

Chapitre 14

Companies and their stakeholders

Les partenaires de l'entreprise

Background, p. 165

■ Repérer les notions essentielles

Answer the following questions.

a. Why do companies have so many stakeholders?

Companies have a large number of stakeholders because they evolve in a complex environment comprising customers, suppliers and all the economic actors.

b. Why and how should companies pay attention to customers?

Companies should pay attention to their customers because they enable the company to make money. If customers are not loyal to a company's products or services, then the company will make less profit.

c. What is expected from suppliers and why?

Suppliers are expected to be reliable, otherwise companies may face difficulties.

d. What is the role of banks in the corporate world?

Banks provide capital, funds or loans so as to help companies to operate properly, like paying their invoices for instance.

e. What characterizes today's workforce?

Workers today work mostly in the service sector. What is more, women are increasingly present in the labour market. That is why workers today expect flexible work patterns to help them balance their personal and professional lives.

f. What is the role of a trade union?

A trade union defends the interests of its members, such as decent wages or good working conditions.

g. Why do companies rely on modern communication strategies?

Thanks to modern communication strategies, companies can have good-quality exchanges with all of their stakeholders. In addition, they can promote a positive image and thus earn a good reputation.

■ Résumer le texte en français

Résumez ce texte en français, en 150 mots environ.

Les entreprises sont au cœur de réseaux d'échanges avec l'ensemble des acteurs économiques. Leur réussite dépend de la fidélité des clients et de la fiabilité des fournisseurs. En adaptant la production à la demande, elles répondent aux besoins au plus près. Sans les banques qui leur accordent des prêts afin de remplir leurs obligations financières, les entreprises ne pourraient fonctionner. La main d'œuvre aujourd'hui est essentiellement employée dans le secteur tertiaire. L'arrivée des femmes sur le marché du travail a changé le visage des entreprises, qui désormais sont de plus en plus sollicitées pour prendre en compte les demandes d'aménagement du temps de travail, visant à équilibrer vie familiale et professionnelle. Les employés comptent sur le soutien des syndicats pour défendre leurs intérêts, mais l'influence de ces derniers a décliné, en particulier en Grande-Bretagne. Les entreprises mettent au point des stratégies de communication pour que tous leurs partenaires aient une image claire et positive de leur activité.

158 mots

■ Approfondir

Do some research on the topic by answering the following questions.

a. What various strategies do advertisers use to appeal to consumers?

Advertisers resort to all sorts of techniques to appeal to consumers. They need to attract customer attention, arouse interest in the product, create a desire for its advantages and encourage the customer to take action by buying it. In order to influence purchases, they appeal to emotions and desires of peace, security, success or finding love. That is why pictures of beautiful girls, sweet-looking babies or handsome men are often associated with commercial products, even though these may be a car or an insurance company. Another technique consists in playing on your senses (sight, smell, hearing, among others) in order to make you react instinctively and quickly. Also, easy to remember catch-phrases, striking logos, shocking or vivid pictures, strong colour contrasts or exaggerated situations are often used in ads. Admen also rely on the principle of repetition: the more you see an ad, the better you remember it. Another way of attracting consumers is by targeting specific groups, like retired people, age groups or housewives.

b. What is your opinion about the increasing number of loyalty cards that are issued by retailers and services today?

Customer reward programmes, loyalty cards, vouchers, etc., are ubiquitous today and perceived differently.

Such cards may be considered as invasive – there are too many of them and consumers get fed up with having so many in their wallets. They can be lured into acquiring a loyalty card with the promise that they will save money, but they eventually realize that the card has not enabled them to save that much money. Some cards are in fact a disguised way of tracking their purchasing habits and may more or less encroach on their privacy. Some consumers resent sharing private information especially as they are not sure how it will be used or if it will not be sold. Other cards have an expiry date which incites consumers to use them frequently even though they might not need to buy anything.

These cards are a boon for consumers – they are practical and easy to use; they enable consumers to get reductions or special offers that other

customers do not benefit from. They are also beneficial for the companies themselves as they can prevent users from switching over to a competitor. They are a simple way of increasing sales. For instance, a store that has trouble getting customers on Tuesdays can grant card-holders extra discounts on that day. Most companies consider them as a cheap and efficient form of advertising.

c. What is implied by the term “brand image”? Why is this image so important? Give examples of company brand images.

“Brand image” is synonymous with reputation. Companies need to build up their image by a whole series of strategies which consist in giving themselves a sort of personality. This is called branding. A brand image is built on the choice of a name and a symbol in order to increase its perceived value. A brand name should be easy to pronounce, remember and recognize.

A good brand image is very important to build up the loyalty of customers, to establish brand recognition and to differentiate a brand from its competitors. It brings added value to the products or services and can even justify an increase in prices. Competition is not just between products but also between the ways they are perceived.

Lexical Work, p. 167

■ Use the list

Use words from the list to fill in the gaps, then translate the sentences.

a. To create customer *loyalty*, companies acknowledge *responsibility* for mistakes. This is why efficient *aftersales* services are popular among *customers*. They *trust* companies that not only provide *reliable* services but also find solutions when problems occur.

Pour fidéliser les clients, les entreprises reconnaissent leur responsabilité en cas d’erreur. C’est pourquoi les services après-vente efficaces sont appréciés des clients. Ceux-ci font confiance aux entreprises qui non seulement offrent des services fiables mais trouvent aussi des solutions lorsque des problèmes surgissent.

b. Advertisers are people who promote new products by placing an advertisement which may be seen on television. Advertising is an interesting activity because you have to find good ideas in order to advertise such or such a product and to target different categories of consumers.

Les publicitaires sont des personnes qui font la promotion de nouveaux produits en faisant passer une publicité à la télévision. La publicité est une activité intéressante parce qu'il faut trouver de bonnes idées afin de promouvoir (faire la publicité de) tel ou tel produit et de cibler différentes catégories de consommateurs.

Grammar Work, p. 168

■ Les noms dénombrables et indénombrables

Analysez et traduisez les exemples suivants :

En traduisant, remarquez les différents sens de certains noms selon leur catégorie.

1. Companies do business with dozens of stakeholders.

Companies : dénombrable ; *business* : indénombrable ; *stakeholders* : dénombrable.

→ Les entreprises font affaire avec des dizaines de partenaires.

2. In all countries, small businesses are more numerous than multinationals.

Countries : dénombrable ; *businesses* : dénombrable ; *multinationals* : dénombrable.

→ Dans tous les pays, les petites entreprises sont plus nombreuses que les multinationales.

3. Our main supplier is a small catering business.

Supplier : dénombrable ; *business* : dénombrable.

→ Notre principal fournisseur est une petite entreprise de restauration.

4. If you lose your job, you will be out of work.

Job : dénombrable ; *work* : indénombrable.

→ Quand on perd son travail, on est sans emploi.

1. Dites si les mots suivants sont indénombrables (I), dénombrables (D) ou les deux.

Loan : D – **trust** : I (confiance) ou D (trust financier) – **commitment** : D – **advice** : I – **information** : I – **progress** : I – **time** : D (fois) ou I (temps) – **growth** : I (croissance) ou D (pousse, tumeur) – **job** : D – **work** : I (travail) ou D (oeuvre).

2. Utilisez les mots de l'exercice précédent pour compléter les phrases en effectuant les changements nécessaires. Ensuite traduisez les phrases.

a. The company's relations have to be based on *trust*, but within reason.

Les relations avec l'entreprise doivent être basées sur la confiance, mais dans la limite du raisonnable.

b. It takes *time* to build a positive brand image.

Il faut du temps pour bâtir une bonne image de marque.

c. Banks grant *loans* to companies which want to invest in development.

Les banques accordent des prêts aux entreprises qui souhaitent investir dans le développement.

d. We sent our customer the invoice three *times* but he didn't pay us.

Nous avons envoyé trois fois la facture à notre client mais il ne nous a pas réglés.

e. Some retailers try to collect as much *information* about their customers as they can.

Certains détaillants essaient de récolter le plus de renseignements possible sur leurs clients.

f. A lot of *progress* has been achieved targeting customers according to their needs.

On a fait beaucoup de progrès sur la manière de cibler les clients en fonction de leurs besoins.

g. The shareholders expect rapid *growth* of the company's turnover.

Les actionnaires s'attendent à une croissance rapide du chiffre d'affaires de l'entreprise.

h. For people out of *work*, it is difficult to accept that they have lost their *jobs*.

Pour les personnes sans emploi, il est difficile d'accepter l'idée d'avoir perdu son travail.

i. Economic *growth* is due to many factors such as demography and monetary policies.

La croissance économique dépend de plusieurs facteurs comme la démographie et les politiques monétaires.

j. Companies now publish their *commitment* to respecting Human Rights.

Aujourd'hui, les entreprises font connaître leur engagement à respecter les droits de l'Homme.

k. Good bankers provide reliable *advice* for their customers to make the right choice.

Les bons banquiers fournissent à leurs clients des renseignements fiables afin qu'ils fassent le bon choix.

■ L'expression de la quantité (et les quantificateurs)

Analysez et traduisez les exemples suivants : (A) *little* et *less* sont suivis de noms indénombrables au singulier, et (a) *few* ou *fewer* sont suivis de noms dénombrables au pluriel.

1. As they had a little money, they were able to buy presents for the whole family.

Comme ils avaient un peu d'argent, ils ont pu acheter des cadeaux pour toute la famille.

2. When consumers have very little money, they cannot afford to buy luxury products.

Lorsque les consommateurs disposent de très peu d'argent, ils n'ont pas les moyens de s'acheter des produits de luxe.

3. Banks tend to lend less money these days.

De nos jours, les banques ont tendance à prêter moins d'argent.

4. A few days ago, they launched their marketing campaign.
Ils ont lancé leur campagne de marketing il y a quelques jours.
5. A shop that has too few customers cannot make enough profit.
Un magasin ayant trop peu de clients ne peut pas dégager suffisamment de bénéfices.
6. They have fewer customers than before because of the crisis.
Ils ont moins de clients qu'avant à cause de la crise.

3. Complétez les phrases suivantes avec *less* ou *fewer*.

- a. *There were fewer customers than usual.*
- b. *There should be less advertising on TV.*
- c. *Ten years ago, there were fewer advertisements at the cinema.*
- d. *They have been exporting less wool from Australia.*
- e. *I was given less advice than I expected.*

4. Traduisez les phrases suivantes.

- a. Il y a aujourd'hui moins d'entreprises dans les petites villes anglaises.**

Today, there are fewer companies (located) in small English towns.

- b. Ils auront peu de temps pour améliorer leur image de marque.**

They will have little time to improve their brand image.

- c. Le magasin m'a accordé quelques réductions sur mes achats de Noël, avant les soldes.**

The shop / store granted me a few discounts / gave me a few reductions on my Christmas purchases, before the sales.

- d. L'entreprise a fait moins de bénéfices l'année dernière.**

The company made fewer profits last year.

- e. La publicité a probablement moins d'influence sur les consommateurs que l'on ne croit.**

Advertising has probably less influence on consumers than believed.

- f. Un peu de confiance est nécessaire dans les relations avec les fournisseurs.**

A little / Some trust is necessary in the relations with suppliers.

g. Peu de clients ont fait confiance à cette société de vente par correspondance.

Few customers trusted this mail order company.

h. Cette banque accorde trop peu de prêts à ses clients.

This bank grants too few loans to its customers.

i. Il y a quelques années, peu de gens faisaient leurs achats par Internet.

A few years ago, few people did their shopping online.

Exam Work, p. 170

1. COMPRÉHENSION. D'après l'auteur de cet article, en quoi la RSE (Responsabilité Sociale des Entreprises) est-elle bénéfique pour l'entreprise comme pour la société ? (120 mots environ.)

Pour les grandes entreprises, la RSE n'est plus perçue comme une obligation pénible ou un moyen détourné de redorer son image ou d'attirer des actionnaires. Au contraire, les entreprises injectent plus volontiers de l'argent dans des causes sociétales car elles en tirent d'immenses avantages : bénéfices accrus, fidélisation des clients, recrutement d'employés talentueux, motivation des membres du conseil d'administration, innovation plus forte et culture d'entreprise enrichie. Les entreprises qui donnent de l'argent pour améliorer la société voient leurs profits augmenter par rapport à la concurrence. D'après l'auteur, grâce à la philanthropie, une sorte de cercle vertueux s'installe, car les employés et les consommateurs se tournent davantage vers ces entreprises dans leur désir de surmonter les divers problèmes sociétaux qui existent.

120 mots

2. COMPREHENSION.

a. What is IKEA doing to be environmentally-friendly? (About 110 words.)

Ikea is intent on going green and designing sustainable furniture. They have replaced their traditional light bulbs by LEDs. They have reduced the quantity of foam inside their sofas, whenever possible. They now recycle leftover wood to provide heating for the towns surrounding their factories. They have scaled down their packaging to a minimum, leaving as little air as possible inside their famous flat packs. They are also investing in the production of green energy by setting up wind farms and solar panel units, which they own and operate. Their ultimate goal is to become self-reliant in terms of energy within a few years' time. These initiatives have been very well received by customers.

114 words

b. Why does the writer have doubts about this policy? (About 40 words.)

The writer believes this is all for show because Ikea's products are mainly made of wood, a raw material that is being squandered globally. For him, Ikea epitomizes consumer society and its wasteful practices by selling throwaway stuff, however cheap it may be.

43 words

3. EXPRESSION. Do some research on the web about Ikea and its strategies to adapt to different cultures around the world. (About 75 words.)

*La réponse à cette question dépendra des recherches effectuées.
Vocabulaire utile :*

to attract the middle class; to suit a local market; to adapt to changing needs; to reflect apartment sizes; to adapt the size of furniture or tableware; to offer affordable prices; to source raw materials locally; to market across cultures; to manage cultural differences; to deal with foreign customers; to build a long-term customer relationship; to customize products to needs; to hire a culturally diverse workforce; to capitalize on the skills of the local workforce; to avoid cultural missteps; to take into account local sensitivities, etc.

4. COMPRÉHENSION. Selon l’auteur, pourquoi les politiques de RSE sont-elles contre-productives ? (120 mots environ.)

La RSE, pour laquelle 20 milliards de dollars ont été dépensés en 2013, est vaine tant que d’autres aspects ne seront pas abordés par les États. Elle est minée par le paradoxe suivant : les entreprises ont beau mettre en place des mesures visant à améliorer leur impact sociétal ou environnemental, cela ne servira à rien tant que leurs efforts consisteront à contourner ou à empêcher les réglementations qui seraient bonnes pour la société et l’environnement. En réalité, elles consacrent davantage d’efforts et d’argent à s’opposer à des lois qui empêchent l’exploitation des travailleurs et la destruction de l’environnement, en faisant pression sur les États. La RSE est utile et vertueuse en apparence, mais elle est sapée par la volonté de maintenir les profits coûte que coûte, au détriment des objectifs sociétaux affichés.

133 mots

5. COMPREHENSION. Why should the environment be viewed as a “stakeholder”, according to the writer? (About 100 words.)

The point made by the writer is that nature provides companies with the very raw materials they need to succeed: if they keep on depleting resources, they will have to close down for good. That is why nature itself is compared to an investor in business ventures ; businesses need investors in order to survive. Animal and plant species are vital to the pharmaceutical industry, for instance. Mangroves and other environments such as forests or river basins are complex, precious eco-systems that reduce pollution and maintain bio-diversity. Companies need to consider the environment as a proper partner whose contribution is vital.

101 words

6. EXPRESSION. Comment on the cartoon. To what extent does it apply to the other documents? (150 words)

The cartoon depicts a company meeting where ethical commitments are being discussed by managers. They seem rather reluctant to make efforts to engage with stakeholders. One manager suggests that they adopt ethical attitudes, but quickly adds that these should be applied within certain limits. Indeed, the managers appear to have other things on their minds.

The cartoon shows how hesitant companies can be when it comes to CSR. Document 3 underlines that CSR efforts are vain as long as companies

lobby against regulations meant to protect stakeholders, like workers or even the environment. CSR is seen as virtuous and desirable but stands in the way of profit-making. In document 1, the impression is that some efforts are all for show, as the products manufactured end up having a negative impact in the environment.

These managers ought to read documents 1 and 4 to understand that their profits and long-term survival depend on a greater sustainability.

155 words

7. EXPRESSION. Rédigez le courrier de réclamation destiné au service clientèle d'une compagnie de transports aériens.

Mr / Mrs XXX (name of the customer)
(address of the customer)

30 June 20..

After Sales Manager
(name and address of the company)

Dear Sir / Madam

On 25 June 20.., I was not allowed to board the flight from Paris to Stockholm (STO 345) on the grounds that it was overbooked, even though I had checked in on time. Moreover, the employee at the information desk was most unpleasant and unhelpful.

Because of this incident, I missed a particularly important business appointment with a customer.

You must understand that I am very dissatisfied and that obviously this incident requires some explanation. Moreover, I expect to receive the compensation to which I am entitled by the European Union legislation on air passenger transport.

You will find enclosed an EU passenger complaint form with all the relevant details.

As a regular passenger with your company, I look forward to hearing from you, and do hope that such an inconvenience will never occur again.

Yours faithfully

8. COMPRÉHENSION. En vous appuyant sur les documents 1 à 5, vous rédigerez une synthèse qui dégage et mette en lumière les enjeux concernant la responsabilité sociale des entreprises de nos jours.

Les documents de cet ensemble démontrent que la RSE, qui n'a longtemps été qu'une simple façade, est désormais au cœur des préoccupations des entreprises, en particulier les grands groupes, malgré certaines contradictions liées à la nécessité même de dégager des bénéfices.

Le premier et le quatrième document soulignent qu'elles y ont un intérêt double – voir leurs profits augmenter et protéger l'environnement, ce dernier étant à l'origine de leur réussite et de leur survie à long terme. En intégrant la dimension sociale et environnementale à leurs objectifs et pratiques, les entreprises bénéficient aussi de retours positifs de la part de leurs clients, partenaires essentiels.

Cependant, les documents 2, 3, 4 et 5 pointent du doigt quelques limites et obstacles. La RSE restera vaine tant que l'ensemble du contexte réglementaire des pays où les entreprises opèrent ne les contraindra pas à rester vertueuses, tant en matière de protection des droits sociaux que pour la préservation de la nature. Elles doivent prendre conscience que leur intérêt est en jeu, mais cela ne semble pas encore complètement acquis.

174 mots