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How can Alaya increase its clients' employees' engagement on the "solidarity" platform? Positioning the current employees' engagement strategy of Alaya in the CSR literature

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How can Alaya increase its clients' employees' engagement on the "solidarity" platform? Positioning the current employees' engagement strategy of Alaya in the CSR literature.

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Internship report
Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Standardization, Social Regulation and Sustainable Development

Under the supervision of Professor Valentina Mele

January 2021

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Introduction

As scientists, stakeholders and the media have been communicating and raising awareness more widely about the increasing pressures on humanity and the environment in recent years, civil society all around the world is urgently calling for actions to be taken by governments and businesses, in order to change current production and consumption behaviors, recognized as the main contributors to environmental and social issues that our societies are currently facing (Turker, 2009). Consequently, a vast majority of companies have elaborated their own Corporate Social Responsibility strategies (CSR) in order to bring back together business and society (Vlachos et al., 2014). While some businesses have internalized their CSR strategies and initiatives, some are depending on external partners to achieve their actions and objectives. It is precisely on this B2B hypothesis, offering an employees' engagement platform and a customer service to businesses, that the startup Alaya has built its business plan.

Founded in 2018 by André Abreu, Guillaume Granelli and Niklas Van Neyghem, the Swiss company Alaya is offering businesses an innovative platform, i.e software-as-a-service to engage employees in their company's CSR strategy by making an impact on today's social and environmental challenges. The technology provided by Alaya could thus be seen as an asset for businesses to build a purpose-driven company culture, while strengthening their CSR initiatives by involving their employees. As the purpose of the engagement platform is to offer corporate volunteering opportunities, goods and monetary donations, as well as to leverage on the altruistic behaviors of individuals, in this context, CSR initiatives can be referred to as "actions on the part of the firm that appear to advance, or acquiesce in the promotion of some social good, beyond the immediate interests of the firm and its shareholders and beyond which is required by law" (Waldman et al., p.1703, 2006).

If the startup can be considered as a flourishing business, convincing an increasing number of CSR and Human Resources (HR) managers to implement the technology as a strategic tool within their company (Bolleter, 2020), challenges still remain when it comes to engage employees on the platform and persuade them of the benefits to get involved and take action.

As a member of the Customer Success department at Alaya, my task is to accompany the clients in the implementation of the program and find strategies to engage their collaborators on the platform. To this end, by analyzing the findings of existing CSR research at microlevel, i.e. at the level of employees, this internship report is devoted to the understanding of the motives driving employees' engagement with the CSR initiatives of their company, and how could Alaya integrate those findings to improve its employees' engagement strategy.

For the purpose of this paper, the relationship between the concepts of perceived CSR and organizational identification, agreed to be positively related to employees' engagement, will be analyzed to understand employees responses to CSR (De Roeck et al., 2014; Glavas & Kelley, 2014; Jones & Martens, 2009; Kim et al., 2010,). Through the lenses of the Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1974), this relationship has been investigated by numerous research in the CSR literature, highlighting two majors mediators - organizational pride (Ashforth et al., 2008; Jones, 2010) and perceived external prestige (Carmeli, 2005; Kim et al., 2010; Smidts et al., 2001) - and one moderator of the entire chain process, i.e. Organizational justice (Folger, 1998; Folger et al., 2005; Rupp et al., 2006). In order to provide recommendations to improve Alaya's employees' engagement strategy, the following concepts as well as their managerial implications will be presented and discussed in this paper.

Part 1: Organization Overview
      Chapter 1: What is Alaya's purpose
            1.1 A brief History of Alaya

Born in January 2018 from a merger between two startups; Share A Dream SA and Hope it up, Alaya responded to the urge of companies pressured by stakeholders to take responsibility for their social and environmental implications.

Indeed, after traveling the world searching for social projects, Niklas Van Neyghem, biomedical engineer , Guillaume Granelli, graduated from HEC Lausanne and Olivier Eyries, graduated from Political Science Lausanne, decided in 2015 to fund Share A Dream, a platform allowing small NGOs, struggling to attract sponsors and volunteers, to connect

with private companies willing to improve their CSR strategies. Within a year, the founders had the opportunity to take part in the early-stage startup accelerator MassChallenge Switzerland 2016 (MassChallenge, s.d.) which help them put their vision into a concrete tool allowing NGOs and corporate businesses to exchange and share their expertise on accounting, marketing and management through skill-based volunteering experiences.

Driven by the same objective, André Abreu, former associate director of the recruitment firm Michael Page, founded Hope it Up in 2016 with the ambition to provide a platform connecting collaborators with local charities in Switzerland, offering mainly field volunteering activities and fundraisings. Through the network of MassChallenge Switzerland, to which Hope it Up participated in 2017, the two startups met and quickly realized that they were both heading in the same direction, hoping to thrive positive change in the businesses culture and raise employees' awareness about social and environmental issues. The respective founders therefore decided to unify their resources and strengths to build a strong and sustainable business model.

1.2 Alaya's ambition

Being the first organization in Switzerland providing an innovative meeting point for businesses and nonprofits, Alaya rapidly grew from a small Swiss based startup of 10 employees, into a flourishing organization with 26 members located in Switzerland and Barcelona. Starting with the intention to offer a greater visibility to NGOs on one side and to help corporations to make a positive impact on today's social and environmental challenges by engaging employees on the other, Alaya became a real asset for organizations to strengthen companies' CSR strategy and bring purpose at work.

Indeed, today Alaya does not only give employees the opportunity to connect with NGOs and volunteer. Through the platform, users, i.e. employees, can also take part in challenges, which can be defined as "gamified, purpose-driven and everyday actions that have a positive impact for the planet, your people, and your company" (Alaya, 2020). Challenges therefore aim at raising awareness of various societal and environmental issues and encouraging employees to change their daily behaviors. For instance, challenges are classified in four categories, i.e. sustainability, wellness, mindfulness and empathy, and

suggest small actions such as using a reusable bottle instead of a plastic bottle for a month or taking ten minutes every day to meditate for a week.

The opportunities offered through the platform Alaya are thus very beneficial for companies as it supports them to build a strong and meaningful corporate culture, increasing employee's engagement at work, retention rate and hiring potential, while making progress on social and environmental challenges and fortifying their CSR strategy.

Today, Alaya is present in more than seventy countries (see appendix A) and partners with forty companies from all around the world such as PwC, L'Oréal, Société Générale or Nexthink.

The startup is also looking for new partnerships with schools, i.e. High Schools, Universities and Business Schools, that would be willing to implement a volunteering platform to encourage students to have a positive impact on the society and the planet as part of their academic experience. Indeed, students are the leaders of tomorrow. Therefore, by encouraging schools to implement this type of learnings community engagement, Alaya hopes to prepare students even better for their future professionally, but also to raise their awareness on today's and tomorrow's social and environmental issues, while stimulate their civic engagement. This solution, very similar to Alaya, is taken care of by the education department within the organization and is called Share-a-dream.

Chapter 2: Organization structure

The startup is organized in six departments (see Appendix B) working closely together to ensure that the technology provided by Alaya offers an innovative and strategic tool to strengthen corporations' culture and values, while staying an intuitive and fun experience for the employees.

To begin with, the product department is responsible for the technical aspects, not only to make certain that the platform is operational, but also to transform ideas and needs of new features, coming from users or managers, into reality. The work produced and the designs

created by the product team are therefore impacting employees' engagement as they are influencing users' experience on the platform.

Collaborating with the product department on the designs and wording used on the platform to target users, the marketing and communication team is of course also working deeply on efficient strategies to raise brand awareness, generate volume and quality leads and engage with the community via the website and social medias such as LinkedIn or Facebook. The Marketing and Communication department has thus, a crucial role as they are targeting each audience impacted by Alaya's work, i.e. companies, nonprofit and employees.

Indeed, Alaya has three types of clients whose customer relationship is managed by different departments. The Nonprofit organizations (NPO) department is taking care of the research of new NGOs to onboard on the platform but is also in charge of the matching between NGOs and organizations. In other words, when a client is willing to organize an activity, i.e. field volunteering, skills volunteering, goods collection or cash donation, the NPO team will establish a list of nonprofits and activities they offer according to the client's need and capacity. As of today, Alaya is partnering with more than five hundred nonprofits from all over the world and has organized two thousand activities, i.e. field volunteering, skills volunteering, goods collection or cash donation.

Regarding the companies, their first point of contact with Alaya is the sales department. The sales team gets in touch with potential clients which have shown interest through Alaya's website and social medias but is also approaching clients who did not reach the startup before. During the negotiations' process, the sales department is of course discussing the price the company is ready to meet. Alaya's pricing depends on the number of people employed and is organized as subscriptions, which means that depending on the price paid, the features displayed on the platform will vary, offering users different types of opportunities.

Once the contract has been signed, it is the customer success department who will be in contact with the people in charge of the program within the company, i.e. HR, CSR

managers, Foundations or internal communication, to first launch the program, which involves discussions to define the company's policies, (if the company allows volunteering activities during working hours; if so, how many hours per year; what are the causes or charities they accept or do not accept to support), the type of activities they would like to suggest to their employees and how is the company going to communicate about the platform. After the launch and throughout the duration of the contract, the account manager designated for a specific client, will be in touch with the person of contact within the company to plan future initiatives and activities and evaluate the engagement of the employees, but also to support employees directly with their questions and struggles as well as suggestions, as some companies allow employees to recommend NGOs and organize events. The customer success department is therefore the main point of contact for managers after their subscription, but most importantly to users whenever they need support.

Part 2: Description of specific situation/challenge/question undertook during the internship.

Chapter 3: Responsibilities and challenges encountered

As a Customer Success (CS) Intern, my task is to support the CS managers and provide them the materials to respond to clients' inquiries and needs.

As mentioned earlier, once the sales department has signed a new client, it is the CS manager responsibility to discuss with the person in charge of the program to understand where the company stands regarding the culture, policies and initiatives already in place or organized within the company, but also to have a clear idea of the objectives the client would like to achieve when implementing Alaya in terms of impact and employees engagement.

When discussing the impact, a client expects to achieve, Alaya defines it as the positive impacts that actions taken by employees on the platform, such as volunteering activities, donation or the participation in challenges are generating. It is therefore measured, in hours for field and skills-based volunteering, number of goods donated for goods collections, the

amount of money raised for cash donations and recently CO2 emissions and/or water saved when taking part in challenges.

Employees' engagement is communicated by Alaya's CS managers as the percentage of employees who undertook as least one action through the platform, whether it be directly linked to a charity, i.e volunteering or giving, or to challenges aiming at becoming aware of environmental, social or mental health issues and encouraging oneself to adjust his or her behaviors to have a positive impact.

Concretely, in order to accomplish the objective set by the CS manger and the client, my responsibility is to formulate and coordinate initiatives and/or activities which will be promoted by the person in charge of the program, such as a Step Count challenges to raise money for a cause, a matching campaign during which every amount donated by employees will be doubled by the company or a wellbeing month encouraging employees to take part in one challenge each week to find a better work-life balance. Those initiatives are thus, more a top-down approach, meaning that the person in charge of the program within the company is the one who validates the initiatives and activities set up on the platform for the employees.

However, some companies are keen to a more bottom-up approach, which means that a community of employees, which are called champions, are selected to become administrators of the platform. Champions will suggest and contact charities they want to support and organize activities, i.e. volunteering activities or donations, with those charities. In this scenario, I am often the point of contact for the champions. My task is to support them, by providing forms and documents they will send to nonprofits. I am also a technical support to help set up the event on the platform and in many cases, I am preparing the communication to promote the activities to their collaborators as well.

Even though the CS department is spending a significant amount of time and resources on discussing with the key person in charge of the program within the companies, on the training of champions and on the promotion of the platform and the activities to

employees (which is also done by using communication kits and documents created by the marketing department), engaging employees on the platform is still a challenge.

As I have experienced, the challenge to engage employees on the platform is three-fold. First of all, when launching the program, the first action employees have to accomplish is to create their account and complete their profile on the platform. Even after receiving the communication and knowing about company' activities running on Alaya, many employees do not create their account.

The second challenge in terms of employees' engagement is to inspire to make a first contribution, whether it be volunteering, donation or to start a challenge. Finally, it is challenging to keep champions and employees interested in the platform and energized to continue to organize activities and make contributions spontaneously.

Increasing the employees' engagement rate is the main challenge the Customer Success department is trying to overcome. Since the creation of the start-up, every Alaya's department, from sales, to product, marketing and customer success have worked hand in hand to find sustainable solutions. Many improvements have been done in terms of new features facilitating the users' experience on the platform as well as in communication and marketing to simplify, explain and promote the platform to employees. However, depending on the company, the ways to engage employees on Alaya still remains an important question.

In order to provide some recommendations to increase the employees' engagement rate of Alaya's clients, this internship report is dedicated to the understanding of the various factors, highlighted by CSR and employees' engagement literature, which have an influence on employees' engagement in their company's CSR initiatives.

Theoretical and empirical section

Part 3: Existing concepts and theories

In the last decade, the concept of CSR has become an important subject of studies in different domains such as human resources management, organizational behavior and

psychology (Gond et al., 2017). However, the literature on CSR appears to be fragmented as approaches differ (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012). Indeed, while studies at the macro level (i.e., institutional and organizational level) have burgeoned, providing a detailed understanding of the reasons for and the advantages of a CSR strategy for companies, little has been done to analyze the impacts of CSR at a micro level, i.e., individual or employee level,(Glavas, 2016; Vlachos et al., 2014). Yet, employees' engagement is key to a successful CSR program, itself resulting in corporate influence growth, reputation improvement (Opoku-Dakwa et al., 2018), employees' job satisfaction (De Roeck et al., 2014), as well as talent retention (Jones, 2010) and increased productivity (Carmeli et al., 2007). Understanding better the conditions influencing employees' engagement in CSR is therefore crucial for Alaya's customer success department to ensure the perenniality of the partnerships with its clients.

Chapter 4: Explaining the Relationship between Perceived CSR and Organizational identification.

According to psychological and behavioral studies, organizational identity, which is derived from social identity, is the most effective framework to predict employees' behavior and thus, response to CSR (Turner, 1982; De Roeck et al., 2014; Jones, 2010). The following chapter is therefore devoted to the understanding of the concept of organizational identification and the factor influencing this identification.

4. 1 Social Identity Theory (SIT)

Social Identity Theory, developed by Tajfel in 1978, suggests that individuals cognitively classify people into diverse social categories. Doing so, facilitates one's understanding of its social environment and people he or she is surrounded with, but it is also a way to define him- or herself in this same environment. Social identification, defined as "the perception of oneness with or belongingness to some human aggregate" (Ashforth & Mael, 1989, p. p.21), as well as personal identity, e.g. bodily attributes, abilities, psychological traits, interests, are essential components of the self-concept. Indeed, being able to classify him- or herself into clear categories, e.g. I am a Swiss, female, tennis player, employee of XY company, etc., partly helps the individual to answer the question, who am I (Turner, 1982)?

Social Identification literature has highlighted a couple of principles which can be relevant for our understanding of organizational identification and its impact on employee's responses to CSR.

First of all, an individual tends to identify with and seek membership in social groups which are associated with highly positive characteristics. Affiliation with that group is recognized as a way to enhance his or her self-worth (-esteem) and thus, build or fortify the self-concept (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). As the association helps the individual to *realize* him- or herself (Tajfel, 1974) and enhance his or her self-esteem, the membership is also often linked to an emotional component (Riketta, 2005). The Social Identity Theory is therefore a combination of cognitive and affective factors as the membership to the group is a way to define oneself in its social environment and results in an emotionally satisfying self-definition (Tajfel, 1974). Furthermore, the emotional attachment arising from the group membership may generate a sense of pride, which in turn creates a willingness to identify even more strongly with the group. As the identification deepens, one will feel more concerns about the future of the group and will thus engage in behaviors to contribute to the success of their group (De Roeck et al., 2014). The following section will demonstrate that these principles can be apply to organizational context as well.

4.2 Organizational identification

In 1945, explaining organizational identification, Simon argued that when employees identify with their organization, psychological attachments are established. As a consequence, the company goals and wellbeing become present in all decision employees have to make (Simon, 1947). But it was Mael and Ashforth who, through the Social Identity Theory framework, named the concept "Organizational Identification" and gave it the following definition: "perceived oneness with an organization and the experience of the organization's success or failures as one's own" (Ashforth & Mael, 1992, p.104). Organizational identification is therefore a form of social identification as it allows the employees to define and realize themselves through the characteristics associated with the membership of the organization.

Subsequently, the use of the SIT in the study of organizational identification will permit an increasing number of researches to show the importance of employees' organizational identification, notably to understand employees' performance, employees' intention to stay in the company, and organizational citizenship behavior (Hasan & Hussain, 2015). Indeed, applying the basics of the Social Identity Theory principles to the organization's context, individuals will generally identify with and seek to work for organizations they perceive as prestigious and attractive in order to fulfill their fundamental need of self-esteem. The high status and privilege of belonging to such organizations, will often result in organizational pride (Ashforth & Mael, 1989) and results in the willingness to be a contributor to the success of the organization (Bartels et al., 2007).

In his research on employees' engagement in volunteerism programs, Jones has demonstrated the validity of these principles. Jones' study focuses on the mechanisms that predict employees' responses to such company CSR initiatives. He argues that organizational pride can have a mediating role on the relationship between employees' response to their company's volunteering program and their organizational identification. Jones defines organizational pride as "the extent to which individuals experience a sense of pleasure and self-respect arising from their organizational membership". Consequently, when employees are proud of their organization, they show an increased willingness to contribute to future achievements of the company. Following this logic, employees with a strong pride of their organizational membership, should be more inclined to welcome CSR strategies and participate in initiatives, as it is known to increase the company's reputation and satisfy external stakeholders' expectations (Jones, 2010, p.859). However, this feeling of pride and organizational identification are influenced by various factors explained in the subsequent section.

4.3 Perceived CSR

Although researchers such as Jones were able to highlight the importance and the consequences of organizational identification on employees motivation to take actions to help the organization achieve its goals, the relationship between organizational identification and employees' response to CSR initiatives has been recognized to be

influenced by additional external factors essential to predict their behaviors towards CSR initiatives (De Roeck et al., 2014).

Micro-level analysis research started to give a greater attention to the implication of perceived CSR. The concept of perceived CSR can be defined as the "employee's perception of the impact of his/her organization's discretionary actions intended to improve the well-being of external stakeholders (including the natural environment)" (De Roeck et al., 2014, p.1142). According to Aguinis and Glavas, understanding and measuring employees' perception of the CSR is essential for a company, as it influences employees' work attitude and behavior towards CSR initiatives (Aguinis & Glavas, 2013).

Analyzing the concept of perceived CSR more in depth, the literature on micro-level analysis has revealed that the relationship between employees perception and organizational identification is influenced by a significant mediator which has a positive impact on organizational pride; perceived external prestige (PEP) (Kim et al., 2010; Smidts et al., 2001; Carmeli, 2005). According to Kim and al, contrary to the organizational identification based on the employees' own understanding, experience and interpretation of the characteristics of the organization, PEP is the organization image employees are cognitively building based on what they assume that outsiders think about the organization. In other words, using external information such as reference groups, marketing, media and communications (Smidts et al., 2001), employees are evaluating and comparing their company's CSR strategy and attractiveness with other companies. If the comparison reveals a socially desirable image, then the organization identification will be strengthened, which in turn may result in an employees' affective commitment to the company (Herrbach & Mignonac, 2004; Bartels et al., 2007). The opposite is also true; if employees consider that outsiders have a low esteem of the organization, they will tend to identify less and be more reluctant to take action for the company, as a bad company image has an impact on their own reputation and thus, their self-esteem, pejoring their self-concept (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991).

Referring to De Roeck and al. study, the relationship between perceived CSR and organizational identification can be understood as a "cognitive-emotional-attitudinal chain

process" which can be simplified as followed: I believe that I work for a socially desirable company (i.e., cognitive construction) which makes my association with that organization rewarding (i.e., the positive characteristics outsiders see about the company will be transfer to me), which enhance my self-worth and generates a feeling of pride (i.e., emotional response) that in turn will stimulate my willingness to identify with the company and contribute to its success (i.e, attitudinal response)(see De Roeck et al., 2014, p. 1145). If the mediating role of perceived external prestige and organizational pride on the relationship between perceived CSR and organizational identification seems relevant to understand *why* do employees take part in their company CSR strategy, CSR scholars argue that the concept of Organization justice, detailed in the following section, may act as a moderator of this entire chain process (De Roeck et al., 2014).

4.4 Organizational Justice

Organizational justice is defined as "the study of fairness at work" (Byrne & Cropanzano, 2001), and indicates that practices such as rules, regulations, penalties, rewards or working processes are applied fairly across the organization (Greenberg, 1990). According to the deontic justice theory, individuals pay attention and response to (in)justice because unfair situations are contrary to their moral and ethical norms (Folger, 1998). Psychological studies argue that there are multiple motives that make people seek for justice and react to injustice. The two main reasons agreed upon are self-interest motives and the existence of universal norms driving interpersonal conducts (i.e. moral duty) which make people automatically react when witnessing an injustice (Rupp et al., 2006). Moreover, deontic justice theory distinguishes two types of perceived (in)justice to which individuals react to; first-party justice and third-party justice (Folger et al., 2005). First-party justice refers to how fairly individuals perceive that they are treated, whereas third-party justice expresses how fairly individuals believe that others are treated (Rupp et al., 2013). According to justice studies, self-interest motives are considered as one of the main stimuli to make individuals react to first-party injustice. If they perceive that the treatment they are subject to is unfair compared to the others, and that this treatment is detrimental for them and thus, following social identity theory, is devaluing their self-worth, individuals will react to this injustice by identifying less with the group or even be willing to withdraw from the membership (Rupp et al., 2006). However, it is also argued that if individuals allocate such importance to first-

party justice, and tend also to react when witnessing injustice perpetrated to others (i.e. third-party justice), because they are driven by universal norms generating automatic reactions to injustice which may transcend the pure self-interests motives (Folger et al., 2005).

Whereas most organizational justice research consider the third-party justice as the other co-workers, it has been argued that when analyzing CSR, "others" (third-party justice) can be applied to external stakeholders impacted by the CSR strategy (i.e. how is the organization treating outsiders) (Rupp et al., 2006). Building on this assumption, it can be suggested that, in order to assess their organization's CSR initiative, individuals tend to start by evaluating the internal fairness of the organization, i.e. perceived overall justice. In particular, employees with a positive perception of overall justice will tend to react more positively towards CSR initiatives, whereas those who believe that the level of justice within the organization is low, will respond more negatively to such initiatives (De Roeck et al., 2014). Indeed, internal justice assessment can be considered as a way for employees to judge and test their management reliability, impartiality and legitimacy (Rupp et al., 2006). Therefore, if individuals feel mistreated or witness injustice treatments within their company, then they will doubt the ability of their organization to treat others (i.e. external stakeholders towards whom the CSR strategy is oriented) fairly. They may even perceive the CSR strategy as a hypocrisy and a purely marketing instrument used to restore and embellish the socially responsible image of the organization (Miyazaki et al., 2005; Wagner et al., 2009).

As demonstrated above, these findings are extremely important for our understanding of the relationship between perceived CSR and organizational identification. Past studies have shown that employees' perception of the fairness of their company is significantly related to the organizational identification level (Tyler & Blader, 2003). First of all, in respect of first-party justice; individual considering that they are treated fairly by their management will feel valued as a member of the organization which in turn can result in pride and thus, improvement of self-esteem, which, as already detailed previously, strengthens the identification and willingness to support the organization (Hasan & Hussain, 2015). Aligned with this chain process, if individuals perceived that their organization's CSR

initiative (oriented towards outsider; i.e. third-party justice) is authentic, sincere and fair, and that it is consistent with the way the organization treats its employees internally, then it will positively influenced their perception of external prestige, which will foster their organizational pride and thus, organizational identification (De Roeck et al., 2014).

In other words, employees with high perception of organizational justice will have a positive perception of CSR, which will strengthen organizational identification and thus help to predict a favorable response to CSR and willingness to engage in the CSR initiatives as the success of the organization is associated with one's individual self-worth (De Roeck et al., 2014).

Chapter 5: Practical Implications

The findings detailed above suggest that very important factors should be taken into consideration by organizations when implementing their CSR strategies. Notably, the organizational identity is an integral part of the self-concept, affecting how individuals perceive and feel about themselves. This means that an organization should be really careful about how it is perceived by its own employees, but also by external stakeholders. These factors will be determinant to predict how employees will respond to the CSR initiatives. As explained above, a favorable perception of overall organizational justice, as well as the positive perception of external prestige will foster organizational identification through organizational pride, which in turn can predict engagement in CSR. In order increase organizational identification, the existing literature suggests various managerial strategies that should be applied by organizations when implementing a new CSR program. This chapter will therefore expose managerial implications suggested by literature that could be relevant for companies willing to implement CSR initiatives such as Alaya.

5. 1 Employees involvement

As it has been established earlier in this paper that employees' perception of CSR has an indirect impact on their behavioral response to CSR initiatives, studies suggest that employees' voices should be taken into consideration in the development, the

implementation and the assessment of the CSR strategy (De Roeck et al., 2014; Rupp et al., 2016).

In order to do so, some micro-analysis researchers agree on the fact that before developing a CSR strategy, management should have a good understanding of its workforce values and Morales. According to studies, employees can be distinguished between those who value individualism and those altruism (Jones, 2010; Rupp et al., 2016). Depending on the type of employees constituting the workforce, the approach of the CSR initiative should be different.

Based on this argument, individuals with a unique sense of empathy will be more favorable to a top-down approach to CSR management than individualistic employees (Rupp et al., 2016). If the previous chapter demonstrated that individuals who perceive their organization as socially desirable are more likely to identify with that organization, this assumption is even more significant for empathetic, i.e. altruistic people (Muller et al., 2014). Empathy is defined as the ability to take the perspective, understand and feel affected by what another person is feeling. Individuals who are sincerely empathetic will be driven by their emotional attachments, but also moral duty to help those in need. Following this logic, empathetic employees will be more likely to welcome CSR initiatives positively, as they care about what happens to people outside the organization and will be more motivated to take action and engage in the organization's initiatives (Tian & Robertson, 2017). In turn, being in direct contact with external stakeholders of the CSR initiatives, seeing the positive impact on the field and perceiving the gratitude of the beneficiaries will foster organizational identification, as perceived external prestige will be enhanced and thus organizational pride more deepen.

However, this also suggests that employees with less empathy, will naturally feel less concerned about others well-being and thus, will not see the benefits of engaging in CSR initiatives as empathetic individuals do. As they have a more individualistic perception, they will tend to engage in activities which they perceive as rewarding for themselves more than for the others. Therefore, imposing a CSR strategy, i.e. a top-down approach, will not encourage them to get involved. Whereas a more autonomous CSR strategy, in which they

can develop according to their interests and/or can take part whenever they perceive a benefit for themselves, i.e. Bottom-up approach, will be more appropriate (Jones, 2010; Rupp et al., 2016).

Translated in managerial implications, this implies that, to meet every employee's, i.e. individualistic employees and empathetic ones, expected outcomes from CSR initiatives, organizations should focus on programs which can be flexible and customized (Glavas, 2016). Indeed, taking the example of volunteering activities, an employee with career-oriented motives should be able to choose opportunities which he perceives as beneficial for his or her networking for instance, whereas a more altruistic employee would take part in a more impactful activity. Following this logic if both types of employees perceive rewarding motives, they will both have incentives to participate in their organization's CSR initiatives (Jones, 2010).

5.2 Communication

Studies demonstrated that effective internal communication is key to successfully transmit corporate shared value and culture, and thus to make employees more comfortable with their organization's strategy and ambitions (Gill, 2015). Indeed, after interviewing and observing employees of a large UK energy company, Slack and al. found out that a lack of good communication about the company CSR strategy was a relevant reason for employees' low engagement in CSR initiatives. Moreover, respondents to their study also highlighted the lack of visibility of CSR within their organization which made it difficult for them to understand how CSR was embedded in the company's culture (Slack et al., 2015). If employees are not directly exposed to CSR or not well informed about it, they are less likely to form a favorable opinion of the strategy and thus, will be less likely to engage in any activities (Chaudhary, 2017). The ambitions, but also the place of the CSR initiatives within the business model and priorities have to be clearly defined and communicated to employees in order to create an organizational culture and shared values assimilated by employees.

Gill suggests that an effective communication tool to build internal identification and enhance external reputation is storytelling. Corporate storytelling is "the practice of using

narration from within the organization relating to its people, practices, policies and visions to effectively engage with staff (Dowling, 2006). The use of narration as the benefits of personalizing the message that is communicated, which allows the receiver to interpret it through its own experience and therefore relate more easily to the story and generate an emotion which will be associated with the organization (Gill, 2015). In this sense, storytelling is more than communication, it is a connection with employees (Aplin, 2010) as it is a way to convince, stimulate and influence employees' perception on their organization CSR strategy and to strengthen organizational identification. Storytelling could also be used to communicate about the achievement of employees deeply involved in CSR initiative, which would increase their sense of pride and of corporate belonging, but also to celebrate social and environmental goods generated on the field. For instance, organizations could communicate how many people were impacted by their volunteering activities or donation, or how many liters of water or CO_2 emissions were saved thanks to their CSR programs (Jones, 2010). It is however important to take into consideration the type of employees present within the organization, as mentioned in the section above. Altruistic employees may be more affected by communication related to the concrete impacts realized or expected on the field, while individualistic employees would be more interested to know what their own personal potential benefits could be in participating in the initiative (Koch et al., 2019).

Furthermore, the communication and the visibility of the CSR program would be more impactful if leaders of the organization get more involved themselves in the initiatives. Acting as role models, leaders' participation arouses employees' curiosity and motivation for the program, but also provides some credibility to the initiative (Regina Chen & Hung-Baesacke, 2014). If leaders show that they strongly believe and find it beneficial for themselves, the company and the society to take part in CSR activities, so will the employees, willing to comply with the organization's norms, but also imitate those with greater influence.

Other tools could be put into place by organizations to increase their CSR visibility for their internal as well as their external stakeholders. Newsletters, training programs and/or missions' statements (Slack et al., 2015), sustainability or CSR reports (Kim et al., 2010) are

recognized marketing and communication resources to promote CSR activities. The application and compliance with standards of official CSR awards and labels would also increase the CSR strategy's credibility and authenticity (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991).

5.3 Enhancing Internal justice

As organizational justice acts as a moderator for the whole relationship between perceived CSR and organizational identification, it is imperative for organizations to work on organizational fairness (Tyler, 2009). As detailed in the previous chapter, employees form their opinion on the CSR program by assessing if the treatment of external stakeholders by the organization is consistent with the treatment applied within the organization. If they perceive that resources allocated to outsiders exceed the ones directed towards the internal staff, they may see the CSR strategy as an hypocrisy. Asking employees to adopt ethical behavior when the organization itself does not apply its own ethical and moral standards (Collier & Esteban, 2007) may result in skepticism from employees. Managers should therefore ensure that their internal processes, policies, decision making procedures, implementation and evaluation are fair and transparent. They should also make sure that employees have the ability and feel welcomed to get involved and/or challenge the decision-making process (Hasan & Hussain, 2015). As mentioned earlier, if employees perceive the CSR initiative as strategic and instrumental rather than altruistic, their willingness to engage in the CSR strategy is compromised (Slack et al., 2015)

5.4 Time dimension

Micro-analysis studies on CSR engagement highlight that the cognitive-emotional-attitudinal chain process explaining employees' responses to CSR needs time before being concretized. Indeed, it takes time for employees to truly understand a new implemented CSR strategy, get familiar with it, and build their own judgement of the initiative, but also to gather all the external information about the new CSR strategy before being able to forge a perception of external prestige. It is only when all this information has been gathered and interpreted by employees that they will or will not adjust their degree of organizational pride which may affect their level of organizational identification and thus, their willingness to engage in the new CSR strategy. Longitudinal researches on the subject mainly suggest that the employees need approximately four to six months to adjust to the new strategy

and build new identity cues accordingly (Ashforth et al., 2008; Colquitt & Rodell, 2011; Mitchell & James, 2001). Following this logic, managers should be able to evaluate employees' engagement in CSR initiatives only half a year after its implementation.

Chapter 6: Strengths and limitations

6.1 Strengths

The analysis of the literature demonstrated that employees' reactions to CSR and their inclination to take part in their company's CSR initiatives can be explained by the cognitive-emotional-attitudinal chain process emanating from the positive relationship between perceived CSR and organizational identification (De Roeck et al., 2014). Moreover, as illustrated in Figure 1, the analysis highlighted three components which may have an influence on this relationship and thus alter employees' responses to CSR initiatives. First of all, organizational pride may predict how employees would react. Indeed, if an employee feels proud about its employer behaviors and actions, he or she would most likely be willing to identify more with the company's culture and value which in turn would encourage him or her to engage with the employer's initiatives as it would contribute to the company's success (Jones, 2010). However, this feeling of pride can be compromised by the other moderator which is perceived external prestige cognitively built with the external information the employees would gather about his or her employer. If an external stakeholder seems to have a high esteem of the company, then so will the employee (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Carmeli, 2005; Hasan & Hussain, 2015). Nevertheless, as stated by the literature, the entire relationship may be compromised by an additional component which is perceived organizational justice, acting as a moderator of the whole sequence. As explained by Rupp amd al. employees' seem to react to both first-party justice and third-party justice (Rupp et al., 2006), which implies that if employees witness unfair treatment either towards themselves or others, they may doubt their managers capabilities to act fairly, but also the sincerity of their intention when implementing CSR initiatives targeting external stakeholders (Miyazaki et al., 2005; Wagner et al., 2009).
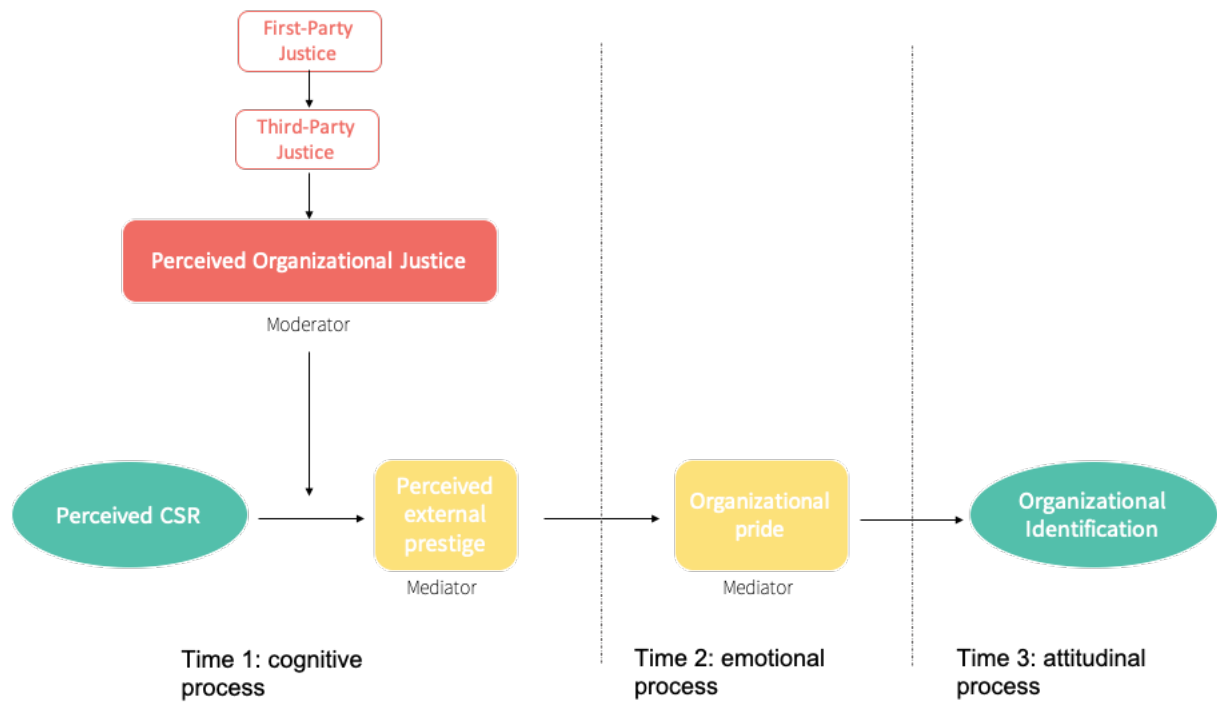
Figure 1. Cognitive-emotional-attitudinal chain process. (De Roeck et al., 2014)

Furthermore, besides the theoretical aspects, the literature analysis provided managerial implications to be considered in order to ensure the positive relationship detailed above. Companies should invest in a strong and efficient communication on CSR activities internally and externally which would have the benefits of raising employees' awareness about the initiatives, improving their perceived external prestige, while increasing their feeling of pride for the company and thus foster their organizational identification (Kim et al., 2010). Moreover, corporations have to take measures to ensure that high moral and ethical standards are applied fairly across the company in order to enhance employees' organizational justice perception impacting both perceived external prestige and organizational pride (Collier & Esteban, 2007; Slack et al., 2015; Tyler, 2009). Finally, De Roeck and al. study added the critical notion of temporality in the relationship between perceived CSR and organizational identification. Indeed, employees need time to apprehend, get familiar with and build their opinion on a new CSR program. In other words, managers should consider that it takes time to implement CSR initiatives and get employees to engage with it (Ashforth et al., 2008; Colquitt & Rodell, 2011; Mitchell & James, 2001).

6.2 Limitations

Although the literature analysis provided a better understanding of the factors influencing employees' responses to CSR initiatives, some limitations still remain. First of all, the studies considered used samples collected either in a single company, a single industry sector and a single culture, which may question the generalizability of the findings (De Roeck et al., 2014; Hasan & Hussain, 2015). Further studies in assessing the relationship between perceived CSR and organizational identification within other cultural contexts would be relevant (Rupp et al., 2006). Finally, employees' personality and individual characteristics were not taken into consideration in the chain process. It would therefore be pertinent to evaluate the role of individual characteristic in this relationship (Chaudhary, 2017)

Part 4: Methodology used to address situation/challenge/questions the company is facing

The previous section exploring the existing concepts and theories in CSR and employees' engagement literature has provided relevant and useful explanations and implications which could be applied in the context of Alaya. However, to establish some recommendations to improve the employees' engagement rate on the platform based on the literature findings, it is first imperative to understand what the current strategy in terms of employees' engagement is.

Chapter 7: Interviews' methodology
7.1 Data collection

In order to map the prevailing strategy at Alaya, six interviews have been conducted with different members of the team. The interviews took place on December 2020 and were structured as semi-structured interviews, allowing more flexibility when approaching interviewees (Noor, 2008). Indeed, as respondents were from different departments and job functions within Alaya, it was crucial that the vocabulary and the meaning of the words used in the questions were understood the same way by all interviewees, in order to ensure validity, reliability and comparability of the responses (Denzin, 1989). Semi-structured interviews therefore allowed to discuss and define the meaning of important words and reorient respondents on the thematic relevant for this paper (Barriball & While, 1994).

Interviews lasted between thirty to fifty minutes and were all taped-recorded and transcribed, in order to avoid losing important information and ease the data collection (Noor, 2008).

As the literature findings highlighted the importance of employees' perceptions about their company, i.e. company's external image, internal organizational justice, organizational pride, but also the significant role of communication and timing to stimulate employees' engagement in the CSR strategy, the interviews' questions (see Appendix C) were formulated to discern what are the practices in Alaya specifically related to those topics. The analysis of the interviews therefore provided elements of comparison with findings highlighted in the CSR literature analysis and serve as a basis to build upon suggestions and recommendations to improve the current strategy.

Two different departments took part in the interviews. Since the analysis of the literature revealed the influence of the existing culture and values on employees' response to CSR, as well as the value of involving employees at the earliest stage of the development and implementation of CSR initiatives oriented towards employees (De Roeck et al., 2014; Rupp et al., 2016), it was necessary, not only to analyze customer success strategy, but also to understand the sales department strategy when it comes to approach, convince and sell Alaya's technology. To this end, six people were interviewed; two member of the sales department, André Abreu, co-founder head of the sales department as well the marketing and communication department, Guillaume Granelli, second co-founder head of the customer success and of non-profit department and two customer success mangers.

As the three interviewees had distinct roles within the company and their contacts with the clients occurred as different stages of the relationship, the questions were not the same for the sales department members and the customer success representatives, but were still focused on the same topics, i.e. employees' involvement, existing culture and values, employees' perception for their company behavior and timing. In order to compare Alaya's strategy with the findings highlighted by the literature analysis, the sales department members had to answer questions related to employees' involvement prior and during the negotiation phase with a client, the influence the existing culture and values already in place

within the company is playing in the discussions, employees' perception of their company behavior before implementing Alaya, i.e company's external image, internal organizational justice, organizational pride and the timing expected before seeing concrete results for the organization. The customer success interviewee was interrogated on topics linked to employees' perception of their company behavior before the platform, employees' involvement in the development, implementation and use of the platform, as well as the influence of the culture and values already present within the company, the communication strategy and the timing expected before measuring concrete impact made through the platform.

7.2 Data analysis

Once completed, the interviews were transcribed and, as the respondents do not intervene at the same time during the customer relationship, the results were analyzed in two groups; answers from the sales department and answers from the customer success department.

Moreover, as the questions were organized by themes, i.e. employees' involvement, existing culture and values, employees' perception for their company behavior and timing, the results were read through thoroughly following the same logic to identify relevant passages and distinguish differences and similarities between respondents (Osagie, Wesselink, Blok, Lans, & Mulder, 2014). Those findings, detailed in the subsequent chapter, therefore contributed to map Alaya's current strategies used by the sales and the customer success department, which impact the employees' engagement rate on the platform.

Chapter 8: Alaya's current strategy
8.1 Sales department strategy

The interviews conducted with the sales department revealed the following information:

Employees' involvement

Regarding employees' involvement in the sales process, people approaching or approached by the sales team and people negotiating the contract are most of the time Human Resources managers, but it may also be Internal Communication members or, if a company is already mature in terms of CSR strategy, a CSR manager or people in charge

of the company's Foundation. They mainly have a double interest related to Alaya's implementation. First of all, Alaya is a great tool to communicate about their corporate culture, engage their employees in company's initiatives and keep them motivated. The second is the rapid impact they can generate for the community and the planet, as Alaya is rich in content, offering many opportunities and activities immediately. The company is thus, saving time in the organization of events.

According to the interviewees, the interest for Alaya is not always a top-down approach. It may happen that some companies have a committee with employees from various departments suggesting the implementation of Alaya's technology to their line managers. But it is most of the time a top-down approach where the managers will impose Alaya to their employees.

Although the persons in contact with the sales department during the whole process are HR, CSR or internal communication managers, the final decision to sign the contract is almost always taken at a director level or sometimes by CEOs as the platform will be used by all the company's departments and employees and the budget has to be accepted. Only a few companies run internal surveys to evaluate employees' interest in such solutions and/or a volunteering program. It is however important to highlight that some companies approaching the sales department already have volunteering initiatives or employees' engagement programs in place and want to work with Alaya as it is perceived as an effective HR tool to facilitate activities organization and communication with employees.

Existing culture and values

Alaya does not have any criterion when it comes to the selection of the organizations, they are willing to work with or not. Any type of companies, any industries, any sectors are welcome to collaborate with the start-up. Alaya's policy is never to judge what a company is doing, but only to offer a tool to anyone who is willing to take its part and act better.

The only criterion for the sales department is the size and sometimes the location of the company. The organization has to have ideally a minimum of hundred employees or exceptionally fifty for some companies. Companies smaller than that do often not have the

budget or the resources to implement Alaya and thus, have a greater risk to churn, even though a lot of efforts are invested by the customer success and the non-profit teams to offer enough opportunities on the platform. Collaborating with small businesses is therefore not profitable for Alaya. Relating to the location criterion, in order to ensure a positive user experience to the employees, the sales department favors companies having offices where the non-profit department already has connections with NGOs and can easily organize activities.

Nevertheless, interviewees agreed that companies which are sensitive about matters related to purpose at work, employees' engagement and already have initiatives in place to tackle social and environmental issues are usually more accessible, easier to convince and eventually show rapidly a high engagement rate once Alaya is implemented. The sales department team brings therefore a significant amount of energy during the negotiations to understand where the company stands in terms of culture and values, what kind of initiatives were done in the past in these matters, who organized those initiatives and how was the employees' reaction. Knowing where the company stands will allow the sales department, but also the customer success managers to understand how Alaya can be a dedicated platform to support and strengthen their current culture. In this sense, the three sales members emphasized the fact that Alaya does not establish or define the company's policy and culture. The platform can support and help to spread the culture and values by empowering employees to take actions, but it is not Alaya's job to elaborate or advise the company on its CSR strategy.

Employees' perception for their company behavior

If the sales department is spending time to understand the existing corporate culture and values before signing the contract, they do not advise the future clients to run an internal survey to evaluate employees' perception of their current company behavior. Companies rarely ask their employees about their knowledge on the existing culture and values or how much they identify with those values, nor do they assess employees' perception of the organization's reputation or their perception of the internal fairness of the company. As most companies implement Alaya as a top-down approach, most of them do not assess employees' opinions and perceptions. However, there have been some examples of

companies which did not have any CSR initiatives in place and who conducted internal surveys and decided not to sign the contract as the results showed that employees were not ready to welcome such solutions.

Timing

The interviewees acknowledged that implementing a program such as Alaya takes time. For this reason, the sales department is now trying to sign contracts of a minimum of one-year duration. Moreover, when setting the objectives to be reached during this year, the sales members have to be realistic. When a company already has a strong culture and initiatives organized, it may be easier and faster to get the employees to use the platform. In such cases, some impact could already be measured after three months. But in most cases, three to six months are necessary before seeing interesting results. According to the interviewees, timing is not only influenced by the existing culture and employees' awareness about the initiatives. It is also influenced by who is the person in charge of the program within the company. In larger and/or more mature companies, the person in charge of the program may be the one responsible for employees' engagement and CSR initiatives to the implementation of the platform, which means that these tasks were already in his or her job description. But it often happens that organizations do not have such job positions in place, and therefore running the program becomes an additional task to an already busy agenda. The person in charge will thus, neither have the time, nor the motivation to organize activities on Alaya, which of course delays the pursuit of the objectives.

8.2 Customer Success strategy

The interview conducted with the customer success manager revealed the following information:

Employees' involvement

Once the contract is signed, it is time for the customer success manager to discuss more in detail with the client about the causes and the charities that the company is willing to support, but also the type of activities and initiatives to organize. The two parties are also discussing the adequate strategy to launch and communicate about the platform with the employees. However, the person of contact within the company may not be the same than

the one present during the sales process. It may be an HR manager, a person responsible for the company engagement program or employees' volunteering program, as well as international communication managers or CSR managers.

In most cases, employees do not have a say in these processes. The development and the launch of the program are therefore a top-down approach, which means that the first choice of activities available on the platform will be done by the person in charge without consulting the employees and the communication announcing the launch will be sent by the person in charge directly to the employees unaware of the program until then.

But some companies involve only few employees which are called the champions. Champions are trained by Alaya's CS members to contact charities in their region and organize activities with them, i.e volunteering activities or donations, that they will then upload on the platform. Supported by Alaya CS department, they will also communicate about those activities with their coworkers. Champions can thus be considered as the bridge between Alaya and the employees of the organization. They will also be the one responsible to animate the platform by adding new activities throughout the year and keep their coworkers' motivation going.

Thus, the vast majority of employees start engaging with Alaya when the program is launched. It is only then, that they can become actors and take part in the CSR initiative by participating in the activities offered on the platform and/or start challenges, and some companies also allow their employees to suggest charities or activities they would like to see on Alaya. It is therefore after the implementation and when employees are active and involved on the platform that it can start to be a bottom-up approach. From there, employees can have an influence on the CSR program and the company's culture.

Existing culture and values

Although the sales department already spent some time understanding the current culture and values in place within the company, it is still recommended for the customer success manager to spend between two to three months discussing the company policy and the

culture before the launch to make sure Alaya's propositions are aligned with the company's needs.

The interviewee emphasized the fact that companies considered as more mature, with a clearly defined policy and a strong culture, well spread and understood by employees will be ready to launch the platform more easily and rapidly, and usually, a higher engagement can be expected from these organizations. Not only are they more engaged, they are also more independent and energetic on the platform. They are used to doing good and helping charities and will thus suggest more activities and initiatives than companies that did not have any policy before Alaya.

Employees' perception

As for the sales department, if a great attention is given to understand where the company stands in terms of CSR policy and initiatives done in the past, only a few companies run internal surveys to capture employees' perception about their company's current CSR strategy and culture, their identification feeling or their perception of the company's reputation and internal justice. Some companies do assess the employees' satisfaction about the program and Alaya's support, but not on the sub-mentioned aspects.

Employees' engagement

Employees' engagement is defined by the customer success department as the percentage of employees who did at least on action on the platform. But employees' engagement can be perceived as a scale and not every employee is at the same level. Some employees are already very engaged, i.e. they are volunteering, donating regularly even outside the company, whereas some employees are not engaged at all and have never taken part in any activity. Alaya's role and objective is to meet each employee where they are, raise their awareness and encourage them to be more active, whether it is with challenges reducing water consumption, with a first volunteering experience or an initiative organized across the whole company.

The interviewees underlined some key factors which may increase employee's engagement with the platform. First of all, as mentioned above, when a company already organized

initiatives such as volunteering or giving in the past and/or employees are aware that they are allowed to take some days to volunteer, they may be more involved on the platform.

Moreover, employees tend to be more involved in the program when the management or a person at the board director level expresses his or her engagement and support for the platform. Alaya CS managers therefore always recommend the hierarchical superiors to engage with the program as well. Other initiatives suggested by the CS managers, such as matching the donation made by the employees or making a company donation, would show the credibility and support of the collaboration with Alaya and encourage employees to do the same.

Communication

Regarding the communication protocol to introduce Alaya to employees, in most cases, except for the champions, employees are notified about the implementation of the program only one or two weeks before the launch or even on the same day if the company decides to launch with a company initiative.

In terms of content, Alaya CS members always discuss with the person of contact within the company to understand which communication method is the most used and effective for the company. Nevertheless, most of the time Alaya provides a communication kit and always recommends that a communication should be sent by email from a top management representative. Emails are considered as more effective to reach every employee and add a more personal feeling, while the involvement of the top management gives more credibility and shows enthusiasm for the program.

After the launch, some companies decide to communicate the impact report, i.e hours volunteered, cash or goods donated, liters of water or CO_2 emissions saved, provided by Alaya with their employees to demonstrate the value and benefits of the platform and encourage them to engage even more.

Concerning external communication, Alaya via its marketing team regularly asks clients if they are willing to share their experience and positive impact made through the platform.

Many companies are, however, really conscious and careful about the content they are sharing on their website or social media. Most posts are used for internal communications.

Timing

Generally, the customer success managers and the person responsible for the program within the company set the objectives for one year which is divided in four quarters. The first quarter is dedicated to the onboarding of the company which means all the discussions prior to launch the program, i.e. the strategy, the selection of non-profits and causes to support, creation of activities on the platform, training of the champions, preparation of the communication kit. The second quarter is the adoption phase following the launch of the platform, i.e. get the employees to create their account and take their first actions. No significant impacts are expected to be made during this phase. The third phase, which means after six months, is called the maturity phase. The objective is to create a greater impact by having as many employees as possible engaged on the platform and start to map the contributions made by the employees. Finally, the fourth stage is the renewal for the client and the maturity phase for Alaya's managers.

8.3 General comments

The interviewees highlighted that even if Alaya customer department is supporting their clients with communication kits, champions and employees' training and activities suggestions to raise employee's awareness, some crucial components could not be influenced by Alaya. Notably, people's actions are driven by their personalities and life experience, which means that some employees will be more sensible and willing to do and act good than others. Second of all, employees and company's behavior are shaped by the culture and tradition present within the country or region where they are located. For instance, according to the interviewee, some countries such as the United Kingdom or the United States of America have a strong culture of volunteering and giving, where it be in private life or at a company level. For some countries, the government is even providing incentives for corporations to donate to charities. In those countries, employees may be quickly convinced about the positive impact of Alaya, whereas in countries such as Switzerland, where volunteering and giving are not yet usual, employees may be more skeptical.

Chapter 9: Suggestions to improve current employees' engagement strategy

Based on the literature findings, the interviews conducted with Alaya's representatives, as well as on my personal observations during the internship, the following section is an attempt to provide some suggestions to take into consideration in order to improve the employees' engagement rate of clients collaborating with Alaya.

As argued by the literature on CSR and employees' engagement, the positive relationship between perceived CSR and organizational identification detailed earlier in this report is a significant predictor of employees' responses to CSR initiatives such as the solution provided by Alaya (De Roeck et al., 2014). The aim of these recommendations is therefore to find processes which would positively impact this relationship. The first set of suggestions could quickly and easily be integrated to the current strategy, whereas the second would require further market analysis and deeper internal restructuration.

9.1 Recommendations to be implemented in a near future

In what follows, suggestions in the areas of employees' involvement and communication are formulated. Additional resources, processes and organization, would be needed to implement the following recommendations. However, as it would not affect the startup's structure or the nature of the service offered by the organization, those recommendations could be implemented in a near future.

Employees' involvement

As revealed by the interviews, employees' perception related to their organizational identification, external prestige and organizational fairness is not assessed by the company nor by Alaya, neither during the sales process nor prior the launch of the program. However, the analysis of the literature emphasized the importance for companies to understand and measure their employees' perception of CSR as it has an impact on their work attitude and behavior towards CSR initiatives (Aguinis & Glavas, 2013).

Conducting a survey at negotiations phase, asking employees about their knowledge of the existing CSR strategy, their perception of it, their current engagement with it, but also their interest for a new program such as Alaya, would allow the sales department members to evaluate the maturity of the company's CSR strategy, not only from a managerial perspective, but also from an employee's point of view, which would be strongly relevant as employees are the main targeted audience of the platform. It is evident that, as for any other company, the sales department objective is to sign new clients to stay profitable. Nevertheless, if the results of the survey are showing that a majority of employees may not be ready or willing to welcome such initiatives, it may be wiser from the sales departments not to sign those clients as there is a higher risk that those employees will be hard to convince, engage and motivate to take action, which would result in a low employees' engagement rate and consequently a frustration from the client.

Moreover, such surveys would also be beneficial at the customer success level. It would be an excellent way for the customer success manager to have a clear understanding about how the employees are feeling towards the current CSR initiatives, what are the strengths of this strategy and its initiatives, and also what part of the strategy and culture should be improved and fortified. It would as well allow the manager to comprehend what employees are expecting for the program and how they are willing to engage with it. Indeed, as explained previously in the theoretical section, employees can be divided in two types; those who value individualism and are therefore less empathetic and less responsive to top-down approaches, and those driven by altruistic Morales and will engage more with the program as they naturally care for others and are willing to support those in need (Jones, 2010; Rupp et al., 2016).

Having this information in hands and discern if an organization has more individualistic or altruistic people would help the manager to define the strategy to engage these employees. For instance, individualistic employees would favor independence and activities which are beneficial for themselves and their career (Rupp et al., 2016; Tian & Robertson, 2017). Thus, in my opinion, the platform should be set up with activities allowing employees to network or improve their skills, such as brainstorming for an NGO or networks regrouping various companies or nonprofits working on social and/or environmental issues and

innovation. Other activities which are not offered on the platform at the moment but could be interesting for this type of employees, would be conferences or workshops organized by NGOs or influential personalities discussing social and environmental challenges and solutions. Those activities are not directly linked to volunteering or donation, but they would still be beneficial to raise employees' awareness and interest on those topics, while being rewarding for them as they will have the chance to meet important people. Moreover, their attachment to independence should be preserved by giving them the opportunity to take part in any actions outside the platform and still be able to log their impact and be valorized for those initiatives although they were not directly organized by Alaya or the person in charge of the program. This strategy is already used by Alaya's customer managers and has proven to be efficient. On the contrary, employees driven by an altruistic temper should be more responsive to a top-down approach and would, in most cases, be admirable champions as they are more likely to believe in the program and willing to invite their coworkers to do good as well (Jones, 2010).

Furthermore, involving employees in the development of the platform and asking for their interest will demonstrate that their voice matters, that their opinion is considered and that they are also playing a role in their company's decision. When employees feel understood, listened to and see their actions valorized by their company and managers, it is very likely that they would have a more positive perception of their organization and thus start identifying more with its culture and value (Chaudhary, 2017; De Roeck et al., 2014; Smidts et al., 2001).

Communication

As highlighted earlier, a lack of knowledge about the organization's CSR initiatives and the disengagement associated with it are most of the time related to the poor communication and/or visibility of the initiatives (Slack et al., 2015). It is therefore crucial for the customer success department to have a strong communication kit to suggest to the person responsible for the program. In my opinion, a few recommendations suggested by the literature analysis could be directly applied to Alaya communication strategy.

As Chaudhary argues that employees that are not directly exposed to CSR and not well informed about it are less likely to engage with the activities offered, I suggest that customer success managers try to systematically organize large company initiatives, involving all the employees, supported and communicated by line managers or board of directors. Indeed, when managers show that they are actively involved in and supportive of the program, employees would be more inclined to build a positive image of the program and willing to engage with the initiatives as well (De Roeck et al., 2014).

Moreover, the message sent to the employees to introduce Alaya should be aligned and coherent with the existing culture and values of the company and the communication should also explain clearly why Alaya was implemented in the context of the current strategy and what objectives the program aims to achieve. If the message is not coherent and employees do not see the purpose of the platform, they may not understand the value of their participation (Slack et al., 2015).

Following Gill and Aplin arguments, I suggest that the communications sent to employees should be inspired by the storytelling methods, generating emotions and sending a more personalized message (Aplin, 2010; Gill, 2015). The narration could communicate about successful stories of employees engaging with the program and showing concrete impacts made on the field. This would not only increase the visibility of the initiatives, but also foster the sense of pride for the organization's actions and thus organizational identification. Besides the impact, the communication could also celebrate employees involved in successful activities. Showing the positive impact made on the field and the gratitude from people impacted would encourage altruistic employees to contribute as well, while rewarding and celebrating employees involved would urge individualistic people to take their first actions as it would boost their own self-worth (Jones, 2010; Muller et al., 2014; Rupp et al., 2016).

As stated earlier, in my opinion the recommendations above could rapidly and easily be integrated to the current practices the customer success department is applying. Indeed, those suggestions would respond to the challenges highlighted by the literature analysis in terms of employees' involvement and communication. However, in my understanding,

some important aspects influencing employees' engagement rate pointed up by the literature analysis and the interviews cannot be tackled by Alaya's strategy and even business model as it stands today. The following section is thus offering recommendations going beyond Alaya's actual structure and service.

9.2 Recommendations suggesting a restructuring

The interviewees agreed that companies with a higher maturity in terms of CSR, which means that they already have a strong and established culture and values, in most cases see their employees engaging more rapidly and smoothly on the platform and take actions. The opposite is also true. Yet, Alaya's representatives also insisted on the fact that it is not Alaya's function to elaborate the organization's CSR policies. The platform is a tool to settle, strengthen and spread the culture and values the company has decided. However, the literature analysis emphasized that simply implementing a CSR initiative, such as a volunteering program, without assessing and working on employees CSR perception and internal organizational justice may not be enough to convince employees to do good. Indeed, as explained in the theoretical section, people are very responsive to injustice whether it is against themselves or against others (Rupp et al., 2006). Therefore, the way they perceive organizational fairness will impact their sense of organizational pride, organizational identification and willingness to take part in CSR initiatives (De Roeck et al., 2014). Consequently, even if Alaya provides a functioning and entertaining platform and has a strong communication strategy, it may not be sufficient to convince employees that Alaya is not just a marketing instrument used to embellish the company's reputation while internally employees feel mistreated.

For this reason, I suggest the idea of rethinking Alaya's primary purpose by adding an auditing and consulting service to its original mandate. This means that Alaya would not only provide a volunteering program but would also advise the client on some of their HR management strategies. Introducing an auditing and consulting activity to its clients would allow Alaya to run surveys internally with companies, have access to employees and truly understand where the company stands in terms of perceived external prestige, organizational pride and perceived organizational justice. It would provide a better comprehension about employees' personal traits, interests and ways of functioning.

Starting there, Alaya could collaborate with the organization in order to solve internal issues revealed by the employees' survey, build a CSR strategy, i.e. only related to HR management and employees' engagement, and work on a culture which would be most adequate to employees' expectations and values.

Once the corporate culture and values are established, Alaya's platform will intervene as the tool to spread this culture and foster organizational identification. To do so, Alaya's team may at first suggest activities or events which could be used more as team building experience than individual opportunities. For instance, the first months following the launch, CS managers could organize brainstorming to support a charity, as usual, or to discuss internal matters and challenges which would encourage employees to meet each other, while showing them that they can also be part of the solution. Other activities such as virtual coffees or lunches could be organized during which employees would share charitable activities they undertook as a company or individually. Challenges in pairs or in groups shaped as competition with rewards could also be set up.

Of course, offering an auditing and consulting service and building or improving a company's culture implies that longer contracts should be negotiated with clients, as a few months would be needed to assess employees' perception, to set up a new culture and let employees adopt the new culture. Moreover, depending on Alaya's staff knowledge and capacities, it is very likely that a new department dedicated and expert in CSR and/or HR consulting should be created.

Well aware of the important efforts, risks and resources related to a potential restructuring of Alaya's services, I suggest that further analysis of the market, competitors and Alaya's capacities should be conducted. However, I believe that collaborating more closely with companies and helping them to forge their culture would allow Alaya to have a greater employees' engagement rate as the organization's culture and activities on the platform would be aligned, coherent and complementary.

Conclusion

The aim of this internship report was to understand what factors are encouraging employees to take part in the CSR initiatives organized by their company in order to improve Alaya's employees' engagement rate on the solidarity platform.

The analysis of the CSR literature on the topic has demonstrated that the positive relationship between the concepts of perceived CSR and organizational identification, and most importantly the factors influencing this relationship, i.e. organizational justice, perceived external prestige and organizational pride, are reliable predictors of employees' engagement in their company's CSR initiative. Indeed, if employees have a sense of belonging and feel proud about the association with their organization, it will increase their organizational identification, and they will then be more inclined to take actions guarantying the company's success, which they will also perceive as their own, contributing to their self-esteem. However, employees build their perception of the CSR initiative first of all by gathering information about how their company's behavior is perceived by external actors. If actions and activities undertook by the organization are validated by outsiders, employees will perceive their employers as socially desirable and will thus develop a sense of pride for their membership with the company, encouraging them to support the initiatives. Nevertheless, even if external stakeholders have a high esteem of the company, employees witnessing or experiencing injustice at their workplace will start doubting their managers' ability to treat others fairly and question the sincerity of the CSR initiative, which will result in a decrease in organizational pride and identification, and therefore a disengagement.

Alaya's technology being considered as part of a CSR strategy, helping companies to build strong culture and values and encouraging employees to take actions, those findings should not be neglected. After elaborating and comparing the actual employees' engagement strategy applied by Alaya's Sales and Customer Success departments to managerial implications associated with the literature findings, two types of recommendations were formulated. First of all, employees' engagement rate on the platform could rapidly and easily be increased by improving the communication kit offered to clients, notably by using

storytelling and engaging more directors or managers in the process, and by involving employees in the development and launch of the program. Secondly, at the moment, Alaya does not define, discuss or advise on aspects related to Human Resources management such as culture, values or internal justice. However, as highlighted by the literature, the existing culture and values already in place within the company have an impact on the engagement rate, i.e. clients more mature, with a strong culture and values well understood and embraced by employees, will have less difficulties to encourage employees to be active on the platform and will have higher engagement rate. For this reason, it has been suggested to rethink Alaya's purpose and offer a new service to clients, which would include auditing and consulting. Collaborating more closely with clients and performing audits would allow Alaya to have better access to employees and thus assess employees' opinion in terms of perceive external prestige, perceived organizational justice, organizational pride and identification. Those data would allow Alaya's customer managers to map and understand where the company stands on those areas and therefore elaborate personalized strategy to increase organizational identification, which in turn should stimulate employees' engagement in the company's initiative. In this scenario, Alaya's platform and the volunteering program it offers could be used as a tool to spread and strengthen the improved company's culture. Having a personalized and adequate strategy reflecting employees' needs and desires would raise employees' engagement on the platform.

It is important to mention that the above recommendations were based on the comparison between practical implications suggested by the literature on CSR and Alaya's current strategy, but did not take into considerations Alaya's resources, i.e. financial or competencies resources, available to make such improvements, nor the market opportunities. I would therefore suggest that further analysis of Alaya's capacities and the market, i.e. customers interests or competitors, should be conducted before initiating such restructuring.

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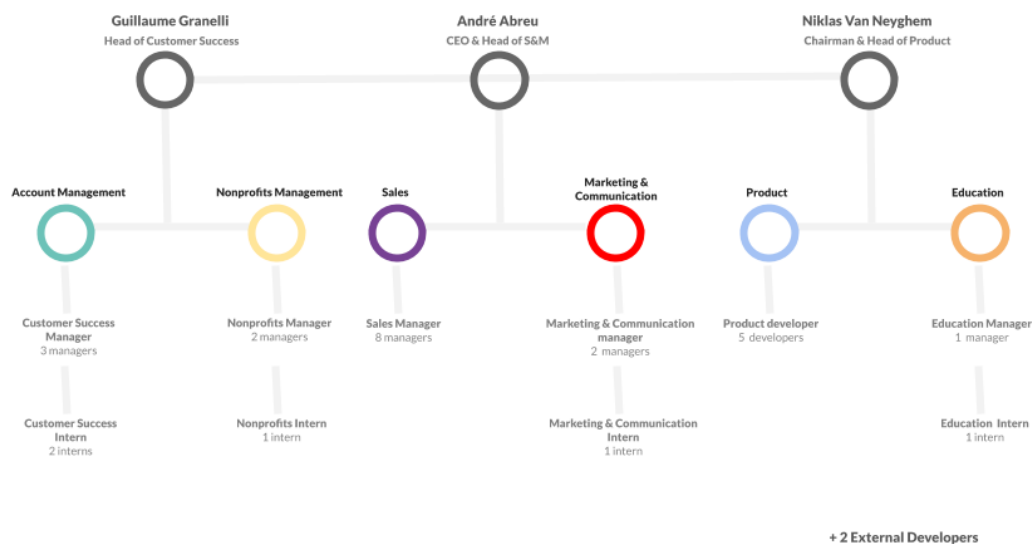
Appendices
Appendix A: Alaya's presence
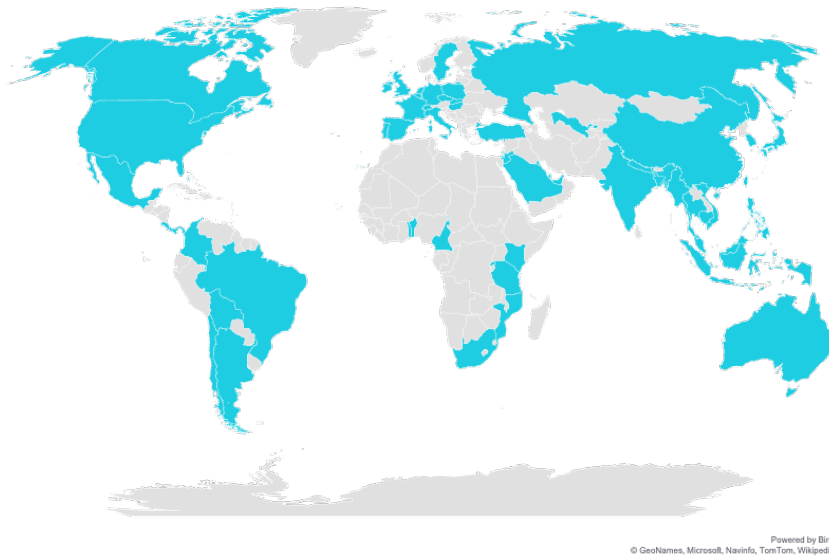
Countries where Alaya is present via corporate or nonprofit partners (March 2020)

Appendix B: Alaya's organizational chart

Alaya's organizational chart (December 2021)

Appendix C: Interviews questions

The objective of this questionnaire is to understand what the current strategy at Alaya is when it comes to onboard new clients, launch the platform and engage employees' engagement on the platform.

Sales process

About CSR and Alaya
1. How would you define CSR in general?
2. How would you define Alaya in your own words?
3. How is Alaya related to CSR strategies? What does it aim to achieve?
4. Do you promote Alaya as a tool to support an existing CSR strategy or do you consider it as a CSR strategy in itself?
5. In your opinion, do the future clients consider it the same way?
6. Who are typically the people contacting you're in the first place (CEO, HR, CSR manager, etc)?
7. Why are they interested in the platform? How do you know it?

About employees' involvement in the development of CSR initiatives
8. As far as you know - is it always a top-down approach or does it happen that companies approach you after employees' request? If so, how often does it happen?
9. What are the objectives clients want to achieve with the platform?
10. Who is normally the final decision-maker? (CEO, HR, CSR manager, etc)
11. Are employees taken into consideration in the negotiations or decision-making processes?
12. Do you tend to accept any kind of client or do you select your clients? If so, do you have any criteria when it comes to determined which companies you are willing to work with?

About existing culture and values
13. During the negotiations are you asking for information about the existing culture and values in place within the company before selling the platform?
    a. Are you taking the time to understand the CSR strategy already in place within the company and how will Alaya be integrated to the existent instruments? /
    b. What role are employees' playing in the current strategy?
    c. What role will Alaya be playing for the company culture?
14. In your opinion, are the existing corporate culture and values playing a role in the success of the platform to employees?

Other general questions

15. Is Alaya associated or certified by a CSR/HR management award or label?
    a. Is there a particular reason why?
16. When discussing the impact and objectives, with a client, do you have a common timeline? If so, when do you expect to see results?
17. What is for you a successful partnership with a client?
18. In your understanding, what are the main obstacles to this success?
19. Did you ever experience some failures? Could you please expand on this point?
20. In your opinion, what should be improved to guaranty a higher engagement rate on the platform?

Customer Success process
About CSR and Alaya
1. How would you define CSR in general?
2. How would you define Alaya in your own words?
3. How is Alaya related to CSR strategies? What does it aim to achieve?
4. Do you consider Alaya as a tool to support an existing CSR strategy or do you consider it as a CSR strategy in itself?
5. In your opinion, do clients consider it the same way?
6. Who are typically the people you are in contact with (CEO, HR, CSR manager, etc)?

About employees' involvement in the development of CSR initiatives
7. When setting up the project, how much are employees opinion consider?
8. Before envisioning the launch, is there any assessment of the employee's perception about their company behavior, CSR strategy, environmental and social impact?
9. Do clients run a survey to assess employees:
10. Do clients run survey to understand employees' expectations about CSR strategies?
11. Are employees' opinion about volunteering program and activities evaluated or taken into consideration?
12. Are the employees involved in the development/launch of the platform? In what way?

About employee's engagement in CSR initiatives
13. How would you define employees' engagement in the context of Alaya?
14. What you would be the optimal engagement rate and behavior?
15. According to your experience, what make certain employees be more willing to participate that other?
16. Do you notice a difference when management is involved in CSR initiatives such as Volunteering program?

17. Do you notice a difference when the company already had CSR initiatives and established culture and values?
18. How are champions chosen?
19. Are they rewarded?

About the communication of the CSR initiative
20. In terms of communication, what is the prevailing strategy?
    a. How much in advance are the employees informed about the program?
    b. By whom?
    c. How? (email, internal tools, meetings/events)
    d. In terms of content, do you advise the company?
21. Do the companies communicate outside the company about their engagement with Alaya and their impact with external stakeholder?
22. Do companies send an impact report to employees?

Other general questions
23. When discussing the impact and objectives, what is your timeline? When do you except to see results?
24. In your opinion, are the existing corporate culture and values playing a role in the success of the platform to employees?
25. In your personal opinion, do you believe that employees engage on the platform because they are "forced" to or because they identify with the values and culture emanating from the platform and the cause supported?
26. According to you,
    a. Why is it so hard to have people engage on the platform at the beginning and to keep them engaged?
    b. what should be improved?

Appendix D: Interviews responses
Appendix D.1: André Abreu, co-founder head of the sales department as well the marketing and communication department

Sales process
1. How would you define CSR in general?
   It is a very broad subject because we are talking about acting responsibly for a company so it involves everything from your product and packaging, how you deal with suppliers and you treat your employees, your ethical manners, and all the initiative you put in place for the planet, for people, for the society. Everything.
2. How is Alaya related to CSR strategies? What does it aim to achieve?
   With Alaya is it about putting CSR in the hands of employees. We are working on a small part of CSR which is how to engage and involved employees in the CSR

strategy of the company. If you are thinking about improving your production or water or energy strategy or deal with your suppliers in a more ethical manner, this is not what we do. But when it comes to the employees and how to involve them in your CSR strategy and actions employees are going to do, then we come in.

3. Do you promote Alaya as a tool to support an existing CSR strategy or do you consider it as a CSR strategy in itself?
Exactly. Of course, there is a way of marketing it, some companies will want to work on CSR and only use Alaya, but companies who have a big CSR department Alaya is only a part of CSR.

4. In your opinion, do the future clients consider it the same way?
It is more a tool yes, because we are not defining a strategy with clients, they have to do it. And then when they have decided how they want to involve their employees, then we come in.

5. Who are typically the people contacting you in the first place (CEO, HR, CSR manager, etc)?
In 50% of the cases it is Human Resources, then 25% it is CSR, foundations or sustainability managers and maybe 25% is the rest which means communication, CEO, etc.

6. Why are they interested in the platform? How do you know it?
The interest they have is a double interest. First, they want to engage their employees in their initiatives and keep them motivated and proud of their company. And the second is how to generate more impact to the community, how to generate more impact to the planet. So, it is a double interest with double benefits that they have.

7. As far as you know - is it always a top-down approach or does it happen that companies approach you after employees' request? If so, how often does it happen?
It is both. Sometimes it is top-down maybe 50% and sometimes it is bottom-up. One person believes in it or a few employees ask for it and then it goes up. Some companies even have a committee where you have a mix of HR and employees, so this is really bottom up.

8. Who is normally the final decision-maker? (CEO, HR, CSR manager, etc)
Very good question. Very often it goes quite high, so often your point of contact is a manager, but the decision will be made by a director or sometimes CEO. Because it is a solution that involves everybody, all the departments, all the employees. So, it goes very up.

9. Do you think that this can cause some issues?
Yes, sometimes that is a problem because we then have to empower people internally to sell it as we do not always access to the decision makers. Therefore, we really have to convince the person we have contact with and give them all the tools and arguments for them to convince the boss.

10. Are employees taken into consideration in the negotiations or decision-making processes?

Very often there is a discussion with a committee or people from different departments. So, very often the employees are also involved. The company is tracking to understand if it is going to be useful for them and so on. It is 50% of the time that employees are involved.

11. Do you tend to accept any kind of client or do you select your clients? If so, do you have any criteria when it comes to determined which companies you are willing to work with?

Any type of company, any sector, but there is a criterion of size. They have to have a certain number of employees, maybe a hundred or fifty minima. And then location is also a criterion, where are the employees based. Ideally, they should be based in countries where we already have some activities.

12. Why do you not accept smaller companies?

We do in some cases, but it is just not a strategy for us to go after them because it is a lower budget, so the pricing of the contract is smaller, and it is less profitable for us. And the companies themselves have less resources to implement the platform, so we usually have a bigger risk of churn when their business is small.

13. During the negotiations are you asking for information about the existing culture and values in place within the company before selling the platform?
    a. Are you taking the time to understand the CSR strategy already in place within the company and how will Alaya be integrated to the existent instruments?
    b. What role are employees' playing in the current strategy?
    c. What role will Alaya be playing for the company culture?
       Yes, very often. We have to understand what they have been doing in the past, what they would like to do, what is important for the culture, what is important for the employees. And knowing all this will be even more important for the Customer success team when they have to implement and animate the platform.

14. Is Alaya associated or certified by a CSR/HR management award or label? Is there a particular reason why?

B Corp and that is it. B Corp is getting attraction, they have a lot of interesting and diverse size of companies that are certified by them. They seem to be quite strict. And there is a lot of marketing reasons as well, so being certified by B Corp is a sign of credibility for us, companies recognize it.

15. When discussing the impact and objectives, with a client, do you have a common timeline? If so, when do you expect to see results?

Implementing a program takes time. This is way we like to discuss contract of a minimum of one year during which we try to run report frequently, like quarterly reports. But we expect to see results in the first half year, so six months

16. What is for you a successful partnership with a client?

Where we listen to them and really understand what they want, but they are also creating the program themselves, they are not waiting for us to run all the initiatives for them, so we expect them to be really active. They have to bring new ideas, they have to use their internal communication and channels, the top leadership has to be involved in the program. They also need to create an environment for the employees to participate such as offering one day of leave a year at least for employees to participate or to volunteer. And when it comes to donation it is the same thing. Companies could offer to do some grant, some matching. All that will make the program very successful and the partnership a success.

17. In your understanding, what are the main obstacles to this success?

Sometimes companies think that Alaya is really easy to implement and expect to see results very quickly or that they do not need to put some efforts on their side, and everything will fall into place. But this is not the reality, there need to be some efforts on their side as well. We can take care of a lot of things, but not everything.

18. Did you ever experience some failures? Could you please expand on this point?

At the beginning we were not ready as we are today, and we did not know the market as we do today. When we signed the first clients three years ago, the platform was not as it is today, so we had to retain those clients which were actually smaller once, because some fatigue came up. They became really tired of using it and at that time the platform was not working very well and to make it work again it is harder, so there are a few clients that we lost.

19. In your opinion, what should be improved to guaranty a higher engagement rate on the platform?

Since then we improve it a lot also in terms of features. Some features are really important, such as gamification elements, recognition elements, visibility to people, the ability to find activities easily on the platform, having enough activities in the platform. The Content part is really important so what are the charity we are supporting and what are the activities you can organize with those charities.

Another we could do to increase the engagement rate is the partnership with the clients itself, such as the internal communication channels that the company already has in place, from intranet to newsletter, to discussion, presentation etc, how can we leverage on that to promote the CSR program. So, all that we have already improve and we are improving our engagement rate.

20. Do you think that the existing culture and values already in place within the company are playing a role in this success?

Absolutely. We have example where employees have to show case, they have to talk about what they are doing because it motivates other people, inspires people and generates visibility for the actors and the projects. A lot of companies have a culture where they do not promote it, they do not promote communication or transparency. People do their things on their own side and it is much harder for us

when it is like that because, how do you change a culture, how do you make people proud of what they are doing and to promote what they are doing so that others will do and so that you will generate more impact? This is really a cultural change and sometimes it is really hard with some companies.

And then you have some companies that are not really technology oriented, they are not digital, and we have a digital tool. That is another cultural difference. How do you promote digitalization in a company that do not use this kind of tools?

21. How could Alaya help companies to change their culture?

It is little by little. Showing that works, showing what is done on the market, but also showing that the program within their company is working and little by little they will want to do more and more. By promoting people to share what they are doing, at the beginning they will be hesitating, but as you can show that sharing creates engagement, then people little by little will be more open.

Appendix D.2: Sales Manager 2

Sales process

1. How would you define CSR in general?

I would define CSR as a department in an organization willing to increase or boost its sustainability or durability or improve its image.

2. How is Alaya related to CSR strategies? What does it aim to achieve?

Alaya is only one part of CSR, sometimes we define it as a CSR solution, but I believe it is only one aspect and it is the one where employees are becoming actors and are empowered to become actors of CSR, more specifically in employees volunteering.

3. Do you promote Alaya as a tool to support an existing CSR strategy or do you consider it as a CSR strategy in itself?

Yes exactly. I would say that Alaya is a tool and a company will use it according to its strategy or policy. Some companies do not have policies so there are starting from scratch and maybe here Alaya can come with some advice, but I believe that is it not our job. We are not consultants in CSR. Most of the time we will help them with the tool only.

4. In your opinion, do the future clients consider it the same way?

Most of them do already understand that CSR is really broad and there are therefore not expecting Alaya to answer all their questions.

5. Who are typically the people contacting you're in the first place (CEO, HR, CSR manager, etc)?

It depends on the size of the organization. If it is a big organization and CSR strategy is mature, they most probably have a CSR manager. But most of time it is human resources or communication, maybe marketing. It really varies a lot. But because

our marketing and communication is becoming clearer on our website, now people approaching us have a clear idea about what is Alaya, therefore we have a lot of HR, as we believe it is an HR tool.

6. Why are they interested in the platform? How do you know it?

Their interest is in the tool itself, that can facilitate the communication to save them a lot of time and the second is for the content we have on the platform. They understand rapidly that we are not selling an empty tool, but there is a mind of opportunities and activities and that is what they value as it will save us a lot of time.

7. As far as you know - is it always a top-down approach or does it happen that companies approach you after employees' request? If so, how often does it happen?

It happens sometimes to have a bottom up approach, as it happened to me yesterday. I was approached by an HR and now she wants to conduct a survey for the employees to validate their interests. But most of the time it is a top-down approach because it is a company program and the people in charge of this program will impose it to employees.

8. What are the objectives clients want to achieve with the platform?

The objective is to make the program work. In the past, many companies have tried to implement such initiative, either for the wellbeing of the employees, the purpose at work etc. but they realized that only few people were participating, and they hope that with a dedicated tool facilitating the communication more employees will engage.

9. Who is normally the final decision-maker? (CEO, HR, CSR manager, etc)

I would say that most of the time it is not the first person we were speaking with. Except SMEs or medium companies, otherwise it is mainly the boarder directors who will take the final decision. And most of the time we do not discuss directly with those people. We know that they have these discussions about CSR and employee's engagement on their desks, but it is never their priority so, we approach other people and do our best to make them sell the program to the board of directors or general managers etc.

10. Do you tend to accept any kind of client or do you select your clients? If so, do you have any criteria when it comes to determined which companies you are willing to work with?

In terms of sector or industry, Alaya policy is never to judge what they are doing but offer a tool to everyone who is willing to take its part.

I am maybe not the best example because I choose any types of company and especially in terms of size. I am asked to try to reach the biggest companies, but I try to reach local companies as I work on the Swiss market. So, I really approach any kind of companies from a hundred employees up to multinational. So, I do not have any specific criteria. Sometimes of course, it might be easier for me if I reach companies that are sensitive to Alaya's related topics and I believe that nowadays every large and serious companies understand and do something in terms of CSR.

So, with them the objective is to make them understand that we do not want to make a revolution or change anything but Alaya could be a great tool to facilitate the communication and participation.

Sometimes I also search for top employers or companies like these, where I am almost sure that there are people whose job really are to engage employees or take care about the reputation of the company.

11. During the negotiations are you asking for information about the existing culture and values in place within the company before selling the platform?
    a. Are you taking the time to understand the CSR strategy already in place within the company and how will Alaya be integrated to the existent instruments? /
    b. What role are employees' playing in the current strategy?
    c. What role will Alaya be playing for the company culture?
       Yes, of course because we need to be aware of where they are, which means if there are starting from scratch and all these topics are completely new or if they already have some initiative in place. Again, bigger company they most of the time have a big culture with departments organizing plenty of activities. It can also be the case in small companies, but it is less usual. So, the idea is really to understand what they do and who is organizing those activities and how do the employee's response. Are they engaged or is the company struggling to implement the culture or the initiative? Therefore, when we understand where they stand, we can understand how Alaya can be a dedicated platform for what they do meaning that we do not want to cancel what they are already doing but improve the engagement.

12. In your opinion, are the existing corporate culture and values playing a role in the success of the platform to employees?
    I do not really know how to answer that because they must already be employees who are engage and for whom the actual culture and tools answer their needs. And there is going to be the rest of the employees who maybe are not really aware of the culture or for whom the culture is something really vague and there do not really experience the culture that is communicated. In this sense I believe that Alaya could help to spread the company culture by empowering the employees to be the one acting and inviting their colleagues to discover the culture and be part of it.

13. Before envisioning the launch, is there any assessment of the employee's perception about their company behavior, CSR strategy, environmental and social impact?
    For instance, do clients run a survey to assess employees:
    a. Organizational identification with the existent company culture and values.
    b. Perception of external reputation.
    c. Perception of organization internal fairness.
       Really good questions and to be fair I do not really know the answer. I know that on our side we could do that. We could launch the program and run a

survey asking employees how they feel, and they see later on how it have evolved if it does. But I am not aware if there do it, and this is maybe not a question I ask. Maybe they do it, but as most of the time it is really top down, they just decide without asking employees. But I have been in contact with companies which we did not signed because it was too early for them and some of them did a survey on employees to reach this conclusion. So, some of them do but it is not usual. The one doing it are maybe those who did not any employee engagement at the moment and therefore it was really new, and they wanted to have a feedback on employees' perception.

14. Do you think that if a company does not have its employees ready for this kind program and decide to still implement it will have a high engagement rate?

    I would say that if there is a culture in place it facilitates a lot for thing. If we start from scratch and the employees are not aware of the culture of the company, most probably they will less engaged. It would probable help Alaya to run more successfully or maybe see results faster in terms of participation if a culture is already well implemented.

15. Is Alaya associated or certified by a CSR/HR management award or label? Is there a particular reason why?

    We have B Corp. Some companies approach us "saying we want to be certified by B Corp." and they understand that is they implement Alaya, it is going to help them. But I do not think that the majority approach us to have the logo. They do it because they really want to empower employees and do volunteering.

16. When discussing the impact and objectives, with a client, do you have a common timeline? If so, when do you expect to see results?

    More and more in the contacts we have key success metrics. We set up some objectives to reach and we need to be realistic when setting these objectives, meaning that it takes time. As we were saying, if a company has a strong culture, it may help to have the employees using the tool quickly. But I would say, three months would be really the minimum amount we need to reach some objectives. Three to six months ideally and after this period we could have some interesting results. The idea is to have objectives and have the people in charge of the program within the company to understand and plan activities to make sure that the problem is alive and that employees participate.

17. What is for you a successful partnership with a client?

    It depends on who is in charge of the program on the client side. If a client is really motivated and passionate about this topic and project, he is going to propose a lot of initiatives, be in contact with the customer success manager to discuss and make plans for the month and the year to come. So, it really depends on the engagement of the person in charge. If they are very engaged employees will have access to a platform with a lot of activities which will also encourage them to participate. It does not necessarily have to be the managers or person we were in contact with, we

just need to have someone who believes in the project and is engaged to organize initiatives and invites its colleagues to use the platform as well.

18. In your understanding, what are the main obstacles to this success?

Time. Again, in big companies there is a person whose job is this already. In other companies the person in charge may have other jobs and lots of work to do and other priorities and therefore it is difficult for them to spend much time on the program.

19. Did you ever experience some failures? Could you please expand on this point?

To me an example of failure would be for example the first client I signed two year ago was a very small company based in Geneva with forty people. And the person I was speaking to be the HR manager and obviously they had no CSR or initiative like Alaya in place as it was a small company, and the person was immediately very enthusiastic, and we signed only after a few days. But the failure was that some employees did react very negatively to the platform. Here we had a troublemaker who was already really engaged with local NGOs and was saying that they did not need such program in place within their company and take the money spent on the platform could go straight to NGOs. But what this person did not understand is that maybe he was engaged personally already but most of his colleagues were not and Alaya could have been a way to motivate them to do good. We launched very fast but after six months we had to stop.

I would say that sometimes of course in sales we want to go fast and reduce the sales cycle, and it happened to me again this year. We signed a client very rapidly and prepared the launch with the customer success manager and the week of the launch, the CEO decided to cut the project. So, sometimes when we go to fast and we do not trick all the boxes such as, maybe as you said, see if the employees wants it, have a clear idea of what they want and have the CEOs agree, we may go to fast and fail at the end.

20. In your opinion, what should be improved to guaranty a higher engagement rate on the platform?

Definitely, communication within the company and of course Alaya can help a bit, but again what is really important is who is the captain of the program within the company. If it is a person whose ability to communicate and spread the energy is very high, then we will have a strong chance to be successful. For example we have a company in Geneva that we launch recently and they already have a great participation rate and it is not a surprise to be because, first of all there are two people in charge of the program, they have a lot of energy, a lot of time and they communicate a lot. Those are the key metrics: time, energy and proper communication skills, probably linked to the culture as well. If on top of that, they have a strong culture it helps.

Appendix D.3: Sales Manager 3

Sales process
1. How would you define CSR in general?
   The policies a company is going to take in order to have a more positive impact on people and the environment.
2. How would you define Alaya in your own words?
   Alaya is a platform to engage your employees via doing good.
3. How is Alaya related to CSR strategies? What does it aim to achieve?
   We fit in part of it as companies need to report their engagement and our platform helps this.
4. Do you promote Alaya as a tool to support an existing CSR strategy or do you consider it as a CSR strategy in itself?
   Both. We can support and we can help creating one for companies who have never done it before
5. Who are typically the people contacting you're in the first place (CEO, HR, CSR manager, etc)?
   It is CSR Manager or HR manager most of the time
6. Why are they interested in the platform? How do you know it?
   Because it saves them time in reporting and finding relevant activities. They also like how simple it is in terms of user or employee experience.
7. As far as you know - is it always a top-down approach or does it happen that companies approach you after employees' request? If so, how often does it happen?
   I had the case in the US that some companies reached out because their employees are very active already and what to implement a volunteering program such as Alaya.
8. What are the objectives clients want to achieve with the platform?
   I would say it is easy reporting as well as increasing the number of employees participating in initiatives. Along with finding relevant activities in line with their CSR policies.
9. Who is normally the final decision-maker? (CEO, HR, CSR manager, etc)
   The decision is usually taken at a higher level, CEO and CFO.
10. Are employees taken into consideration in the negotiations or decision-making processes?
    No.
11. Do you tend to accept any kind of client or do you select your clients? If so, do you have any criteria when it comes to determined which companies you are willing to work with?
    As we are a small startup, we tend to work with anyone but we prefer at least 200 employees.

12. During the negotiations are you asking for information about the existing culture and values in place within the company before selling the platform?
    a. Are you taking the time to understand the CSR strategy already in place within the company and how will Alaya be integrated to the existent instruments? Yes
    b. What role are employees' playing in the current strategy? A little bit
    c. What role will Alaya be playing for the company culture? Yes
13. In your opinion, are the existing corporate culture and values playing a role in the success of the platform to employees?
    Yes because it will help with the onboarding if they are already use to something like us.
14. What is for you a successful partnership with a client?
    We tend to leave that part of the Customer Success Managers and we define success by how many employees are using the platform.
15. In your understanding, what are the main obstacles to this success?
    That employees simply don't care, lack of internal communication, lack of integration to the company's IT stack.
16. Did you ever experience some failures? Could you please expand on this point?
    Unfortunately, I lost a lot of contract to our competition for not being French enough or American enough.
17. In your opinion, what should be improved to guaranty a higher engagement rate on the platform?
    We should try to have Alaya integrated more to the companies' IT system, so they do not see Alaya as just another platform.

Appendix D.4: Guillaume Granelli, co-founder head of the customer success department

Customer Success process
1. How would you define CSR in general?
   For me CSR at a corporate level is all the actions, processes and everything a company can put in place to make sure it has a positive impact on the environment or the society or even improve the current processes. There are several dimensions to CSR. The first one is the dimension related to the impact, most of the time it is a negative impact as it is almost impossible to have a neutral impact, on environment and society, but mostly on the environment like the direct one you generate through your activities. So as Alaya, we are not specialized at all on those fields but it is more related to if you have production, to make sure that everything you do in your production line etc. is conformed or you always try to do your best to reduce the emissions of the good you doing or the service. This is very direct or related to what you do, but then you also have a kind of second impact that is where do you start

the chain of certification and when do you start looking at your products if you take the example of factories producing a good, you have so many suppliers before you, so when you are working on CSR do you start with your company or also with the others layers of production? Even for services companies like Alaya, you could even think about the computer you buy, the screen you take, the table use, where they are from and how they are produced etc. That's why there is two dimensions for me. The indirect one more about the chain of suppliers. But then it also goes to the production, the energy you are using, recycling. And then you also have smaller parts of CSR that is what Alaya does. It is what employees and companies can do as small actions to compensate part of their CO_2 emissions. Such as buying trees for an organization to then reduce your emissions. What we do at Alaya with those kinds of small challenges where employees even at home or at individual level can do small actions to reduce their impact. Alaya are maybe the visible actions that can be made but not at all the big work related to the production.

2. Do you promote Alaya as a tool to support an existing CSR strategy or do you consider it as a CSR strategy in itself? This is why we branded Alaya as an engagement engagement because we tackle both employee engagement and CSR. CSR we are doing is really a small part, and it's based on individual actions or company actions. yes you can do a grant to an environmental project that plans trees or compensate CO_2, but the impact is minor if you compare it to, let's take the example of producing goods, of improving these processes and reducing the impacts related to that, Alaya only has a small part.

3. In your opinion, do the future clients consider it the same way?
   I don't think that they see Alaya at all as a CSR for everything. Only 1/3 of our personal contact is leading the CSR department within the company, we have some cases, but most of them are HR or Internal communication so CSR is not their main goal. But for some of them, it is part of their CSR budget but in most cases Alaya is a 10% of what they do related to CSR.

About employees' involvement in the development of CSR initiatives
4. Who are typically the people you have contact with? You are the decision-makers?
   50% of them are HR, so it mostly the HR director or maybe a manager. In some companies it can be people in charge of company engagement or employee volunteering within HR still. Then 1/4 is internal communication and CSR or foundations.
   But for the decision-makers it depends on the size of the contract, but most of the time it has to go to the director of the company to get accepted. When it's already in the budget it is easier, but when it is a new budget it needs to be validated and most of the time, we need a C level validation.

5. Do you think that this can cause some problems as you are discussing with one person and then the decision maker is not the same one?

This is challenges in all the companies because you have to convince the buyer, so that's why we are trying also to train and coach the people we are talking to, so they can also convince internally. But it is the same in all companies, you should be able to convince the C level as well. But then company that have CSR department or volunteering program or initiative in place it is already that the actors are involved or aligned with this philosophy so sometimes it is easier. But implementing a new solution always take time. That's why our cycle is quit long, because we have to convince other.

6. Before envisioning the launch, is there any assessment of the employee's perception about their company behavior, CSR strategy, environmental and social impact?

    For instance, do clients run a survey to assess employees:
    a. Organizational identification with the existent company culture and values.
    b. Perception of external reputation.
    c. Perception of organization internal fairness.

7. Do clients run survey to understand employees' expectations about CSR strategies? Maybe not related to culture field etc. and as the contract has already been signed it is kind of too late to ask this kind of question. But if they were willing to implement it it is also because internally, as it is not always a top-down approach, employees or managers have asked for this kind of initiative to managers or HR and they do not have the tools or resources to do it internally so this is also why there are asking our help. But then it is also true that what we advertise to companies before selling is that Alaya will help align employees' value with the company, as Alaya is all about doing good, it can only help in that direction.

8. Are employees involved in the development/launch of the platform? Do they have a say in the strategy to launch the platform or in the kind of activities, events, causes they would like to support?

    It starts as a top-down approach when you implement Alaya, you select maybe company initiatives that you would like to promote and it is also always the kind of initiatives that are run by our CS team that we facilitate with champions or person of contact running the program to make sure we still have some initiative that can be pushed. As for example the mindfulness week to promote some challenges around mindfulness so this would be chosen by the company but then, even if they have specific causes, activities etc, we will still have a lot of action from the employees going on the platform and picking some activities related to their personal causes or start challenges that speak more to what they like etc. It is thus a good mix between top down big initiatives such as matching for example which shows also that the employee has the support of the company because a lot of times employees are a bit afraid about engagement in Alaya because they are not sure if there are allowed to that and if it is supported by the company. So, a mix of both is kind of the best practice you can have.

9. Before the launch how much time do you spend to understand the culture and values that are already in place within the company?

It is already done a bit by the sales team, they are talking to the company as they have to advise them on that and it is of course part of the sale process to convince them to join Alaya and to convince them you also have to understand how they work. But also, in CS when we take back the account what is recommended is to take 2-3 months for the onboarding to make sure we align on the company policy, on the culture, on what has been done in the past, what should be implemented, etc. but then it varies a lot. The maturity of the company is very different. We are now signing a France client where basically they have a CSR committee, a foundation, they want to launch in March because their CSR team will finish the company policy. The HR is also in the loop. Whereas with some you launch, and they have nothing in place you suggest them some template or some best practices and then they implement everything. So, it really depends on the company and the maturity. Some already do a lot of track record, a lot of work with nonprofit. So, usually a three month of onboarding before launch is quit a good among of time, also to define the strategy.

About employee's engagement in CSR initiatives

10. How would you define employees' engagement in the context of Alaya?

It is really close to what you said in the question related to culture. So, implementing Alaya for companies is amazing because not only does it promote a sense of doing god among the company, so that employee who will participate to those actions will start to have another image of their company about they care and what they do, so it is a great way to motivate the employees, also with matching, etc. when you that for example during Covid-19 some companies matched the donations from employees. Employees start thinking: "I want to support that local hospital and then behind my company is also giving the same amount". It feels good because you feel supported and have a sense of belonging, you feel closer to the culture of your company. And then all about employee engagement. The more employee teambuilding activities you have, the more you will feel connected with your company and also your colleague. And I think that a big part of employees' engagement is how you connect with employees through teambuilding done by field volunteering activities, skills-based, brainstorming to help a charity, a challenge, a step count challenge, so there are many ways through Alaya to connect with employees.

So to sum up it improve the culture feeds of your company because you feel that your company cares also about your choices and doing good and then is also a way to do networking and connect to your colleagues more so you feel more align with the values. We see that more with the year, we now have more teambuilding with

purpose and philanthropic, but team building exists for years now to put employees together.

11. What you would be the optimal engagement rate and behavior of employees?

For me the optimal journey for an employee, and it is also why we build the challenges feature, is that let's that someone is just starting in doing good or only did once or twice volunteering and just registered on the platform, he starts completing maybe one or two challenges, sustainable challenges like not eating meat for a week or reduce its shower time etc. and then by completing those challenges this person will become more mature to start some volunteering, start participating in goods collections organized by its company. So, this would be more a bottom-up approach.

But it could also be different. For example, a company organizing for the launch a goods collection then it is easy to participate but more a top-down approach.

12. According to your experience, what makes certain employees be more willing to participate that other?

There is a large part of it that is hard to explain as it is more related to phycology or how people are. We are talking at launch with one of our ex investors who just had its son that passed away. His son always wanted to create a charity and now that he is gone, the father suddenly decided to create a charity to realize his son's dream and now became super engaged. So, this is an extreme example, but is shows that sometimes you have events in life that makes you want to engage. For example, when some employees have kids then want to show them the way, some people support big charities while some to do not want to support those, so it is very personal. But it is also very related to the country where you are born or raised. So Alaya can help and convert some people who are not yet in volunteering or giving mood, but there is a big personal and cultural part that is playing a role and that we cannot control. We see it with some countries. For instance, we are based in Switzerland but when you compare it to the UK or USA, such countries have always been about giving and volunteering. There is also in terms of government a difference. In the UK each time you donate, the government donates for you as well. So, so many initiatives which are institutional and within the company. But in Switzerland like central Europe we are late on this point and maybe it is started to change but you do not change a culture in a year, it is taking time and we are seeing a shift in Switzerland but still less people will be convinced by Alaya straight away.

13. Do you notice a difference when management is involved in CSR initiatives such as Volunteering program?

Yes, definitely and it is also what as customer success team try to always recommend to companies before launching. They have to show that the management is behind this initiative. We had the example of a company once that launch with a C level who did an activity before the launch and they made a video that they used for the roll out and sent the video to all the employees and we saw that employees were

much much more motivated to act, because they knew they had the support of the management. But sometimes it is also a bit tricky when you have the middle management that needs to reach targets and make it work so they have this top—down approach saying: " we will implement that and the employees will make this and this." But then as they are in the middle and they can have barriers or slow down the process. But definitely when employees know that they have the right to use Alaya and that they are supported by the company, it helps for the engagement yes.

14. Do you notice a difference when the company already had CSR initiatives and established culture and values?

I do not think it is necessarily related to if they already have a CSR department or a foundation in place. But it is more if maybe as a company they have more activities. But we have banks for example working with us for years now and we see their engagement increasing now. Obviously if you start from the gate go it is different from a company that did already a lot of volunteering or giving and it is more in their values and DNA, of course this is easier to have employees participating. Some clients are really starting, they have never done that before and they need also to set their company policies etc. so it is taking some time, maybe year sometimes.

15. How are champions chosen?

It depends on the level of the champions. The bigger the company, the more layers of champions you will have. Sometimes on a country or regional level it will be a HR or head of, or manager of internal communication for the country etc. so those people are selected by the person running the program because in some sense they were already doing this in their region. And then you have more champion on a local level who are employees that time and they are

About the communication of the CSR initiative

16. In terms of communication, what is the prevailing strategy?
    a. How much in advance are the employees informed about the program?
    b. By whom?

    Before launching we create a pole of employees that we call champions who are inform just after the signature or a few weeks after that and they will help to prepare the launch and the roll out of the program in the multiple locations. But if we talk about all the employees, usually they are informed just one or two weeks before the launch. Then, it depends how the company wants to launch. some companies want to launch with a specific event so maybe they will inform them a bit in advance. But as Alaya is not something that you use only once or for one event, you do not need to inform the employees a lot in advance. Most of the time it is just saying : " Next week or in two weeks we will launch our volunteering program, you have as employees the right to take to days per year to do some volunteering, and you donation will match…" etc. for example.

Usually, it is or looks like it is the C level launching it but in reality, it is internal communication, but we always try to have someone higher in the hierarchy to send this communication.

    c. How? (email, internal tools, meetings/events)

    d. In terms of communication content, do you advise the company?

Yes, we have a communication kit to help the companies with key words and elements that we use, but it is also the role of the customer success manager to spend some time with the company to know what the best practices are internally. For some companies' emails work really well, some companies prefer internal tools for communication, other is printed materials etc, so we really have to adapt to each company but have template and guideline to support them with that.

17. Do companies communicate outside their organization about their engagement with Alaya and their impact with external stakeholder?

I have to say that when we created Alaya I was expecting more companies to use Alaya as a marketing or external communication tool, but in the end, it is not a lot. Out of our 40 clients maybe 10% of clients really communicate about it externally. For most of them, it is used for the internal communication, so HR, engagement, internal communication department. Otherwise it is rarely public. Some of them have it on their website.

18. Why do you think that they do not share it that much?

Maybe it is also culture wise as we have more companies in central Europe and it is not usual to communicate about it externally. But for me Alaya would be a very good way to retain talents, increase engagement, attract talents and to also show your customer that you are doing volunteering. But it may also be linked to the portfolio of Alaya clients. We do not have a lot of B2C clients, there are more B2B companies like bank, ensure etc. so they may need less to communicate about doing good with their customer as a clothes brand of organizations like that would need to do.

19. Do you think that if Alaya was certified by a label it would encourage companies to communicate about it more?

Yes, could be interesting but for example a lot of labels like Bcorp are B2C labels, so it is not the topology of Alaya's client. But yes, it could help but certification is a lot of work to get.

20. Do companies send an impact report to employees?

Yes, I am not sure if they are all going it, but some are doing it on their international communication tools, and they mention Alaya because at the end these initiatives are made for employees so they are more than happy to communicate about it. And I know that the impact report we send to clients monthly or quarterly are used by the managers to see also the returns on investments.

Other general questions

21. When discussing the impact and objectives, with a client, do you have a common timeline? If so, when do you except to see results?

I like to divide the year in four stages which are actually the four quarter for the Customer success team objectives. Basically, the first quarter is all about onboarding so everything before launching for the employees which means discussing the strategy, select the nonprofit, create and populate the platform with activities, train the champions, prepare the launch with the communication etc. So here we do not expect any results. Then we have the second quarter which is the adoption phase. Here the goal is to get the employees used to Alaya, which means to make them create account and maybe start to take some activities, but here what we measure is more the number of account created, the number of people who connected to the platform to really understand how many employees already engaged with the platform. Here in this phase you do not have a lot of impact created. Some with the challenges or some field volunteering activities. But then the third phase is the maturity phase and here it is all about creating more impact, we start to map the contributions made the employees (volunteering, donations, challenges) So it is really about the action and the impact employees created. In this phase we start to expect to see some results. Companies are also expecting results at the stage. And finally, quarter four, it is abot renewal for the client and the maturity phase for us. And here it is really important to have as many employees as possible engaged on the platform, in order to show the managers, the positive results.

22. So those are most of the time quantitative results, but do you also assess the perception of employees?

Yes, we also have some kind of impact report so on one part the quantitative results and on the other we send some form to understand how employees feel and how happy there are with the activities offered.

23. Did you ever experience some failures? Could you please expand on this point?

We lost some clients like all the companies do and some reasons were that some of them were not ready internally to launch this kind of platform and even on our side we were spending too much time and resources on those clients. So, this is link to what we said earlier, if you have companies within which they already had the structure or people who were doing that internally, it helps because then it is among and within their job description and something to add to their job. And when we lose a client this is most of the time the main reason because they do not have the resource internally, they will not have the time to work on Alaya. Even if we support them, they will still need to invest some of their time.

Of course, there is also a pricing reason, some companies do not have the budget anymore. Some companies already understood that tool such as Alaya helps to retain and attract talents etc. but it is true that when a company needs to do a big budget cut, they will cut in Alaya's like solutions. Especially when we just started to work with a client. When you work with a client for many year and they cut Alaya

it may be seen really badly by employees, but when you reach the stage where you have to let go of some employees and reduce costs, cutting Alaya is often an option.

24. According to you,
    a. Why is it so hard to have people engage on the platform at the beginning and to keep them engaged?
    b. what should be improved to guaranty a higher engagement rate on the platform?

    I think it should start on the sales level, really understand clients' needs and what they expect from Alaya and how we can help. But then when we find the perfect match then it is also about time. Taking the example of a client we had from the start, they started with a really low participation rate, then getting to 5-10% and then this year even with Covid we reached 15% in one quarter, so we cannot go faster than the flow. Because there needs to be a chance within the company and in some companies, we have become their main tool to do that change and they count a lot on Alaya. Employees also get to know Alaya more, with the participation growing, so this is the main point. We have to understand from the gate go the company's needs and expectations and then one the ways to boost participation it is really hard to have one proper answer because it depends on the client.

Appendix D.5: Customer Success Manager 1

Customer Success process
1. How would you define CSR?
   I define it as practices implemented by companies in order to respect the principles of sustainable development, meaning to be economically viable, to have a positive impact on society but also to better respect the environment.
2. How would you define Alaya?
   Alaya is a platform that helps companies build a purpose driven culture and engage their employees, one act at the time, to have a significant and positive impact on our planet and its inhabitants. Alaya gives employees the opportunity to have access to a large choice of different volunteering activities easily.
3. How is Alaya related to CSR strategies? What does it aim to achieve?
   Help the company have a positive impact, build their culture and help them engage their employees in subject supported by their CSR strategies and by the company as a whole.
4. Do you consider Alaya as a tool to support an existing CSR strategy or do you consider it as a CSR strategy in itself?
   Yes, Alaya is definitely part of the CSR strategy of a company. Most of the time, companies with CSR department have clear CSR strategies with focus on specific subjects. The Alaya platform, by engaging their employees will support the axes

supported by the company through their CSR strategies and reinforce the willingness of a company to have a positive impact on the planet, their business and the society. It is important for companies, Alaya and employees that the platform and their CSR strategies are linked, so that it makes more sense. Also, it will help the employees to be part of the company

5. In general, do clients consider it the same way?

Yes, most of the time, clients want that their employees' engagement program is linked with the causes or axes they support as a company. Most of the companies allow their employees to engage how they want but focus on big initiative linked to specific subject supported by the CSR. It happens that some companies decide that their employees' engagement program offer activities only linked to the causes supported by the CSR strategies.

6. Who are the people you have contact with?

In big companies it is most of the time with CSR Manager or foundation, whereas in smaller companies is it mostly HR and sometimes communication managers. If we are in contact with the CSR department, it is always good also to have a contact with someone from HR and from the communication department as we need their support to send communication, have access to email address, company policy, etc.

About employees' involvement in the development of CSR initiatives

7. When setting up the project, how much are employees opinion consider?

Most of the time, the implementation of an employee engagement program is top down. We do not really ask employees for their opinion at the beginning. However, what we do sometimes is ask the employees which charities they would like to see on the platform. Users also have to possibility on the platform to suggest us the name of charities they would like to support. Furthermore, with many companies, at the end of the year, we send a survey to all the users, to know what they did, what they think about the platform, the actions they have done and what they would like to do : type of initiative, causes to support, charities, etc.

8. Before envisioning the launch, is there any assessment of the employee's perception about their company behavior, CSR strategy, environmental and social impact? Not from Alaya. But it can happen that we ask these types of questions in the survey we send at the end of the year, but not before launching.

9. Do clients run a survey to assess employees:
   a. Organizational identification with the existent company culture and values?
   b. Perception of external prestige?
   c. Perception of organizational justice
      Not linked to the launch of the Alaya platform but big companies do it internally sometimes. Alaya has nothing to do with theses survey.

10. Do clients run survey to understand employees' expectations about CSR strategies?
    Yes internally, mainly big companies with CSR department or foundation

11. Are employees' opinion about volunteering program and activities evaluated or taken into consideration?

Yes, for many companies, it's important to know what their employees think about the program and what they think about the activities they have done.

12. Are the employees involved in the development/launch of the platform?

Yes, especially for big companies with offices in several countries. We ask some employees to become champions and help Alaya on the launch of the platform and on engaging their colleagues in their location.

13. Are the employees involved after the launch of the platform? In what way?

Yes, the champions are involved, by uploading content on the platform, reaching out to local charities, suggesting initiatives and activities to their colleagues in their location. Finding new activities, initiatives or concepts to engage their colleagues.

About employee's engagement in CSR initiatives

14. How would you define employees' engagement in the context of Alaya?

The percentage of employees who did at least one action, either it is something to support a charity (FV, sharing skills, donating goods or funds) or something to have a positive impact on the planet, himself, the company or colleagues.

15. What you would be the optimal engagement rate and behavior?

Companies want of course to have the highest engagement rate as possible. Wouldn't it be great if everyone did something? Yes, but this is utopist. A good engagement rate for me would be to have one third of the employees doing one action or more.

What we learn to explain to company is that everyone is in the "engagement scale" but not necessarily on the same level. Some are very high, and some very low in this scale. Meaning that if you are high, you do a lot: you volunteer or donate regularly. But if you are low, you do nothing. The role of Alaya is then to meet each employee where they are and bring them higher in the engagement scale. Moreover, the optimal engagement rate depends a lot on the type of companies. You cannot expect the same engagement rate for a big company, with a strong culture, a clear CSR strategy and a CSR department than the one for a small company, without a specific department handling this subject.

In term of behavior, our goal is to make each user own the platform and the engagement program. Often, we start with top down initiatives, organized by the person in charge. The goal of the Alaya platform is to give access to many different possibilities of doing good because volunteering is very personal. The best-case scenario would then be that each employee goes alone on the platform, choose a project he like and get engaged, without a push from Alaya or the company. Our goal is to make doing good part of a company culture and also part of an employee's behavior. That even if he is not anymore in a company partnering with Alaya, he will continue to do good on its own because now it's part of himself, his values.

16. According to your experience, what make certain employees be more willing to participate that other?

Doing good is very personal, we have different skills, different causes close to our heart and we do not want to help all in the same way. Some wants to spend time with beneficiaries, for some other, giving money is their way of doing good. I think it is a question of values and what affects us. Some employees do it because it is part of their DNA or values. They care about what other people are living or what is happening in the world. Some employees do it because sometimes there is rewards, some others do it for the recognition or because they have the impression, they have to do it. I think there is as many reasons as there are employees, but the main reason would be for me some people need responsible and wants to help.

17. Do you notice a difference when management is involved in CSR initiatives such as Volunteering program?

Yes, always important to have management involved. It's very important for the user to know that their company allows them to use some of their working time to do good. Always very important to be very clear on the company policy and to have the manager onboard. As employees will have to ask the manager, it is important that the manger understands and likes the program and do not discredit or demean employees who want to engage

18. Do you notice a difference when the company already had CSR initiatives and established culture and values?

Yes, companies with CSR initiatives, clear company policy and an established culture and values tend to be more engaged. The difference is also on the fact that in this companies, users tend to do good more on their own. Meaning that they come to us because they want to do something and help a charity. It is more bottom up than in the other companies when initiative comes from the top or from Alaya.

19. How are champions chosen?

What we need from a champion is to love the program, be keen to spend time to engage its colleagues, willingness to do it, i.e. it is always important to give the choice to an employee to become a champion and not force him. Therefore, employees should apply for this role. It is also good if the champion is already engaged within the community and knows some charities and how it works.

20. Are they rewarded?

It depends, but it is something we recommend to companies, either financial reward (money, voucher, etc.) or reward focused on recognition such as article on their intranet, employees of the month, etc.

About the communication of the CSR initiative
21. In terms of communication, what is the prevailing strategy?
    a. How much in advance are the employees informed about the program?

Normally when we launch. It can happen with some companies that we do a teaser to announce the launch of an employee's engagement program but most of the time it is when we announce the launch of the platform. This way, employees have the possibility to directly go on the platform and start their first activity.

b. By whom?
It is always better to have the communication send internally. For the launch it is good to have it sent by the top management (CEO if possible) with a quote or a short video. Then for initiatives, we find it good to have the champion or the person in charge to send the communication.

c. How? (email, internal tools, meetings/events)
I think it is always better when the communication is sent by email rather than posted on teams or in their intranet.

d. In terms of content, do you advise the company?
Yes, most of the time, Alaya prepares the communication for the company.

22. Do the companies communicate outside the company about their engagement with Alaya and their impact with external stakeholder?
It depends on the company and their industry, but a lot of our companies communicate externally about their employees' engagement program and the activities done by their employees.

23. Do companies send an impact report to employees?
Yes, it happens very often than companies share key metrics and stats with their employees to congratulate them.

Other general questions

24. When discussing the impact and objectives, what is your timeline? When do you except to see results?
Most of the time when we set up key metrics and objectives its after one year

25. In your opinion, are the existing corporate culture and values playing a role in the success of the platform to employees?
Yes definitely. Companies with strong culture and values tend to have higher engagement on the platform

26. In your personal opinion, do you believe that employees engage on the platform because they are "forced" to or because they identify with the values and culture emanating from the platform and the cause supported?
More because they want to do good. It can happen than in some companies, organizing a citizen day or a community day, everyone almost has to participate. We can thus have some employees doing it because they "have to" or because everyone does it more than because they want it. But the goal of the Alaya's platform is really for each employee to find the project they want to support.

27. According to you,

a. Why is it so hard to have people engage on the platform at the beginning and to keep them engaged?
It depends on where the company and the employees are on the engagement scale.
Another reason is, because it is new, employees have to adapt to the new tool.

b. what should be improved?
There are technical aspects that should be improved such as sase of finding projects according to skills, causes and location, having project that can be done easily with the possibility to register directly on platform and have more project everywhere in the world.

Appendix D.6: Customer Success Manager 2

Customer Success process
About CSR and Alaya

1. How would you define CSR?
CSR is really broad. But basically, it encompasses all the actions and programs companies put in place to have a better impact on the society and their people.

2. How would you define Alaya?
Digital ald all-in-one platform allowing companies to engage their employees with purpose and to build a good culture.

3. How is it related to CSR strategies? What does it aim to achieve?
As I said, CSR is very broad and Alaya does not cover everything in CSR. I believe that Alaya is particularly helpful for the following points: engaging employees in volunteering and donation projects and encourage employees to take action and have a more sustainable and healthier lifestyle.

4. Do you consider Alaya as a tool to support an existing CSR strategy or do you consider it as a CSR strategy in itself?
Definitely a tool to support an existing CSR strategy or a new CSR strategy. But Alaya is not strategy in itself. Companies need to define a policy, to agree on the causes and topics they want to address through their CSR efforts, to define a budget which will be allocated to this strategy, etc. Then comes the tool: Alaya. Alaya will facilitate the implementation of the strategy and help companies to bring things to life.

5. In general, do clients consider it the same way?
I think so. But we have some clients who really count on Alaya to help define their policy and strategy. So, I would say it can be part of the journey we have with the clients, which is really interesting!!

6. Who are the people you have contact with?

It depends, but most often HR, CSR, Foundations, Internal communication managers.

About employees' involvement in the development of CSR initiatives
7. When setting up the project, how much are employees opinion consider?
   Not that much. On a scale from 0 to 10, I would say 4.
8. Before envisioning the launch, is there any assessment of the employee's perception about their company behavior, CSR strategy, environmental and social impact?
   It happens sometimes, but it's not systematic.

9. Do clients run a survey to assess employees:
   a. Organizational identification with the existent company culture and values?
   b. Perception of external prestige?
   c. Perception of organizational justice
      I would say the same, systematically.
10. Do clients run survey to understand employees' expectations about CSR strategies?
    Same here. But we perhaps we should do it more often.
11. Are employees' opinion about volunteering program and activities evaluated?
    Again, not systematically.
12. Are employees involved in the development of the platform? In what way?
    Only some of them are evolved, we call them champions. Champions are responsible to onboard their charities and contact new one. In a way, they have an influence on the CSR program and especially on the partners.
13. Are employees involved after the launch of the platform? In what way?
    After the launch, users are involved in the execution side of it. In other words, they are invited to take part in activities and initiatives organized either by their champions, their company or Alaya itself. They can also suggest new partners.

About employee's engagement in CSR initiatives
14. How would you define employees' engagement in the context of Alaya?
    I would distinguish two type of engagement. The first one concerns the engagement for the community or the environment through volunteering and giving activities. The second is personal engagement through environmental, social and wellbeing challenges.
15. What you would be the optimal engagement rate and behavior?
    It on many aspects and it also depends on how you define "engagement rate". But I think there are two main factors to take into consideration: the size of the company and the maturity.

16. According to your experience, what makes certain employees be more willing to participate that other?

First, I would say, a company policy where people are allowed to take volunteering days. Then matching programs in place. Indeed, people are much more willing to get involved when their company matches their volunteering and giving efforts. Finally, when the Middle management shows the example employees tend to get more involved as well.

17. Do you notice a difference when management is involved in CSR initiatives such as Volunteering program?
Definitely. It reinforces the credibility of the program and also vehicles a positive message.

18. Do you notice a difference when the company already had CSR initiatives and established culture and values?
Again, this has an impact on the maturity of the company and therefore on the engagement rate that follows.

19. How are champions chosen?
It depends on the companies. But the key message should be: "do not appoint someone to be a champion – let your people choose!"

20. Are they rewarded?
Not yet. This is something we are discussing and planning to do in the near future.

About the communication of the CSR initiative

21. In terms of communication, what is the prevailing strategy?
   a. How much in advance are the employees informed about the program?
      Usually one week prior the launch.
   b. By whom?
      Management or person in charge of the program.
   c. How? (email, internal tools, meetings/events)
      By email most of the time.
   d. In terms of content, do you advise the company?
      We try to always share templates with the company.

22. Do the companies communicate outside the company about their engagement with Alaya and their impact with external stakeholder?
Not that much. I feel that most of them are scared to be pointed at and accused of "Greenwashing". They prefer to remain discreet on their volunteering and giving programs. But we still have a some who love to communicate externally about these things.

23. Do companies send an impact report to employees?
Yes, the one we produce for them.

Other general questions

24. When discussing the impact and objectives, what is your timeline? When do you except to see results?

I usually discuss objectives and KPIs at the beginning of the year, i.e. in January with my clients. And we then have until the end of the year to reach them. I also have quarterly meetings with each of my client to assess the situation and make sure we're on track. This is also a good moment to adapt the objectives if needed and discuss strategies and initiatives we could implement throughout the next quarter.

25. In your opinion, are the existing corporate culture and values playing a role in the success of the platform to employees?

Yes sure of course. It has an impact on the maturity of employees with regard to CSR initiatives.

26. In your personal opinion, do you believe that employees engage on the platform because they are "forced" to or because they identify with the values and culture emanating from the platform and the cause supported?

Employees are never forced to be active on the platform. People decide to create their account and take action. It is their choice. But it is our role to convince them and to make sure people want to create their account and to become active users.

27. According to you,

    a. Why is it so hard to have people engage on the platform at the beginning and to keep them engaged?

    It always takes time to implement a new solution and to get people onboard. It is a long journey with a "classic" adoption lifecycle, with the early adopters and the laggards. Moreover, our industry is quite "new". Indeed, it is quite new to talk about purpose at work and purpose-driven culture for people. This might also raise some questions and reluctance among "old fashion" and conservative companies.

    b. what should be improved?

    I would say our communication to make sure the word is widely spread. We should not only work on the launch communication but also on a sequence/cadence of communications to be sent to the employees to ensure they receive enough reminders.

    Moreover, I believe we should work to have more concrete things to do, concrete projects when employees access the platform. The worst thing is to get them lost on Alaya and never come back because they did not find an activity interesting enough for them.