



From CSR to Public Value: Review of a Classic

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For almost 40 years, Archie B. Carroll shaped the corporate social responsibility (CSR) discourse into a four-dimensional pyramid framework. The theoretical framework of the American scientist was later adapted to corporate citizenship and sustainability approaches. The four layers of the pyramid postulated by Carroll - structured from foundation to apex as economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic (or discretionary) responsibilities - drew considerable attention from the world of corporate management. The model has been considered the ultimate standard.

New Carroll pyramid focusing on public value

Particularly due to its overwhelming success, a constant improvement of the approach is required. An important criticism of the Carroll pyramid concerns the identification and ordering of the four dimensions, which are inadequately justified theoretically. Therefore, Prof. Dr. Timo Meynhardt (HHL Leipzig Graduate School of Management and University of St. Gallen) and Prof. em. Dr. Peter Gomez (University of St. Gallen) propose an alternative approach in their latest article "Building Blocks for Alternative Four-Dimensional Pyramids of Corporate Social Responsibilities" (<http://bit.ly/299A4x2>). It builds on the public value concept and integrates a microfoundation of psychological research into basic human needs. According to the new approach, responsibility is what the social environment recognizes as serving or promoting the common good. Drawing on their findings from the Swiss Dialog process, the authors have developed a new pyramid with a clear focus on public value. Meynhardt comments, "The advantage of our alternative pyramid logic is that it may be contingently adapted to different cultural contexts, because it allows adaptive internal reordering."

Meynhardt, Timo; Gomez, Peter: "Building blocks for alternative four-dimensional pyramids of corporate social responsibilities", in: Business & Society (2016), DOI: 10.1177/0007650316650444

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