSR managers, the typology acts as prompt for individuals to reflect on their most natural (and hence most effective) type, or mix of types, and whether this matches their formal role. For managers of a CSR team, the typology would cast light on the mix of team members, which may influence the way in which individuals are managed and allocated tasks, in order to maximise the change effort. And for human resource managers, the typology may assist in recruitment, either for targeting a particular type of CSR manager to fit the corporate culture, or as a way to ensure a balanced distribution of types in the organisation. The typology could also be further developed into a psychometric-type tool, in which individuals could rate themselves against a set of phrases or statements, and obtain a set of scores that suggest a type profile (similar to a Myers-Briggs type assessment diagnostic).

Hence, by understanding the different ways in which CSR champions are most effective in bringing about change in organisations, the CSR agenda can be taken forward successfully.

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