

## THE IMPORTANCE OF BUSINESS LEADERSHIP FOR THE DISSEMINATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF SOCIO- ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGIES: THE CASE STUDY OF THE BRAZILIAN COMPANY «ALUMINA»

**João Augusto Ramos e Silva** (State University of Maranhão, Brazil) <sup>✉</sup>

### Abstract:

This paper aims to analyze the importance of business leadership for the dissemination and implementation of environmental strategies in organizations, based on a case study in «*Alumina*», a Brazilian company producing aluminium and alumina. With main concepts and theories on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and organizational leadership as theoretical reference, we have assessed the basic skills of leaders, as well as the insights and contributions of organizational leadership for the dissemination and implementation of socio-environmental strategies.

From semi-structured interviews carried out in the company, it was inferred that indeed leadership has an essential role at such purpose. The findings of the study are presented in the last part of the paper, as well as some reflections on the intended objectives.

**Keywords:** *leadership; socio-environmental organizational strategies; dissemination; implementation*

## LA IMPORTANCIA DEL LIDERAZGO EMPRESARIAL PARA LA DIFUSIÓN E IMPLEMENTACIÓN DE ESTRATEGIAS SOCIO-AMBIENTALES EN LAS ORGANIZACIONES: EL CASO DE LA EMPRESA BRASILEÑA «ALUMINA»

### Resumen:

Este trabajo trata de analizar la importancia del liderazgo empresarial para difundir y aplicar estrategias medioambientales en las organizaciones, en base a un estudio de caso en «*Alumina*», una empresa brasileña productora de aluminio y alúmina. Con los principales conceptos y teorías sobre Responsabilidad Social Corporativa (RSC) y liderazgo organizacional como referente teórico, se valoraron las competencias básicas de los líderes, así como las ideas y contribuciones del liderazgo organizacional para la difusión e implementación de estrategias socio-ambientales.

A partir de entrevistas semi-estructuradas realizadas en la empresa, se infirió que el liderazgo tiene un papel esencial a tal propósito. Los resultados del estudio se presentan en la última parte del artículo, así como algunas reflexiones sobre los objetivos perseguidos.

**Palabras clave:** *liderazgo; estrategias socio-ambientales en la organización; diseminación; implementación*

---

<sup>✉</sup> Centre of Applied Social Sciences (State University of Maranhão), Cidade Universitaria Paulo VI, São Cristóvão 65055 310-  
São Luis (Maranhão, Brazil)  
e-mail: [jares@uol.com.br](mailto:jares@uol.com.br)

## 1. Introduction

The environmental, economic and social transformations that have taken place in the sphere of the territories in the world in recent decades have brought forward needs that go far beyond the profit generation of shareholders. Such transformations were fundamental in raising several questions in society, mainly about the subject of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

At the time of the Industrial Revolution (18th and 19th century), organizations had as a central objective the maximization of profits and results. The environment was stable, changes occurred and information was restricted. It was deemed to have a wide knowledge about the environment and the possible consequences of the leaders' actions.

However, in 1980, with the development of post-industrial society, the term citizenship became a frequent part of the discourse of the business community. This was a result of the State, with the neo-liberal policy, being unable to meet the needs of social areas, causing companies to realize that their role was not limited to the market context. In this way, the contemporary concept of company incorporated social and environmental objectives in the business plan.

According to this new concept, there is an understanding that companies are inserted in a complex environment, in which their activities influence and impact several social agents, i.e. stakeholders, which are groups or people who are influenced or can influence the goal achievement of an organization (Freeman 1984), a concept with multiple facets in practice (Tenório et al. 2006).

Regarding CSR, there are several elements that lead companies, in the sense of the leaders, to act using social and environmental responsibility. This can occur due to the external pressure, the instrumental form, as well as to other issues related to values. In this context, it should be noted that the leaders have significant relevance in the dissemination and implementation of organizational strategies, leading them to success or failure.

The criteria that enforce such strategies are, mainly, past experiences, values, beliefs, knowledge, skills and philosophies. Some leaders are more conservative; while others have innovative features and entrepreneurial skills, then being more willing to take risks.

Therefore, the objective of this research is to analyze the importance of organizational leadership for the dissemination and implementation of socio-environmental strategies, particularly in an industry of production of aluminium and alumina. To achieve this goal, bibliography research, description and explanation were conducted as part of a case study.

To review the issue, the study was divided in five parts. The first part discusses the concepts and motivational elements of CSR. The second part focuses on concepts and theories of leadership as well as the basic skills of a leader. The third part covers the history, context and description of the strategies and environmental practices of the Brazilian company «*Alumina*». The fourth part presents the analysis of interviews conducted in this company, and the fifth and last are the final considerations, where the inferences about the study and reflections about the answer to the problem proposed and achieved objectives, related to the referential theoretical framework, are presented.

## 2. Corporate socio-environmental responsibility

Up to date there is not a unanimous concept of CSR. Different approaches have been developed trying to match the specificities of each historical period, so the subject needs to be analyzed and understood with the support of its own evolution.

In this paper, aiming a better characterization of CSR for the intended goals, two distinct periods were considered: i) a first one, which comprises the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century until the late 1950s; and ii) a second one, which represents the development of contemporary approaches, starting around 1950 and being extended up to the present.

The second period, specifically from 1950 to 1970, was marked by the Keynesian thought about the intervention of the State in the economy. This economic model was adopted as a standard to overcome the economic depression in the USA, drop in New York Stock Exchange in 1929. In the face of this event, and the subsequent development of post-industrial society, the pre-existing concepts began to be questioned by society. Therefore, exposed new paradigms, only the economic growth was insufficient in

satisfying the social expectation, because in the context of post-industrial society, companies should also contribute to improving the quality of life in society.

Toffler (1995, p. 101) consistently corroborates this paradigm shift. To be precise, he states that “the emerging system of super industrial values emphasizes the complex goals included in «life’s quality», instead of the goal of economic success. Thus, the consumer movement has challenged the business community in terms of the safety of automobiles, the effectiveness of non-ethical drugs, living conditions in home health care and nursing homes, pollution, military policy, policies of hiring employees, the corporate responsibility and other issues on which the economic component is essentially secondary. [...Now] the objectives of the movement are a healthier and more civilized society, not necessarily a richer society”.

It is agreed that theoretical studies about CSR started in 1950, with the post-industrial society; however, it was from 1970 on when the assignments carried out on the subject obtained notability.

In this context of post-industrial society, Srour (2000, p. 43) describes the relationship between the market and social-environmental responsibility: “it is true, that in the competitive environment, companies have an image, reputation, and brand to protect. And, in countries that enjoy the rule of law, civil society brings together policies to mobilize and retaliate socially irresponsible or inapt companies. Customers, especially, these who exercise their right to choose and migrate to competitors, have an undeniable capacity for deterrence, a sort of nuclear arsenal. The organized citizenship can force the business leaders to act responsibly, even at the expense of their intimate convictions”.

According to this approach, Barbosa and Rabaça (2001) define CSR as an organization’s commitment to society, in which their participation goes beyond job creation, taxes and profits. In this sense, the authors establish that the harmony and balance of the company depend on their performance within the environment, with economic growth and social development. In line with such attitudes, companies are now (or at least they are expected to be) viewed with respect and admiration by customers, society, employees, suppliers and other possible stakeholders, ensuring the continuity and sustainability of long-term business.

In this context, the external pressure, the instrumental form and values appear as three key motivational elements for CSR in practice:

- *External pressure*: the pressure exerted by society on organizations to be fairer and more socially responsible causes CSR advancement and recognition within corporations. This element refers to environmental legislation, the activities of trade unions and the demands of social agents, consumers and communities impacted by industrial activities. A new mentality comes from the prerogatives of the post-industrial society, which went on to seek improvement in the quality of life and not only economic success.

- *Instrumental form*: another fact which justifies the practice of social initiatives by enterprises is the instrumental form, as a means of getting some kind of benefit or advantage. The nature of the benefit does not necessarily have to be economical, and the evaluation of benefits can include, among others, issues related to an increase in consumer preferences, by strengthening the company.

- *Values*: the paramount need to maintain competitiveness and changes driven by the globalized context has forced companies to adopt the commitment to sustainability. Mancini et. al (2003) state that sustainability is often associated with the environment, however, this term is associated with corporate values as a condition of survival and ethical prerogative.

According to Tamoyo and Porto (2005) when we talk about what we value in life each person has multiple values with varying importance. In accordance with previous postulates by Schwartz, these authors consider that personal values are beliefs and motivational elements that transcend situations and specific actions, guide the selection and action evaluation and are ordered by relative importance to the other.

The CSR became a deciding factor for the leaders and for the society. The concern, respect, and corporate attitudes about CSR are roughly understood as a market differentiator and survival within the business environment. It presents the concepts of leadership, describing some theories, fundamental skills of a leader as well as the challenges faced by them.

### 3. Organizational leadership

*Leadership* is a function, role or responsibility that someone needs to develop when responsible for the performance of a group. The word leadership is widely diffused in the language of modern administration. Leadership goes beyond the ability to plan, organize, direct and control. According to Maximiano (2009, p. 277), “leadership is the process of conducting the actions or influencing the behaviour and mentality of other people. It is the achievement of goals through the direction of employees. The person who successfully commands his or her employees to achieve specific purposes is a leader. A great leader has this ability day after day, year after year, in a wide variety of situations”.

For a long time, the idea was cultivated that a leader was someone with innate qualities, being responsible for the supervision, direction and control of a team. And by exercising leadership, the leader would get admiration, recognition and loyalty.

However, the concept has been updated once and again. Today, it is believed that most people can be developed for leadership. According to Motta (2007), leaders are ordinary people who learn common skills, but that taken together form an unusual person.

There are several theories that cover leadership-related studies. These theories were presented by several authors, including humanists. These authors are originating in Human Relations Theory and discuss the influence of leadership from the perspective of people’s behaviour.

Therefore, in support of the present study, three groups of theories will be discussed: theories of personality traits, theories of leadership styles and situational or contingent theories (Maximiano, 2009):

#### 1. *Personality trait theories:*

Theories of personality traits were the first theoretical approaches related to leadership. A feature is considered a quality or distinctive characteristic of personality. The distinctive features of a leader personality by means of which the behaviour of people around them can be influenced.

#### 2. *Theories of leadership styles:*

The theories of leadership styles are theories that examine the leader’s behaviour in relation to their subordinates. While the approach of personality traits referred to what the leader is, the approach of leadership styles referred to what the leader does and executes. In others words, the way of leading.

The leader uses the three processes of leadership, according to the situation, the people, and with the task to be performed. In other words, the leader can use autocratic, democratic or liberal leadership. The challenge in choosing, is knowing when to use each style, with which group, in what circumstance and activities.

#### 3. *Situational Theory or Contingency Theory:*

The Situational Theory explains leadership within a wider spectrum and it is based on the principle that there is not a single valid leadership style for all situation. While theories of personality traits take into consideration only the leader itself, in the case of leadership based on theories of styles, only some variables related to the situation are considered. Therefore, the Situational Theory is the most attractive option to the administrator view, as far as it broadens the options and possibilities to change a leadership model in order to adapt it to different situations.

The instability of organizations has caused the development of transforming leadership to balanced and focused achievements of collective interests. In this context, it can verify the importance of the leader to the achievement of the goals of the organization through their basic skills.

As it is understood that a leader is someone who supports the organization to reach the success by promoting an environment conducive to teamwork, additionally to the development of the above different theoretical approaches, a number of authors have devoted their efforts to determine which are the basic skills that a real leader should possess.

Specifically, Covey (1994) mentions that the leaders will only engage diligently in organizational processes in cases where there is a harmony between personal and business principles. Therefore, even though there are no rules for leadership training, it should be noted that a leader needs to have or develop main skills in order to influence their subordinates and take them to seek the best practices of the organization.

Such *basic leadership skills* can be grouped in three categories:

a) *Evaluation capacity*: evaluation is a challenging task for the leader, because it establishes the parameters for performance, integrating the challenges in the organization and adapting the tasks and management styles, choosing the right people and removing people who are not aligned with the purposes and goals of the company.

According to this concept, Kouzes and Posner (1997, p. 11) conclude that “leaders inspire a shared vision, seeing beyond the horizon of time and imagine the attractive opportunities that they and their followers will find when they reach a remote destination”.

Regarding to the evaluative capacity of the leader, Farren and Kayne (1996) suggest that the leader needs to be a good evaluator, providing honest feedback to team members about their performance, determining and clarifying the standards and expectations on performance.

b) *Leader by example*: the leader’s communication and involvement abilities are fundamental to convince other people of what is needed to be done, but when there is an exemplary leader, unquestioningly, the practicability can easily be internalized of the task.

In the view of Kouzes and Posner (1997, p. 13) leader by example means that “the leaders pointed out the path by personal example and by the delicate execution of their tasks. [...Their] acts and attitudes are very important, much more than words, [and] naturally, must be coherent with them”.

In summary, the leader can be an example to everyone around him. The example of the leader inhabits the attitudes of other people. The words are important, however the actions is what supports the strategies adopted by the leader.

c) *Transformational leaders*: the concept of “transformation” deals with change shape, that is, something or somebody which becomes different. In a world with constant turbulence and numerous changes, the leader must be prepared to assume unusual roles. At this purpose, they need to think differently or, at least, they must be prepared to consider and adopt different approaches. A transformative leader enables stigmatized barriers to be overcome within a team, and is also responsible for redefine the task of the individuals in the organization.

Bass (1985) indicates that the leader can transform a team when educating them about the importance and results of work, encouraging them to overcome their personal interests in order to benefit the group and of the organization. Thereby, the leader is motivating their subordinates to reach the highest level of excellence in work.

In the face of adversity, it is possible to notice that the leadership role is surrounded by numerous obstacles. It is, therefore, the duty and challenge of the leader, disseminate and implement within the organizations strategies that will lead to the achievement of established goals and objectives.

On the basis of the above background, the next sections present the case study of a company with a particular focus on its environmental practices and strategies. Included data were either extracted from the information available on the website of the company or directly by in-deep interviews with employees.

#### **4. Case study of «Alumina» company**

The case study is related to a Brazilian company producing aluminium and alumina. It is a multinational industry related to metallurgical segment considered to be one of the biggest production complexes of primary aluminium and alumina in the whole world. However, as the disclosure of the official name of the company was not authorized when releasing the data from interviews, it has been assigned the fictitious soubriquet «*Alumina*».

So, the «*Alumina*» company was founded in July 1984 at São Luis, in the Brazilian State of Maranhão, where its headquarters are located and performs an important role in the local and State economy. Currently the company staff is composed of 90% local employees and its operational activities involve hundreds of local suppliers.

As most businesses, «*Alumina*» aims to be the best company or to get a leader position in its field of activities. Due to this reason, it has developed a list of values based on its corporate code of conduct, allowing the relationship with stakeholders according to ethics, integrity and honesty principles.

The corporate code of conduct created by the company establishes standards beyond law requirements. Accordingly to this code, the values of «*Alumina*» are present in business decision-making and in the actions of all employees, suppliers, customers, partners and the communities where it operates (its territory). These values are *integrity, health, safety and environment, customers, excellence, people, profitability, and responsibility*. They are listed and described in the company website (see Table 1)<sup>1</sup>.

The «*Alumina*» business model is based on criteria that ensure economic success, environmental protection and social responsibility. One of the pillars of this model is the management system that strives for continuous improvement in the quality of the production by lowering costs, reducing production time and improving health safety and environment conditions in the workplace.

Regarding certification, the company accomplishes ISO 9001, ISO 14001, SA 8000 and OHSAS 18001 standards, which treat respectively with quality models, environmental management systems, corporate social responsibility, and management systems for health and occupational safety.

In this sense, it is noteworthy the great importance that «*Alumina*» attributes to those issues dealing with the health and safety of its employees. The management system in the company is based on rigorous standards of risk control and prevention programmes, focusing on the awareness and participation of employees.

On account of the search for excellence in all related activities, the company collects several awards in the fields of integrated management, technology; workplace, and health, safety and environment, among others. In 2011 it was one of the 100 top best companies to work for in Brazil, according to the *Great Place to Work* ranking (<http://www.greatplacetowork.com.br/>).

In the «*Alumina*» company, CSR is understood as the process of creating conditions for people, groups, organizations and the community in general who can acquire knowledge and skills that enable them to live to their reality and act on it in a creative and transformative way. Thriving and operating in a sustainable manner is a permanent challenge, a commitment made with all stakeholders: shareholders, consortium companies, employees, customers, suppliers, institutions, ordinary people, government and community. Therefore, the exchange of information and the recognition of the importance of each segment are able to reduce and prevent conflicts and ensure learning for all people concerned.

**Table 1.** The list of «*Alumina*» values

Value	Description
Integrity	“The foundation of the company is integrity. We are open, honest and have trusted relationships with customers, suppliers, co-workers, shareholders and the communities in which we operate”.
Health, safe and environment	“We work safely, in order to protect and promote the health and wellness of people and the environment”.
Customers	“We contribute to customers’ success by creating exceptional value through innovative solutions in products and services”.
Excellence	“We incessantly seek excellence in everything we do, every day”.
People	“We work in an inclusive environment that promotes social inclusion and welcomes changes, new ideas, respect for the individuals and equal opportunity of success for everybody”.
Profitability	“We generate substantial financial returns, that enable profitable growth and result in significant value for shareholders”.
Responsibility	“We are accountable-individually and in teams-for our behaviour our actions and results”.

Source: company website.

<sup>1</sup> As it is usual in a number of company websites, the «*Alumina*» values are listed in the company website which was accessed when developing the case study. However, the website address is not provided to safeguard the anonymity requested by the company.

Furthermore, the company develops tools and actions for sustainability, including social, environmental and economic issues in accordance with the expectations of its stakeholders. Such initiatives generate value, build positive agendas and promote sustainable local development.

In this way, and similarly to other competitors around the world, «*Alumina*» company holds a global approach to sustainability that comprises three distinct, but interdependent pillars: sustainability of products, sustainability of resources, and sustainability of operations. Through these guidelines, strategic objectives and targets have been established to assist all company plants to integrate the aspects of sustainability in their operations.

Specifically, in case of the company plants which are located in Brazil, seven top priority sustainability issues have been determined as well as two cross-cutting ones, as follows:

a) *Priority sustainability issues:*

- conservation of natural resources and biodiversity;
- regional and local development;
- management and people development;
- labour relations strategy;
- value chain;
- access and efficient use of energy; and
- environmental management of waste, effluents and emissions.

b) *Cross-cutting sustainability issues:*

- transparency and accountability; and
- dialogue with stakeholders.

In order to promote a fully sustainable production, audacious goals were defined in 2005 to be achieved either within a 15 (2020) or 25 years term (2030). As we can show in Table 2, strategies are focused on the preservation of the environment, social responsibility and profitability. An advance of achieved results by 2011 is also provided.

Some examples of environmental management practices adopted are highlighted: monthly critical analyses of the operational plans, quarterly internal audits of the environmental management system, monitoring of the industrial waste management programme (which includes segregation, selective collection and recycling), reduction in the emission of gases (considered one of the lowest overall system of metallurgical industries), the *Community Gardens Project*, plant landscaping and environmental parks.

In addition to environmental initiatives, some social activities are also developed and/or supported by the company and its the Advisory Council for Community Relationships. This council, composed of employees and representatives from different departments, form a team focused on the discussion and implementations of «*Alumina*» social practices.

**Table 2.** Strategic objectives and goals intended by «*Alumina*» for 2020 and 2030

Strategic objectives	2020	2030	Results by 2011
Reuse/recycling of waste landfills	75%	100%	74.9% decrease
Rehabilitation of waste-disposal area	30%	40%	-----
Reduction of CO <sub>2</sub> total emissions (direct and indirect) in refineries	20%	30%	8% increase
Energy reduction in every business	20%	30%	3% decrease
Reducing water consumption	15%	25%	27% decrease
Fatalities	zero	zero	zero

Source: own elaboration based on data available at company website for 2012.

In recent years, most of the social activities of the company were developed in communities close to its factories, specifically the one which is located at São Luis. These actions benefit thousands of people in education, health, culture, environment and sustainable development areas.

As a concrete proof of the commitment to the community, up to 2010 around R\$ 30 million<sup>2</sup> have been invested in social projects, benefiting more than 600,000 people. To perform these actions, currently more than 1,500 volunteers work in building a better future for many families.

## 5. Primary data research and discussion on results

In order to complement the information on the website, in-deep interviews were conducted with a sample consisting of 10 «*Alumina*» superintendents. It was a convenience sample, as the interviewees were selected on the basis of their representativeness at the research purposes. These interviews were developed for 30 minutes each, in average, and a summary description on main characteristics of the respondents is included in Table 3.

Obtained data were treated and analysed by developing a content analysis, which was defined by Bardin (1977) as a set of communication analysis techniques in order to obtain, for systematic procedures and objectives, the description of the content of messages, as indicators (qualitative or quantitative) that allow the inference of knowledge regarding production and reception conditions (the variables defined) for these messages.

In order to analyze the data and achieve the intended general objective, a screenplay by categories and subcategories from the theoretical referential was used. Evidence of these categories and subcategories was finally found in the answers to the seven questions that were asked to respondents when they were interviewed.

In this sense, it is important to take in mind that, due to the subjectivity in the respondents' answers, some of the leadership skills that were mentioned in the theoretical framework were not perceived in the provided responses.

On the contrary, other skills verified accordingly to the obtained results were not mentioned in the theoretical referential. These “new” skills that were observed refer to: respect for the environment, respect for the people, and confluence of personal and professional values.

The frequency percentages for all these categories and sub-categories are shown in Table 4 and results will be following discussed.

**Table 3.** Respondents profiles at «*Alumina*» company

Respondents	Id. Acronym	Gender	Department	Age	Years in the company
Interviewee A	I <sub>A</sub>	Female	Community relations	39	14
Interviewee B	I <sub>B</sub>	Male	Controllershship	49	24
Interviewee C	I <sub>C</sub>	Male	Refinery process	49	24
Interviewee D	I <sub>D</sub>	Male	Smelting process	46	20
Interviewee E	I <sub>E</sub>	Male	Smelting process	46	22
Interviewee F	I <sub>F</sub>	Male	Smelting process	48	29
Interviewee G	I <sub>G</sub>	Male	Health, security and environment	51	29
Interviewee H	I <sub>H</sub>	Male	Smelting process	45	17
Interviewee I	I <sub>I</sub>	Female	Refinery process	46	14
Interviewee J	I <sub>J</sub>	Male	Refinery process	49	22

<sup>2</sup> Brazilian Real (R\$) is the currency of Brazil. At the time of publishing this paper (April 2014) the exchange rate with US\$ was around 0.45 (1 R\$ = 0.45 US\$) and 0.32 with Euro (1 R\$ = 0.32 €).



**Table 4.** Category and subcategory analyzed during the interview with the lead (superintendents) from «Alumina» company

Category	Subcategory	Frequency (%)
External pressure	Environmental legislation	70%
	Consciousness of consumer behaviour	100%
Instrumental perception	Consumer's preferences	100%
	Company's survival	80%
Values	Evaluation capacity	50%
	Confluence of personal and professional values	80%
	Respect for environment and people	100%
	Transformer leader	50%
	Leadership by example	50%

### 5.1. External pressure

The category of *external pressure* consisted of two subcategories: *environmental legislation* and *consciousness of consumer behaviour*.

#### a) *Environmental legislation*:

This set of legislative pieces includes different standards and guidelines that companies and institutions should follow and/or accomplish. On this basis, most respondents (70%) understand and believe that there is a dependency between production and environmental legislation. In other words, there is only a guarantee of efficiency of operational processes when environmental legislations are observed.

As an example, the respondent I<sub>H</sub> mentioned that "*the controllership has commitments with the environment as it is involved in the remediation of degraded areas, air, soil and particulate emission (IB)*" "*The operational efficiency in my field depends on combustion efficiency (opacity). Consequently, with the combustion efficiency we are fulfilling environmental legislations*".

Another point is that the company deals with internal procedures in a way more restrictive than the legislation, and therefore the sense of security of operations is quite evident in the content of the leaders' speeches. Specifically, and according to the respondent I<sub>C</sub>, "*we treat with accuracy the legislation as the fugitive emissions and the disposal of waste. Even our internal procedures are more stringent than the legislation*".

Under this same view, Barbosa and Rabaça (2001) understand that CSR expresses a commitment of the organization to society. Accordingly, it demonstrates that the company's participation in the society goes further than simply providing jobs, taxes and profits.

#### b) *Consciousness of consumer behaviour*:

Consumer behaviour has been said to be demanding enough as well as combined with feelings of disappointment and discouragement in the face of corporate attitudes. However, this scenario has changed and nowadays, it is possible to conclude that the consumer is more aware of, confident and has a positive view about sustainable business initiatives. In this context, it is possible that this new attitude is founded from observation of the new profile of the companies in relation to CSR.

Obtained answers are completely aligned with that mindset (100%). As a foundation for this, respondents did not only consider a consumer who requires of companies CSR, but also feels glad to contribute to the design of a product with sustainable features.

Regarding this concept, respondents mentioned that "*the requirement and commitment to society and the environment is a path without back*" (I<sub>B</sub>), or "*the Stakeholders are increasingly demanding a sustainable planet mostly because they believe that natural resources are finite. Besides, it gives pleasure to say that the product that you produce is sustainable*" (I<sub>C</sub>).

## 5.2. Instrumental perception

The category of *instrumental perception* consisted also of two subcategories: *consumer's preferences* and *company's survival*.

### a) Consumer's preferences:

A preference can be understood as a manifestation of a greater liking. On this assumption, all the interviewees (100%) stated in their answers that consumers are increasingly aware of CSR. This can be perceived, e.g. in the perception of I<sub>A</sub>: *"the client prefers companies with quality products without environmental aggression and this makes the companies competitive"*.

Similarly, I<sub>B</sub> indicated that *"the customers are more demanding and have commitment to society and the environment. They use to avoid these companies and forward this teaching to their children"*.

In this way it is possible to observe that the leaders understand that the company's transcends the physical boundaries, in terms of special position, it influences and it is influenced, either directly or indirectly, by the public with which it interacts.

### b) Company's survival:

Taking the lead in a new sustainability-oriented scenario requires a different way of thinking, that is not only from the perspective of how much can be done, but also considering the cost of not undertaking it. In such context, it was possible to observe that 20% of respondents were not aligned with that stance, categorizing CSR as a cost.

For example, I<sub>B</sub> indicated that *"we still need to find technological solutions that transform what we now call revenue costs, adding value to the waste, without the company spend with such practices"*. At the same time, I<sub>D</sub> stated that *"nobody can ignore the cost, nor neglect the socio-environmental responsibility as it involves costs. Somehow this equation has to be resolved"*.

So, and according to respondents, the perception of survival is increasingly latent. Leaders are increasingly convinced of the benefits brought by investments in CSR, even if this is in the short or long term.

## 5.3. Values

Finally, the category of *values* consisted of five subcategories: *evaluation capacity*, *confluence of personal and professional values*, *respect for environment and people*, *transformer leader*, and *leadership by example*.

### a) Evaluation capacity:

The evaluation is a challenging task for a leader, because it establishes the parameters for the business performance, integrating the challenges in the organizational structure, adapting tasks and management styles, choosing the right people and removing people who are not aligned with the company's purpose.

In this regard, it was found that some 50% of respondents indicated that the organization needs firstly to assess what is correct and then carry out the task. To exemplify, a couple of excerpts can be highlighted: *"the premise is do everything correct from the conception of the product to the final destination"* (I<sub>B</sub>). *"I see that there are some people with aptitude for sustainability. These people have a common characteristic: they like people"* (I<sub>D</sub>).

Regarding the evaluation capacity of leaders, Farren and Kayne (1996) emphasize that these individuals need to be good evaluators, providing honest feedback to team members about their performance, as well as determining and clarifying the standards and expectations of the performance.

### b) Confluence of personal and professional values:

The principles and values of a company are grounded by its way of "being", so reflecting the character of the organization. Considering that the organization is composed by people, it is important to realize that the company's success is based on how the company's principles are aligned with the principles of the leader.

This subcategory can be considered as a new element arising in the research, as it was evidenced in the reports from some respondents, but it was not previously perceived in the referential theory. Specifically,

it was possible to identify that 80% of respondents have personal values extremely intertwined with the professional values. Concrete testimonies indicated that *“I believe that it is impossible to dissociate the professional from the citizen. I take care of the company as I take care of my personal life”* (I<sub>B</sub>), or *“I consider the integrity as a essential value”* (I<sub>E</sub>).

In this sense, it is possible to notice that the interviewed leaders understand that there must be a connection between the personal and professional values, so believing that the work is a healthy and necessary complement to their lives.

c) *Respect for environment and people:*

For this subcategory, 100% of respondents stated an important knowledge and responsibility for environmental impacts occurring in the operational process of the «Alumina» company. In this way, rather than accept that the organization is responsible for social and environmental integrity, it is important to recognize that respect for the environment and people is a value, so that it should sustain the economic strategy of the company. According to I<sub>B</sub>: *“the respect for the environment is extremely important. By the way, when someone does something wrong, this can be harmful. In the operations, the cost of non-quality is really important. In others words, the lower quality of product is produced the more the company is spending resources, hours, staff, and producing waste”*.

Meanwhile, I<sub>C</sub> stated that *“the value respect for people is very important because it brings others: responsibility and integrity”*.

Regarding the participation of employees in community events, most respondents (70%) emphasized that their subordinates were engaged. This was evidenced, for example, in the speech by I<sub>A</sub>: *“we have a very good level of commitment. The company has a high percentage of volunteerism, and the participation is increasing”*.

However, it was possible to observe that spire employees (30%) were not so engaged as others. The main justifications for this evidence reside in the high concentration and lack of time to participate of extra activities. For example, and according to I<sub>F</sub>, *“in my department we have a low participation in community work. Surely we were better, but the lack of leaders who mobilize the employees has helped this number decrease”*.

During the research, it was perceived that leaders felt responsible for spreading the environmental and personal values inside and outside the company. In this way, we can venture that a leader plays a vital role with their subordinates. Regarding the implementation of environmental practices in the organization, an illustrative testimony was provided by I<sub>D</sub>: *“the leader has a vital role to achieve the environmental goals because it is through the leader that is given the start of commitment to achieve the business’ goals. The leader does, oversees and gives example”*.

Also from the obtained results of the research that was carried out in the «Alumina» company, it was possible to infer that the environmental conservation and social development are only feasible objectives if the leadership is aligned with environmental strategies and commit to this purpose.

d) *Transformer leader:*

The word “transform” is a synonym of a complete change, something or somebody becomes something or somebody different. A transformer goes a step forward and is capable of encouraging followers to improve their performance, creating a sense of commitment in relation to the business goals. He/she is still, visionary, full of ideas, with clear targets and owes the ability to create a relationship based on knowledge exchange with his/her team. However, only 50% of the respondents were identified as possessing the behaviours and attitudes required to be a transformative leader.

An answer reinforcing this subcategory was provided by I<sub>B</sub>, when indicating that *“the participation of leadership is crucial to revive the commitment of the employees every day, aware them that the work does not end soon after the operation”*. In a similar sense, I<sub>D</sub> stated that *“the great tool of motivation is the people’s recognition. I always take my best employee for strategic leadership meetings”*.

In a general sense, the leaders from «Alumina» company that were interviewed demonstrated appreciation for people. Furthermore, they all agreed when recognizing the importance of the team in the process of a project implementation, as well as specifically in the case of implementation of those projects related to CSR.

e) *Leadership by example:*

The communication and the involvement of a leader are crucial to persuade the employees of what needs to be done. However, when the example of the leader is added to this, there is no doubt on the employees will easily internalize the practicability of the task.

Kouzes and Posner (1997) situated leaders in the point of origin for change. They must innovate, i.e. leaders must be pioneers in doing something that all others may appreciate. Good examples are important as a parameter for the others to follow. During the interviews, it was noted that approximately 50% of respondents have attitudes of a leading example.

In this sense, I<sub>A</sub> said that “*the words move, but the examples drag*”, and I<sub>B</sub> indicated that “*examples and simple attitudes motivate people. Eventually, we encourage them to participate of we call «consciousness moment». I once took all draft papers and spread across the room to the following day be aware of how important is take care of the environment, how much money was spent and, of course, let them know which elements that ensure employability*”.

Thereby, individuals who lead by example have a set of explicit values that are compatible with parameters for its decisions, and these, for the most part, are coherent and appropriate to the terms discussed and shared among their teams.

## 6. Final considerations

Different conclusions can be extracted from the obtained from the obtained results in case of the «*Alumina*» company. So, and according to the *external pressure* category, it is possible to infer that the organization does not only understand the importance of the parameters required by the law and by society, but it also performs conform to them.

Considering those respondents who were highlighted in the environmental legislation subcategory, most of them were assigned to operational areas. In other words, it can be concluded that such awareness is much more evident in those areas where there are more environmental legislation standards to be performed.

It is also important to notice that all respondents were aware of the new consumers attitudes, recognizing this aspect by the example. This means also the recognition of the increasingly demand of environmentally responsible practices by a substantial group of consumers.

Regarding the *instrumental perception* category, it was evidenced that interviewed leaders understand that CSR activities can and should benefit the company. In this respect, they completely agree that the customer is increasingly inclined to acquire and use goods and services from those companies perceived as socially and environmentally responsible.

As regards the category *values*, it was possible to observe that most of the interviewed leaders of the «*Alumina*» company considered that the values are the true stands for sustainability, because through them it is possible to have consistency for dissemination and implementation of CSR strategies, from the most simple to the most complex ones.

After the discussion on results, we can emphasize the influence of a system of personal and business values in a set of corporate actions. Furthermore, even if the reasons for design and implementation of CSR activities in practice are still correlated with instrumental perception and external pressure, values sustain the actions. Values already allow the society to see a catalyst of a more just and equitable coexistence through respect for social and environmental issues.

Thereby and responding to the problem of which came first for the elaboration of this article, it is possible to say that the leadership of the «*Alumina*» company has a indispensable function to the dissemination and implementation of socio-environmental strategies in the firm.

Finally, it is understood and agreed that the term CSR has several dimensions, which seem to derail from the practical point of view. Unlike this perception, it is believed that business and personal values of leadership –when they are aligned– support and perform as the basis for the dissemination and implementation of socio-environmental strategies by creating an environment with firmness and consistency of purpose.

## References

- Barbosa, G., & Rabaça, C. A. (2001). Ética e credibilidade sob uma nova ética [Ethics and credibility under a new ethic]. *Valor econômico* 11 October 2001. *Valor econômico*. <http://www.valoronline.com.br/valoreconomico/materia.asp?id=877148>. Accessed 6 May 2012.
- Bardin, L. (1977). *Análise de conteúdo* [Content analysis]. Lisbon: Edições 70.
- Bass, B. (1985). *Leadership and performance beyond expectations*. New York: The Free Press.
- Covey, S. R. (1994). *Liderança baseada em princípios* [Principles based leadership]. Rio de Janeiro: Campus/Elsevier.
- Farren, C., & Kaye, B. L. (1996). Novas habilidades para novos papéis de liderança [New skills for new leadership roles]. In Hesselbein, F., Goldsmith, M., & Beckhard, R. (Eds.), *O líder do futuro* [The leader of the future] (pp. 181-192). São Paulo: Futura.
- Freeman, R. E. (1984). *Strategic management: a stakeholder approach*. Boston, MA: Pitman Press.
- Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (1997). *O desafio da liderança* [The challenge of leadership]. 2th ed. Rio de Janeiro: Campus/Elsevier.
- Mancini, S., Muritiba, S. N., Oliveira, P., & Kruglianskas, I. (2003). Valores organizacionais na gestão com responsabilidade socioambiental [Organizational values in management with social and environmental responsibility]. Paper presented at EnANPAD 2003, Atibaia. Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Administração. [http://www.anpad.org.br/evento.php?acao=trabalho&cod\\_edicao\\_subsecao=48&cod\\_evento\\_edicao=7&cod\\_edicao\\_trabalho=2089](http://www.anpad.org.br/evento.php?acao=trabalho&cod_edicao_subsecao=48&cod_evento_edicao=7&cod_edicao_trabalho=2089). Accessed 25 April 2012.
- Maximiano, A. C. A. (2009). *Teoria geral da administração: da revolução urbana à revolução digital* [General theory of administration: from the urban revolution to the digital revolution]. São Paulo: Atlas.
- Motta, P. R. (2007). *Gestão contemporânea: a ciência e a arte de ser dirigente* [Contemporary management: the science and the art of being manager]. Rio de Janeiro: Record.
- Srour, R. H. (2000). *Ética empresarial: posturas responsáveis nos negócios, na política e nas relações pessoais* [Business ethics: responsible postures in business, politics and personal relationships]. Rio de Janeiro: Campus.
- Tamayo, A., & Porto, J. B. (2005). *Valores e comportamento nas organizações* [Values and behaviour in organizations]. Petrópolis: Vozes.
- Tenório, F. G., et al. (2006). *Responsabilidade social empresarial: teoria e prática* [Corporate social responsibility: theory and practice]. Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Getulio Vargas.
- Toffler, A. (1995). *A empresa flexível* [The flexible firm]. Rio de Janeiro: Record.