

Studies show that some job seekers are attracted to employers that are known for corporate social responsibility (CSR), yet the underlying reasons for this are poorly understood. Signaling theory suggests that job seekers often have little information about potential employers, forcing them to make inferences using whatever information is available. Consistent with signaling theory, job seekers have been shown to make inferences from CSR about how well employees are treated (Jones, Willness, & Madey, 2010). The purpose of the present study is to illuminate the different types of signals job seekers infer from two types of CSR activities. MBA students ($N=30$) read web pages from three companies, one of which included a CSR manipulation: community involvement or pro-environmental practices. Participants completed survey items about the attractiveness of working for each company and then answered structured interview questions about the signals they received from CSR. Consistent with prior research, the survey data showed that participants were particularly attracted by CSR practices. Findings from the structured interview showed that participants claimed to have inferred a variety of signals from CSR, including signals about the company's favorable reputation, altruistic and friendly culture, attention to the larger business environment, and, especially, concern for employee well-being. Participants' ratings of specific signals showed that the strongest inferences from CSR were about whether their personal values matched those of the company, how others would view their employment choice, the company's ethical climate, the ability to form friendships with coworkers, the company's financial standing, and favorable employee treatment. Other results showed that, while both types of CSR triggered similar signals, those relating to employee treatment and compensation were stronger when CSR was about community involvement, whereas signals about innovativeness and societal impact were stronger when CSR was about pro-environmental practices. Implications for theory, research, and recruitment are explored.