

4.0: Introduction



Figure 4.1 The Japanese concept of *nemawashi* broadly means “laying the groundwork” or “building strong roots.” In a business ethics context, *nemawashi* means building a strong foundation for an action or project by reaching out to all stakeholders and seeking their input, demonstrating how much the organization values their opinion as it builds support from the ground up. (CC BY 4.0; Rice University & OpenStax)

Good business leaders know that a commitment to sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR) requires a strong foundation, one upon which a company can build and expand its commitment to every aspect of the organization.¹ Companies that truly intend to incorporate CSR into their long-term strategy start by soliciting input from a large and diverse group of stakeholders, followed by a transparent process of implementation, commitment, and enforcement. Corporate social responsibility is more than just another policy; it’s a philosophy, capturing the essence of *nemawashi*, or “building strong roots” (Figure 4.1). CSR also demonstrates that a company is willing to commit the financial and human resources necessary to make it a reality, rather than just a talking point.

This chapter looks at sustainability and CSR from the perspective of a diverse constituency, including managers, employees, investors, government regulators, competitors, customers and clients, the community, and the environment. If you were a CEO, would you be willing to commit the time and money to incorporate CSR the right way in your company? Why might some businesses hesitate to use a *nemawashi*-style approach?

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