

Research Watch

E-MAIL HIDES YOUR LYING EYES



Studies have shown that most people lie at least once during a 10-minute conversation—and new research reveals that when communication takes place by computer, the incidence of deception rises. In an experiment involving 15-minute conversations between 110 pairs of undergraduate students, **Mattitiyahu Zimbler** and **Robert S. Feldman**, of the University of Massachusetts Amherst, found that people conversing by e-mail told five times as many lies as people speaking face-to-face. The relative impersonality of e-mail decreases self-restraint, the researchers say; it also affects the kinds of deceptions, with e-mailed lies typically being more self-serving than those told in person.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY by Xueming Luo and Shuili Du

“Good” Companies Launch More New Products

Corporate social responsibility is becoming a clear priority: More than 6,000 companies in 135 countries have adopted the UN’s Global Compact, agreeing to align their operations with 10 principles relating to human rights, labor, environment, and corruption. But CSR remains controversial because of its impact on the bottom line. Critics charge that it saps firms—and shareholders—of capital. Proponents argue that it attracts consumers, enhances customer satisfaction, and bolsters public relations.

Our research reveals another benefit: Corporate social responsibility programs can make a company more innovative. Viewed through this lens, CSR is not a peripheral activity but can become a pivotal component of competitiveness and growth.

We studied 128 firms in all major industry sectors from 2001 to 2004, examining the relationship between CSR engagement (as measured by an outside index) and the number of new products introduced. After controlling for variables such as size, financial leverage, and market stability and performing statistical regressions to determine causality, we found that companies in the top third in terms of CSR activities brought out, on average, 47 new products a year, while companies in the bottom third brought out only 12.

What accounts for this effect? We believe that because CSR strengthens relationships with external stakeholders, including customers, suppliers, nonprofits, and governments, it provides access to a wide body of knowledge. This helps a

company stay abreast of evolving market preferences and new technologies and facilitates “creative leaps.”

We also discovered that not all companies reap the same innovation rewards from their CSR endeavors. The higher the investment in R&D, the greater the stimulating effect, especially on pioneering, or first-of-a-kind, innovations.

Marketplace dynamics play a role as well, with the impact of CSR activities magnified for companies in highly competitive environments. Competitive intensity typically fuels organizational learning and thus better equips firms to capitalize on new information. Firms facing strong competition derive more incremental innovations from their CSR endeavors.

In an era of open innovation and rapidly diversifying knowledge, companies can no longer rely solely on internal resources; they must find ways to bring external ideas into the firm. CSR can be a powerful catalyst for doing that. When designing and implementing CSR initiatives, managers should think about their company’s strategic imperatives as well as the social and public relations benefits; carefully coordinate CSR programs with R&D investments; and consider the degree of rivalry they face. They might also regard CSR as a crucial capital investment, not an operational cost. ♡

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FIRST LISTEN, THEN LAUNCH

CSR engagement broadens a company’s access to outside knowledge, market preferences, and new technologies. CSR activities helped these firms come up with dramatic innovations.



Nike

NEW PRODUCT:

Air Jordan XX3, whose “jigsaw puzzle” design reduced plastic waste by at least 17%



Boeing

NEW PRODUCT:

787 Dreamliner, which uses 20% less fuel than existing aircraft of similar size



Toyota

NEW PRODUCT:

The Prius—the world’s first mass-produced gasoline-electric hybrid car

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