

BCD Travel Case Study

Business Travel Leader Integrates Sustainable Practices Across the Globe



The Company

BCD Travel is the world's largest privately held travel management company (TMC). It helps companies make the most of what they spend on travel. This means keeping clients' on-the-road employees safe and productive and equipping them to make good choices about safety, sustainability and spending. It also means advising corporate travel and procurement managers about how to grow the value of their travel programs. The company has been built through mergers and acquisitions over three decades. The BCD Travel brand emerged in 2006, following a large merger. The next year, BCD Travel introduced its **corporate social responsibility principles**. CSR has been an important part of the company's strategic direction ever since. "The biggest challenge to achieving our ambitious CSR goals is integrating initiatives across wholly owned units, subsidiaries, joint ventures, affiliates and partners that cover 108 countries," said Sharon Dirks, BCD's Senior Manager of Global CSR.

EcoVadis' assessment covers BCD's wholly owned operations in 26 countries. As BCD rolled out sustainability standards and reporting worldwide, the company's EcoVadis score rose. In 2016, BCD became the first TMC to earn EcoVadis' highest rating. This case study explores how BCD achieved EcoVadis gold.

Key Facts

- Largest privately held travel management company
- Revenue of US\$24.6 billion in 2016
- Nearly 13,000 employees
- Presence in 108 countries

EcoVadis Snapshot

- Underwent first EcoVadis assessment in 2010
- Significantly improved EcoVadis score throughout the five evaluations
- Achieved gold rating in 2016, becoming the first travel management company to do so
- Use EcoVadis Corporate service level to manage CSR assessments

Supporting sustainability at every level

Step 1: Secure buy-in and commitment

BCD Travel's approach to CSR has evolved since 2007—including how sustainability efforts are coordinated and how they're supported by everyone from executives to front-line employees.

"While our company's leaders supported CSR from the start, it took awhile to build a structure that integrated CSR goals into business goals," Dirks explained. Today, the company's mission is to build a better workplace, world and business, a commitment that encompasses how it treats employees, serves customers and operates in and gives back to communities where it does business.

An executive committee, made up of five company leaders representing global client management, human resources, finance and business ethics, technology and supplier relations, meets quarterly. The committee assesses CSR progress; strategizes on how to further integrate CSR and business goals; and seeks new ways to engage employees worldwide in BCD's sustainability mission. In addition, these executives and their teams identify and collect data that substantiates progress. "This data is essential to meeting requirements for EcoVadis assessments, and

we also use it in our company's detailed annual CSR report and submission to the [United Nations Global Compact](#)," Dirks said. The Global Compact calls on companies to align strategies and operations with universal principles on human rights, fair labor practices, environmental protection and anti-corruption practices.

But support isn't only top down. Dirks' team is dedicated to CSR and responsible for developing and implementing the company's defined CSR strategy. Also, on the ground in countries around the world, CSR coordinators support the mission, encourage participation among colleagues and share progress via a social-media-for-business platform that reaches everyone in the company.

"It's a company wide effort that goes well beyond being 'green,'" she said. "At BCD Travel, CSR covers people, the environment, ethical business practices, information security, data protection and philanthropy. All these aspects of CSR are important to our employees, our customers and our brand."

Aligning sustainable practices across Global business operations

Step 2: Educate and engage employees worldwide

BCD Travel became a CSR pioneer when competitors and most clients weren't prioritizing sustainability. At the time, the business travel industry was not talking about topics such as CO₂ emissions or traveler security and well-being.

"Since then, priorities and risks have changed, and the importance of corporate social responsibility has increased significantly," Dirks said. "Many of our largest customers are publicly traded companies with CSR goals embedded in their commitments to shareholders. Part of how clients meet those commitments is by requiring suppliers like us to do business in line with their CSR goals."

But BCD also has its own commitment to CSR. The company first defined its CSR goals in 2007, joined the U.N. Global Compact in 2008 and has worked diligently to integrate CSR principles into all aspects of its business ever since. "BCD's global structure presents the greatest challenge to meeting our CSR goals," Dirks explained. "Our CSR department works closely with human resources, marketing and other stakeholders across dozens of countries on campaigns that engage employees at all levels in companywide CSR efforts."

The first campaigns mainly focused on philanthropic projects. Today, they cover all aspects of CSR—from environmental activities and local charitable fundraisers to security awareness and employee appreciation events. Messages come not only from executives, but also from lower-level employees who encourage colleagues to get engaged and "live" CSR in the workplace every day.

BCD also uses an online learning platform to educate employees about CSR. Training on topics such as health and safety, information security, ethical business practices and human rights are available to all employees anywhere in the world.



Engaging partners and suppliers

Step 3: Integrate CSR goals into supply chain operations

BCD Travel has long-standing partnerships with suppliers throughout the corporate travel industry—from airlines and hotels to rail and rental car companies and more. In addition, partner agencies in 86 countries provide travel services to BCD clients. “We strive to achieve responsible, CSR-oriented business practices throughout our operations, including our partner network and supply chain,” Dirks said. “Our partner agreements and supplier contracts contain a **Supplier Code of Conduct** outlining expectations and compliance requirements.”

In early 2016, BCD subscribed to the EcoVadis Corporate service level to bring partners and suppliers into its CSR assessments. Today, BCD engages 35 companies in its CSR value chain—a number it constantly seeks to increase. BCD uses EcoVadis assessment information on partners and suppliers in CSR performance reports provided to stakeholders and clients.



Advancing CSR performance

Step 4: Participate in EcoVadis assessments

BCD Travel has participated in five EcoVadis assessments since 2010. Its score in all categories—environment, labor practices, fair business practices and sustainable procurement rose steadily, culminating in a gold rating in 2016.

“EcoVadis’ scorecard results and suggestions for improvement helped us identify and remedy gaps and increase our CSR performance over the years,” Dirks said. “But as we improved, EcoVadis’ expectations grew, so the bar was set higher every year. To reach the gold rating, we had to implement and execute CSR policies, actions and reporting on a global level. We also needed to align reporting to the internationally recognized GRI standard, which businesses use to communicate the sustainability-related impact of operations.”

Achieving EcoVadis gold put BCD ahead of its largest competitors; placed it in the top 1% of all suppliers assessed in its industry category; and put BCD among the top 2% of all suppliers assessed by EcoVadis.

Looking into the future

Step 5: Inspire sustainable practices across the business travel industry

“BCD Travel was the first travel management company to achieve EcoVadis gold, but we don’t want to be the last,” Dirks said. “Our executives consider themselves CSR ambassadors within the corporate travel industry—evangelizing about the importance of setting and achieving sustainability goals. I speak at conferences and to internal and external stakeholders, explaining how we integrate CSR goals globally, engage employees in the effort and measure progress through EcoVadis assessments and other key performance indicators. “The BCD Travel brand is increasingly recognized for sustainability,” she said.

“It’s a distinction that’s a point of pride with our employees, helps us attract new hires and ensures we are the supplier of choice for companies that also place a high value on sustainable practices. EcoVadis has helped us globalize our CSR initiatives, measure our progress and set our goals even higher for the future.”

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EcoVadis is the first collaborative platform providing sustainability ratings and performance improvement tools for global supply chains. EcoVadis' easy-to-use CSR scorecards help procurement teams to monitor supplier environmental, social and ethical practices across 150 purchasing categories and 110 countries

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