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The Effects of Social Responsibility Strategies on Organizational Reputation and Success

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Abstract

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) entails "achieving commercial success in ways that honor ethical values and respect people, communities, and the natural environment" (White, 2006). There has been increasing pressure on organizations to be good corporate citizens and implement CSR strategies, however research is lacking on whether CSR strategies are beneficial to the companies that are incorporating them. While there is no doubt that a company's CSR initiatives help society, it is important to explore also whether it is just society that reaps the benefits or whether the business also is positively affected. This paper consists of a review of current literature on this topic, as well as a study, consisting of 12 in-depth interviews with small to medium-sized business executives in the Lancaster, PA region, conducted to garner more evidence. The purpose was to find whether CSR strategies in general positively influenced a company, as well as which CSR strategies seem to have the most impact. Findings point to the notion that all companies that incorporate CSR strategies have benefited in some way, whether this was a positive bottom line contribution, or a more intangible benefit such as corporate reputation. In regards to the most beneficial type of CSR strategy, any initiative that is some way related to the business implementing it, that is to say it is 'industry-specific,' is the most impactful contribution and brings about the most positives for society and the initiating company. Further research on this topic still needs to be conducted in order to build up more evidence-based approaches to this area that is growing in popularity due to external pressures.

Introduction

This project aims to examine social responsibility as a whole, as well as different types of social responsibility strategies, and their effect on an organization's reputation and success. The goal of this project is to determine if social responsibility does have an effect on an organization's reputation and whether or not it is important to the success of the organization. Another goal is to look into whether different types of social responsibility strategies lead to different reputational effects. In order to address these research questions, both an extensive literature review and a study involving interviews with business executives were completed. Results showed that companies involved in CSR benefitted in some way, whether that was tangibly, or more common intangibly. It is to be noted that the more a CSR strategy was tied directly to the business's mission and/or industry then the more positive effects came from that initiative. Business executives should be aware of this and work to choose ways for their company to embed being socially responsible into their daily operations. Further research should be conducted on the difference between CSR in large versus small business, corporate/publically-owned versus family-owned, as well as different regions and countries.

This paper is broken down into the Literature Review, Methodology, Results, Discussion, Recommendations, and Conclusion. Within the literature review section, an overview of CSR is given, followed by history, current external pressures, arguments for and against CSR, a discussion on the varying approaches to CSR, and a look at some case studies of CSR strategies in companies. The methodology section first discusses the different types of CSR strategies the companies in this study currently employ, followed by changes they have made in the past to their CSR initiatives, influences on their strategy development, and whether or not and how they communicate their actions to the public. Also within the methodology section, the views of executive's beliefs on the effects of their CSR strategies on their company's reputation and success, as well as any future changes they have planned for these strategies, are discussed. Following the literature review and methodology, the paper presents the results from this research and a discussion of these findings, including calls to action for additional research. The paper is then ended with a conclusion section, tying everything from this study together.

Literature Review

The literature review for this project will include peer-reviewed articles (11) from various databases, including "Business Source Complete" and ProQuest.

Overview of CSR

There are three central terms regarding social responsibility: holistic approach, interdependence, and one's responsibility for one's impact on society. A holistic approach refers to treating something as a whole, not as separate parts. In regards to CSR, it is important that a strategy encompasses the business, their employees, their customers, as well as the targeted beneficiary of their actions. Interdependence is about mutual reliance between two or more groups; specifically to CSR, this speaks to the notion that without the company's CSR strategy, whoever their initiative targets would be in need, and without the initiative's target, then the company would not have a CSR strategy to act on. CSR recognizes the fact that corporations are responsible for positively impacting the society in which they operate. Guidelines for social responsibility are outlined in ISO 26000 as "accountability, transparency, ethical behavior, respect for stakeholder interests, respect for the rule of law, respect of international norms of behavior, and respect for human rights" (Mulej, Hrast, & Dyck, 2015, p. 148). Achieving commercial success in ways that honor ethical values and respect people, communities, and the natural environment is critical to the idea of social responsibility (Cacioppe, Forster, & Fox, 2008).

One's ethics are their conception of what is right and fair in regards to conduct or behavior. This is linked to one's moral frameworks which provides the structure for their ability to choose between right and wrong, good and bad, and acceptable and unacceptable courses of action. An organization conscientiously takes into account the needs of all stakeholders within their objectives and seeks to do no harm or minimize the effects on the less powerful. Ethical values include a sense of honesty and fairness, prudence, respect for and service to others, keeping promises, being truthful, and developing business relationships based on trust and integrity. It is important for organizations to build an ethical climate by focusing on doing the right thing and having strong moral leadership in place (Cacioppe, Forster, & Fox, 2008).

There is currently a need to close gap between espoused ethical values and behaviors. In a study that looked in to different ethical behaviors and values of 800 directors, managers, and partners, less than one fifth said they were prepared to say that charging personal entertainment to expenses was totally unacceptable and only sixty percent were prepared to say that minor fiddling of business expenses was totally unacceptable; clearly this is an ethical issue that needs to be resolved (Cacioppe, Forster, & Fox, 2008). An organization's ethical climate directly affects the ethical behavior of those working in that environment; this points to the need for a clear understanding or covenant regarding the organization's ethics.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), as understood by the European Commission, is "the voluntary integration of social and environmental concerns in the enterprises' daily business operations and in the interaction with stakeholders" (Pérez, 2015). Companies work to allocate their resources and make decisions in order to satisfy their stakeholders, therefore it is necessary to find a fit between types of CSR implemented by the company and their stakeholder environment. Companies are an integral part of the society in which they operate and CSR involves the responsibility that a company has to make a positive contribution to that society (Komodromos & Melanthiou, 2014). Internal CSR deals with the organization itself and is primarily concerned with the well-being of the company’s investors, employees, and shareholders, while external CSR deals with the welfare of outsiders; both internal and external CSR should be embraced in order to reap the full benefits of a CSR strategy (Komodromos & Melanthiou, 2014).

A company’s CSR strategy often entails commitment of the organization to contribute to sustainable economic development, working with employees, their families, the local community, and society at large, to improve their quality of life. There is a notion that corporations have an obligation to constituent groups in society other than shareholders and beyond that prescribed by law or union contract (Cacioppe, Forster, & Fox, 2008). Organizations have what can be looked at as a pyramid of economic, legal, ethical, and charitable responsibilities. The base is made up of the economic and legal responsibilities of an organization; these are required. The middle of the pyramid is comprised of an organization’s ethical responsibilities, which are expected. The top of the pyramid are the charitable responsibilities that are desired of an organization (Cacioppe, Forster, & Fox, 2008).

A company’s corporate reputation is defined as stakeholder perceptions concerning an organization’s performance and behavior. Corporate reputation is made up of the sum of every activity a company undertakes which impacts the community, whether it was intentional or not (Boulstridge & Carrigan, 2000). It is important to recognize that actions are perceived differently by each stakeholder and also that past perceptions may influence one's future expectations. An organization's reputation must be earned, and can either be good, bad, or an organization may have no reputation if a stakeholder has no perception of them (Boulstridge & Carrigan, 2000). CSR reporting refers to the disclosure of company initiatives that demonstrate the inclusion of social and environmental concerns in business operations and in interactions with stakeholders (Pérez, 2015). This disclosure of CSR information serves as part of the dialogue between a company and their stakeholders that works to legitimize corporate behavior, which in turn contributes to a positive corporate reputation. "Consumer-related" CSR reporting focuses on how consumers react and shape their attitudes and behaviors towards CSR endeavors, while "business-related" CSR reporting is concerned with the effects of such reporting on the companies themselves, in terms of enhancing or damaging corporate image and reputation and/or building brand equity (Pérez, 2015).

Reputation is affected by both internal factors, such as transparency, human values, communication, employee welfare, innovation, CEO reputation, adaptability to changes, and the company's stance on social and environmental issues, as well as external factors, such as customers, shareholders, industry analysts, the media, government, and industry regulators (Komodromos & Melanthiou, 2014). Several other factors that influence corporate reputation include the quality of management, financial performance, quality of products and services, brand leadership, the ability to attract and develop top talent, and market leadership (Boulstridge & Carrigan, 2000). Perceptions of how well CSR initiatives are meeting stakeholders' social and environmental values and expectations can also influence the earning potential of a company's corporate reputation (Pérez, 2015).

A positive perception leads to enhanced reputation and supportive stakeholders (Boulstridge & Carrigan, 2000). Good reputations cannot be built in a day, month or even a year, but instead are built over a time period that cannot be defined (Komodromos & Melanthiou, 2014). Actions geared towards building a good reputation should be embedded in the company's day-to-day routine and become standard operating procedure, such as frequent kind actions and client follow-ups (Komodromos & Melanthiou, 2014). By having an explicit corporate goal of developing a positive corporate reputation, organizations are able to differentiate themselves from competitors (Boulstridge & Carrigan, 2000). Stressing the importance of the need for all employees to protect the company's image, appointing a Chief Reputation Officer (CRO) to manage the firm's image, and tying executive bonuses to performance in regards to corporate reputation, are a few ways that companies today are working to build strong reputations (Boulstridge & Carrigan, 2000). A negative corporate reputation can lead to the shunning of a company's products, a decline in investor interest in the company, reduced stock prices, and employee boycotts (Komodromos & Melanthiou, 2014).

History

CSR talks within academia and practitioner circles began in the 1970s and looked at three dimensions: economic, legal, and ethical/voluntary issues. Focus was mainly on consumer and occupational safety, company responsibility, and workplace discrimination. The philosophy of response was mostly pro-action and reactionary to what was happening in the present time (Komodromos & Melanthiou, 2014). Towards the end of the 1990s there was a growing interest among the public about the ways businesses were behaving. People had concerns about unsavory business activities and businesses began to consider the value and vulnerability of their image, leading to the development of corporate reputation management as both an academic discipline and a practical endeavor. The notion of 'license to operate' spoke to the maintenance of public confidence in the legitimacy and integrity of a business's operations and conduct; if an organization behaved 'unacceptably' they were faced with a wide range of sanctions from the public (Boulstridge & Carrigan, 2000). CSR has evolved in the 21st century to embody the belief that brands should have community meanings, which reflect national, cultural, ethnic, and linguistic boundaries. There are now four phases: Philanthropy, Ethics, Legal, and Economic (Komodromos & Melanthiou, 2014).

External Pressures

There currently is a lot of pressure on companies to be ethical and more socially responsibly. Globalization and the changing business environment have made it increasingly crucial for companies to strive to be good corporate citizens (Komodromos & Melanthiou, 2014). Intangible attributes of companies, which includes their corporate reputation, are more durable and resistant to competitive pressures than product or service attributes since they are harder to duplicate or imitate (Pérez, 2015). The growing impact of media reporting scope and global communications reach has affected the public's beliefs about companies, which are based on experience with a company's behavior, their products, and what they have heard/read about it (Boulstridge & Carrigan, 2000). Recent consumer trends focus on individualism, interest in benefits beyond material satisfaction, and purchasing decisions based on a firm's role in society. While consumers do not expect companies to fix all problems in the world, they do have standards (Boulstridge & Carrigan, 2000).

The Cooperative Bank in the UK conducted a MORI poll that suggested about a third of the consumers were seriously concerned with ethical issues and over half of the consumers had bought from or recommended a company to a peer based on that company's ethical reputation

(Cacioppe, Forster, & Fox, 2008). Additionally, another study showed that 15 percent of respondents would pay more for a product or service that was associated with a cause that was important to them, while another survey found that nearly 25 percent of respondents said they had either boycotted a company or urged others to do so because they disapproved of the company's policies and/or actions (Cacioppe, Forster, & Fox, 2008).

While there is a growth in the number of ethical consumers that act as watchdogs on companies, the relationship between awareness and action is complex. Constraints include the perception that being ethical is more expensive, a lack of availability of ethical alternatives in mainstream shopping outlets, and the difficulty in obtaining accurate information (Cacioppe, Forster, & Fox, 2008). This leads to what is referred to as the attitude-purchase gap. Products from unethical firms are still bought due to the fact that responsible corporate behavior isn't the most dominant purchasing decision criterion. The most important factors to consumers when making purchases include price, quality, and convenience; personal rather than societal reasons. This has led to a push for organizations to focus on other groups that will be more responsive to efforts of reputation management, such as government regulators, activists, city financiers, industry press, and employees (Boulstridge & Carrigan, 2000).

One recent focus group has been ethical investors; individuals who see the potential of a business to contribute to social progress. Businesses depend on healthy and well-functioning societies to thrive so it only makes sense that they should be working to contribute to these societies (Patrizia, 2014). Ethical investors want a return on their investments, transparency, timely info, fair treatment, and reliable forecasting. They are acting in self-interest but also take into account moral considerations (Cacioppe, Forster, & Fox, 2008). Stock prices react favorably when companies win affirmative action awards and negatively when they are involved in employment discrimination or environmental suits. Certain organizations monitor, rank, and report social performance of companies to help individuals make ethical choices in regards to investing (Patrizia, 2014). Impact investing is defined as “investments that are made into companies, organizations, and funds with the intention to generate social and environmental impact alongside a financial return” (Global Impact Investing Network).

Arguments pro CSR

In developing countries, CSR is used to augment government efforts, while in developed countries, like the U.S., CSR is used as a strategic tool that helps organizations to have a legitimate existence in society (Komodromos & Melanthiou, 2014). Financial analysts, journalists, employees, competitors, clients, shareholders, suppliers, opinion leaders, and category experts, are all stakeholders that may influence corporate success, directly or indirectly (Page & Fearn, 2005). Social responsibility reflects and influences values, culture, ethics, and norms and reduces and/or eliminates lack of satisfaction causing loss of markets, suppliers, partners, good image, and trust (Mulej, Hrast, & Dyck, 2015). CSR has been linked to the several positive outcomes for organizations, including a positive bottom line increase, greater access to capital, improved brand image and corporate reputation, attraction and retention of a quality workforce, and the development of leadership skills. Most benefits of CSR, like improved reputation, are intangible, but there is a spillover effect showing that CSR relates to a company’s profitability through good reputation, reduced risks, and increased revenues. Fifty percent of a company’s value is intangible and the reputation of a company is determined by individual assessments outside the organization (Komodromos & Melanthiou, 2014).

Margolis and Walsh conducted an extensive analysis of literature involving 95 studies and found a positive correlation between a company’s CSR strategy and their financial performance (Cacioppe, Forster, & Fox, 2008). The Domini Social Index, which is an early socially responsible index, when compared with the S&P 500 index displayed that in March 2003 the 10 year annualized return on investment for DSI was 9.13% and only 8.54% for S&P 500 (Cacioppe, Forster, & Fox, 2008). Additionally, Frooman's analysis of 27 event studies, in which socially irresponsible behavior from a company occurred, each company suffered from immediate and permanent loss of wealth (Cacioppe, Forster, & Fox, 2008). In regards to greater access to capital, as mentioned earlier, there is a growing group of ethical investors whose portfolios screen for ethical, environmental, and other socially responsible practices. Improvement of brand image and corporate reputation due to CSR can be seen in the fact that when price and quality are equal, 61 percent of consumers report they would switch to a retailer associated with a good cause and 68 percent would pay more for a product from a company linked to a good cause (Cacioppe, Forster, & Fox, 2008).

CSR's contribution to an organization's ability to attract and retain a quality workforce is due to the fact that if an organizations' values and practices are more closely aligned to the values that individuals hold, then there will be an increase in productivity and reduction in turnover and associated recruitment/training costs (Cacioppe, Forster, & Fox, 2008). Employees are the primary stakeholders of a company and directly contribute to a company's success. Employee involvement and ownership is critical to the success of an organization's CSR strategy; employees are the individuals that bridge the gap between a company's CSR goals and the realization of those goals. It is necessary for a company's management to develop and maintain stable relationships with all of their employees through communication, identification, dialogue, and exchange processes (Patrizia, 2014). Organizations that are truly committed to CSR are perceived as more trustworthy. Trust is defined as, "the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party, [. . .] irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party. An employee who trusts her manager might accept the vulnerability of taking action, while a lack of trust may lead to negative outcomes such as worry and stress. In a recent study, supervisor commitment to social responsibility was an important indicator of employees' engagement in corporate social responsibility behaviors" (Ciocirlan, 2016, p.11). Additionally, CSR opens up opportunities for employees to engage in activities that may differ from their normal tasks and allow them to develop and demonstrate their ability to take charge in new and challenging situations, thus allowing management to identify leadership skills (Cacioppe, Forster, & Fox, 2008).

Arguments against CSR

While CSR does have the potential to have an immense positive impact on an organization, as well as the community in which they operate, it is important to note that with reward there is always risk. In 1970, Milton Friedman, a well-known economist, wrote an article in the *NY Times Magazine* entitled The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits (Friedman, 1970). He felt as though charitable contributions, if they are to be made at all, should be made by individual stockholders/employees and not by corporations. Friedman's statement has the underlying inherent notions that social and economic objectives are separate and distinct; a corporation's social spending comes at expense of its economic results. He also pointed to the fact that corporations, when they address social objectives, provide no greater benefit than is provided by individual donors (Porter & Kramer, 2002).

Research has pointed out that instead of staying completely away from CSR initiatives, a company instead needs to tread cautiously. They should have a clear objective of the activity they are undertaking and temper their expectations to reality by conducting a cost/benefit analysis; good corporate behavior is morally and ethically desirable but isn't always commercially beneficial (Boulstridge & Carrigan, 2000).

Another argument against CSR is that there is currently an underdeveloped stream of research analyzing corporate reputation as an outcome of corporate social responsibility reporting. Corporate reputation has both a behavioral and informative component; without communication, the impact of CSR on stakeholder perceptions would be null or negative. Positive correlation between CSR reporting and corporate reputation has been confirmed in Western contexts, leading the findings to have be generalized to Eastern economies as well. Revealing corporate commitment to CSR initiatives has become as equally important, as communicating financial performance, to maintain corporate reputation (Pérez, 2015).

Like any other strategic decision that a business makes, those in charge need to look at both the benefits and costs of the action and analyze what is the best choice for their company at that point in time. While CSR strategies do have many positive outcomes for society as well as the business, as previously mentioned, they also require investments of time, money, and effort of all those involved.

Approaches to CSR

Current literature approaches social responsibility from different perspectives: the perspective of individuals as consumers and citizens, the perspective of organizations, the perspective of the government, the perspective of the international community, and the differing perspectives held by various professionals, researchers, scientists, educators and the media (Mulej, Hrast, & Dyck, 2015). As consumers, individuals should focus on 'real need over greed,' and use suppliers who have a well-grounded SR image. As citizens, people should pressure organizations and governments for more SR. Organizations should practice SR and also pressure peers and governments for more SR. The government should accept exclusively suppliers that are champions of SR and innovation, and the international community should create a mandatory law covering world peace, basic human rights, and SR. Professionals, researchers, scientists, educators, and the media need to provide knowledge about SR and foster the awareness of the need for SR (Mulej, Hrast, & Dyck, 2015).

Corporate social responsibility does not look the same for every organization; one firm may focus more on people in society, while another may focus on controlling harmful effects on the environment. When choosing which CSR strategy to put in place, or which initiative to pursue, it is important to keep in mind the importance of integrating business and society to create shared value that benefits everyone/everything involved. Identifying points of intersection is critical; inside-out linkages are when a company impacts society through its operations in the normal course of business (via their value chain activities), while outside-in linkages correlate with the external social conditions that influence corporations (such as their competitive context) (Porter & Kramer, 2006). Choosing which social issues to address can be the make-it or break-it point of an organization’s CSR strategy. Generic social issues are those that are important to society but are neither significantly affected by the company’s operations nor influence the company’s long-term competitiveness, therefore they generally are not the best approach to CSR. On the other hand, value chain social impacts (those that are significantly affected by the company’s activities in the ordinary course of business), as well as social dimensions of competitive context (those that significantly affect the underlying drivers of competitiveness in those places where the company operates), are important areas for an organization’s CSR to focus on (Porter & Kramer, 2006).

Sustainable development of an organization refers to the strategies they utilize to achieve economic (profit), social (people), and environmental (planet) goals. Economic goals of a SR organization involve paying a fair price to producers and charging an affordable price to consumers. Ecological/environmental goals include preserving the environment and the sustainable use and management of natural resources. A firm's socially responsible social goals regard the integration of their priorities and the needs of society and citizens (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006).

Responsive CSR involves acting as a good corporate citizen that is attuned to evolving social concerns of stakeholders by mitigating existing/anticipated adverse effects from business activities. Strategic CSR involves choosing a unique position and doing things differently from competitors in a way that lowers costs or better serves a particular set of customer needs (Porter & Kramer, 2006). Companies should practice both responsive and strategic CSR. An organization should develop a corporate agenda and categorize and rank social issues; while this may sound harsh, it is just to be used as a means to an end. The more a social improvement relates to a company's business, the more it leads to economic benefits as well due to the fact they are integrally connected (Porter & Kramer, 2002). Companies should be sure to do their due diligence and make sure that they are selecting the best CSR initiative for their business to be involved in, and then continue to rigorously track and evaluate results (Porter & Kramer, 2002). Research points to the idea that an organization should consider all core subjects and issues, and their interdependence, rather than concentrating on a single issue because efforts to address one issue may involve a trade-off with other issues (Mulej, Hrast, & Dyck, 2015).

Linking CSR to corporate reputation can be done in three ways: reputation management, building a virtuous corporate brand, and/or ethical product differentiation. Reputation management involves basic requirements of conducting a responsible business to obtain and maintain a license to operate from society. Building a virtuous corporate brand can be achieved by making an explicit promise to the stakeholders and general public that the corporation excels with respect to their CSR endeavors. Ethical product differentiation requires differentiating a certain product or service on the basis of an environmental or social quality (Pérez, 2015).

There are several theories explaining the link between CSR reporting and corporate reputation. The institutional/legitimacy theory looks at how CSR reporting is viewed as a legitimacy and reputation management tool that responds to pressures by stakeholders and is driven by corporate identity communications. Companies that begin a dialogue to create awareness, understanding, and appreciation for strategic goals, see results in the satisfaction of the interests of both the company and its environment. Corporate legitimation is a process that translates past performance into an expectation for the future (Pérez, 2015). Impression management theory considers that stakeholders' expectations of the company help form their impression of the organization, so companies use CSR reporting as a PR vehicle to influence people's perceptions. Reputation risk management theory takes into account the complexity of external and internal corporate factors that might lead companies to report on their CSR. Agency theory deals with how corporate governance combats agency problems by aligning corporate behavior with stakeholders' interests and assuring transparency. CSR reporting is essential for information exchange and reduction of asymmetries and promotion of transparency. Signaling theory studies the signals of sellers that influence the market price of a good/service; by decreasing information asymmetry by CSR reporting, financing costs are optimized and corporate value is increased (Pérez, 2015).

Sustainable consumption refers to a decision-making process that takes a consumer's views on social responsibility into account in addition to their individual needs and wants. Consumption practices are still heavily driven by convenience, habit, value for money, personal health concerns, self-indulgence, and individual responses to social and institutional norms. People are often resistant to change, however the diversity and complexity of motivations means there is room for changes (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006). Reflexive consumers reflect upon existing cultural norms and make their own individualized risk assessment, while ethical consumers more directly link what is consumed and the social issue addressed (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006). The consumer behavior model outlines that both individual and situational determinants affect purchase decisions. Personal values, defined as relatively stable beliefs about the personal/social desirability of certain behaviors and modes of existence, needs, and motivation can translate into involvement when activated when a product, service, and/or promotional message is perceived as instrumental in meeting important needs, goals, and/or values. Values that are linked to sustainable consumption include universalism, benevolence, self-direction, honesty, idealism, equality, freedom, and responsibility; values associated with less ethical and/or sustainable consumption patterns include power, hedonism, tradition, security, conformity, and ambition. Consumers are more guided by principles and values than by consequences when making ethical decisions (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006).

Not every consumer is the same, so it is important for companies to utilize different strategies to more effectively reach the varied consumer segments. For consumers that think CSR is positive and meaningful and indicate there is a good chance they will buy the good/service because of the SR nature of the company, then that organization should focus on rightness of behavior. If consumers don't feel positive or intend to buy something just because if the SR ties, then an organization needs to stress personal benefits, availability, and certainty to them (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006).

It is clear there are many different ways that an organization can be socially responsible. Businesses really need to evaluate and research different CSR initiatives before choosing a strategy to undertake. This will enable them to decide on the best way for them to create positive impacts. Continual analysis and reflection of their actions is also key to make sure that they are getting the results they had hoped for. If a business's strategy is not bringing benefit to them and the target of their initiative, then it is necessary for that business to find out why and how they can change their course of action for the good of all those involved.

Case Studies

It is important to look into real life case studies that have been conducted to see if there is any evidence in the use of CSR strategies to positively affect an organization, and to determine whether the general public is familiar with the concept of CSR or not.

A study conducted in Cyprus during the fall of 2012 interviewed eight different services companies' managers. This study concluded that eighty-five percent of Cypriot enterprises acknowledge that CSR is important, however smaller companies tend to give less priority to CSR because they believe that their business activities to some extent aren't directly related to CSR. Most of these organizations focused their CSR efforts on human resources and fair market practices, paying less attention to the protection of human rights, reinforcement of local communities, and the need for transparency. An important finding was that the organizations that did not implement CSR blamed the current economic situation, the size of their business, government indifference, the cost of CSR, and the lack of proof of the benefits of CSR to a business. The researchers concluded that, "CSR strategy acts as insurance for organizations by protecting reputations and reducing the financial impact of negative publicity, or in cases of crisis management, CSR can protect the organization and help to establish its reputation." Another conclusion that was drawn was that CSR contributes to company reputation and "significantly increases company ability, especially in the last four years, to recruit and retain employees, attract more customers, and differentiate their firms from their competitors" (Komodromos & Melanthiou, 2014).

ReputationZ was a study that was conducted in two parts: one part was at the end of 2004 and involved interviewing approximately 22,000 consumers about their opinions of 111 key corporations in the UK and US; part two was completed in the spring of 2005 and involved interviews with over 5,800 Japanese consumers about 56 different companies. In order to remove interviewer bias and encourage respondent truthfulness, all interviews were done over the internet using self-completion invitations that were sent to a nationally representative base group. The survey began with an awareness question of 10 corporations, followed by detailed rating questions on 3 corporations that the respondent was aware of. The consumers' overall opinion of the corporation and their assessment of the corporation's behavior on 14 aspects of reputation was reported. From these results an Effective Reputation Index was created, which was a composite measure based on a variety of key corporate perceptions from the ReputationZ studies. This Index was matched against the Brand Equity Bonding Score (which was developed in the BRANDZ Study, a global survey conducted annually since 1998 that covers 22,000 brands in 30+ countries, based on over 640,000 consumer interviews) and showed that poor corporate reputation makes building strong brand equity difficult, but a good reputation is no guarantee of success. Results reveal that people endorse the statement "it's up to companies to find ways of producing goods in a responsible way without increasing prices" more than the statement “people should be prepared to pay more for goods if that’s what it takes to ensure that they are produced responsibly,” leaving the responsibility very much on the companies and not the consumers themselves. This study shows that pushing a CSR agenda on to consumers may not reap the strongest rewards since ethical behavior is expected (Page & Fearn, 2005).

A study conducted by the AIM/GSM Leadership Centre involved 353 questionnaires comprised of graduates from the Graduate Management Association, participants/graduates from the Masters in Leadership and Management course at Curtin University, MBA students enrolled on the Graduate School of Management, and participants of several Executive Development courses at the Australian Institute of Management. The median age of the participants was 36-45 years old, they were 78.8% male, 80.5% had at least a bachelor’s degree, and 62% worked in the private sector in a variety of management/professional positions. The questionnaire asked them to rate 30 Australian and 30 international organizations in three different ways:

(1) rating the ethics and CSR of each organization and on a 5-point Likert scale

(2) rating different aspects of ethics and CSR (such as how they treat the environment; types of social/community events they conduct/sponsor; how they deal with employees in their home country; how they deal with employees in third world countries; how responsive they are to community concerns; whether the company/employees break the law; types of products they sell; quality of products; extent to which they put employees and customers before profits; how they are portrayed by the media)

(3) rating the likelihood of taking possible actions if they perceived that a company was unethical or not socially responsible (such as not applying for job; not buying stock even if they’d make money; criticize that company and its employees whenever the chance; not buying products; writing a letter to CEO expressing views; discouraging people from working there;

convincing people not to buy products; if price/quality was the same, buying from the company that has an ethical and/or socially responsible reputation; encouraging government to make them pay higher taxes)

Results indicated that a company was considered ethical if they obey the law, treat their home country staff well, and look after employees in developing countries. Companies were considered socially responsible if they were looking after the environment, treating employees in developing countries well, and being responsive to community concerns. A high proportion of business students and management professionals said they wouldn't apply for jobs with unethical and/or socially irresponsible organizations and had reservations about buying shares/stocks in these types of companies as well. Breaking law was the most important criteria when describing a company as unethical, while how they treat the environment was the most important factor in determining how socially responsible a company is. These findings suggest that consumers have more of a macro focus with respect to CSR, while having more of a micro focus with respect to ethics (Cacioppe, Forster, & Fox, 2008).

Another study using a focus group methodology comprised of a more diverse group by gender (50/50), age, and profession (university students, management professionals, skilled blue-collar workers, retirees) thanthe aforementioned study. This study asked participants a variety of unstructured questions about CSR. Results showed that there was a low awareness of company's CSR strategies due to lack of information, however some felt that they didn't want more information because it would "make buying difficult." Many were skeptical about corporate involvement with charities, saying that many organizations became involved for their own commercial gain (to 'look good') rather than acting out of kindness. Participants felt it was okay to publicize good deeds but not to "sell themselves" or be "too repetitive." Those in the focus group were more interested in what a company could provide for them because they felt companies should provide for the community “especially when some companies make millions,” since it is the community which “allows them to be there in the first place” (Boulstridge & Carrigan, 2000).

A research study to assess whether consumers with high (vs. low) levels of a specific individual characteristic have a different attitude and behavioral intention towards sustainable products & whether consumers’ level of involvement, certainty, perceived availability, and perceived consumer effectiveness (PCE), can be influenced by information provision and communication, was conducted in Flanders, Belgium with 456 individuals, 19-22 years old, following higher education.

To manipulate involvement, researchers presented half of the participants with an article describing potential benefits of sustainable products for the consumer, environment, and society, while the other half received an article similar in length, writing, style, and difficulty that discussed a tourist national park. The aim was to see if the sustainability article group would become more involved in regards to the subject while the other group retained their inherent involvement level. Results showed that those who read high involvement text were effectively more involved than those who read the other text. To manipulate perceived availability, a promotional message was displayed informing respondents that products are widely available and websites and free phone numbers were provided for them to check for the nearest-by selling point. Results from this section showed that those who received the message reported a higher level of perceived availability. To manipulate certainty, a promotional message with two existing, well known labels were shown that provided consumers with certainty that products were indeed ecologically/socially sound. Results indicated that those who received the message that should have stimulated certainty didn't report higher certainty. To manipulated PCE, a promotional message with a short statement that informed respondents that they can contribute to a better world by reacting to unfair/unsustainable actions along with an example was given. Results showed that those who received the message didn't report a higher PCE (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006). So while involvement and perceived availability were able to be manipulated, certainty and PCE were not. Attitudes and behavioral intentions are stronger among highly involved consumers, more certain consumers, consumers with higher PCE, with higher perceived availability, and with stronger social norms. Attitudes towards buying sustainable products are also higher among consumers with higher universalism and lower power values, but behavioral intentions don't appear to differ depending on these values. The study also found that women have significantly more positive attitudes towards buying and higher intentions to buy compared to men, however city versus countryside residents made no difference (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006).

In regards to benefits from CSR in the ability for companies to attract and retain a talented workforce, Rutgers conducted a survey for the non-profit *Net Impact* that gave a picture of what students and professionals most value in a job. Responses indicated that opportunities to make a positive impact at work are linked to job satisfaction and having a job that makes a social impact on the world is an important life goal for many. Seventy-two percent of students about to enter the workforce said that a job where they can make an impact was most important to their happiness even if they had to take a pay cut. They listed that it was is more important than having children, a prestigious career, being wealthy, or being a community leader; the only factors above 'making an impact' were financial security and marriage. Professionals showed similar prioritization, with fifty-three percent saying a job where they can make an impact was important to their happiness (Patrizia, 2014). The Kenexa Research Institute found that strategic corporate initiative of CSR provides more benefits to an organization than simply reducing costs by recycling and giving back to the community. CSR efforts positively affect an employee's personal outlook of the future, satisfaction with their job, and confidence in the company's future (Patrizia, 2014).

One study recently conducted, the Gallup Study, focused on engaged versus disengaged workers and their effects on an organization. Employees who are engaged contribute to a reduction in staff turnover, and ultimately, a boost in profitability, while those actively disengaged are more likely to steal from their companies, negatively influence their coworkers, miss workdays, and drive customers away. Results showed that actively disengaged employees cost the US between $450-550 billion each year in lost productivity (Patrizia, 2014).

Three Italian companies that showcase successful CSR strategies are Luxottica, Brunello Cucinelli, and Ferrero. At Luxottica a system of industrial relations seeks to reinforce their productive system, improve of all workers actual wages, and foresee promotion of services in favor of workers themselves. The company's place primary importance on the human aspects of organizational life, quality of relationships between people, satisfaction of their needs, and fulfillment of their aspirations. This affects daily operation of company performance and therefore market performance (Patrizia, 2014). Brunello Cucinelli also has an ethical, humanist-inspired entrepreneurial model, with people at the center of the production process. This company focuses on the acknowledging the creativity of each worker, a sense of profound participation in the group's success and goals, and extreme loyalty and trust at all levels of the company, as well as with outside contractors and clients. Brunello has created a strategic competitive advantage through nurturing a human advantage; their employees are treated as preciously as the clothes they create. There is no traditional hierarchy or distinction between management and non-management, no time cards, everyone has a key to the workplace, and higher than average wages are paid. The company realizes that quality of life is essential to business success, so they went as far as buying and restoring an entire town, developing it into an artisan factory village where employees live and work, complete with a castle, church, medieval houses, farmhouse, villa, workshops, warehouses, dining areas, town squares, and an outdoor theater. The profits are split evenly three ways: to the employees, the community, and back into the business (Patrizia, 2014). Ferrero's main emphasis is on "Sharing Values to Create Value." They recognize that man is naturally at the heart of the company and have the constant objective of company growth and further development of employees. Similar to Brunello, they provide their workers with a company nursery, mini club, college scholarship program, supermarket discounts, and football and tennis courts (Patrizia, 2014).

Case studies are an important way to look into what is really happening in the world in regards to a certain topic. Often times there is literature on a topic but no actual evidence to back up an assertion made. Additionally, literature could contrast from what is actually being practiced in the marketplace, so it is important to get an idea of current trends relating to the topic at hand. By analyzing experiments, studies, and initiative of current companies, one is able to develop evidence-based theories and strategies that provide a framework for action.

Methodology

This paper uses a qualitative methodology, based on first-hand interviews (12) with small-business owners in Pennsylvania in an attempt to evaluate their perceptions of their social responsibility strategies on the reputation and success of an organization.

CSR Strategy Types

When asked if their organization had socially responsible strategies in place it appeared a lot of companies may have been acting socially responsible, however they didn't actually implement a strategy of CSR on purpose. Comments that rung true to this statement included: "no plan in place, we just do it!", "We work to be good corporate citizens and give back", and "God calls us to do things, it's human nature and faith." For those companies that did implement CSR strategies, reasons for engaging in CSR fell into four categories: community, family, environment, and industry-specific.

Community-related strategies at the upper-level of management included serving on the board of local non-profits, owners being very philanthropic in the community and helping out local charities, establishing a code of personal conduct for employees, and hiring individuals that would not otherwise be able to get (or keep) a job and giving them innumerable chances to help develop them into successful workers. CSR strategies that got all employees involved in helping the community involved collecting gifts for kids at the holidays, donating money to charities, helping non-profits in need financially, food drives, making cards for hospital patients, volunteering with disabled youth sports programs, and being involved with community activities such as Girls on the Run and the Heart Walk. One company has a 'Continuous Improvement' team that is made up of employees that volunteer to be involved with community charities, conduct holiday drives, coupon and food collections; this is just one way employees are being given more freedom in choosing what gets done. Another company allows one random employee a month to pick a non-profit customer that the company then donates money to, and every other month the company sponsors a non-profit at the $2,000-3,000 level. Additionally, this same company gives money for each employee to choose what non-profit to give to during the Extraordinary Give Lancaster.

In regards to family-focused CSR, many respondents noted that they support organizations that their employees and their employees' children are involved with. Other family-oriented strategies included Christmas bonuses, Thanksgiving turkeys, and support of employee health issues. Relating to the environment, the interviews conducted showed that many organizations have recently put an emphasis on doing things "as green as possible." This recent change can be attributed to new technologies, such as lower emission light fixtures. Several companies also mentioned that they very conscious of their power consumption and savings, as well as the fact that they make attempts to convey the importance of recycling and cutting down pollution to not just employees, but also customers. Companies cited taking sustainable approaches both for the benefit of the environment and as a way to cut back on expenses.

The most important category of CSR strategies for a company are those that are industry-specific. A consulting company donates their services to help consult, define, and complete projects for non-profits. One company allows each of their employees to pick a non-profit that they will then donate product to (in this case a pallet of salt) once a year. Another company gives a holiday gift each year that is tied to their business in some way and has a worthwhile cause; this year the company donated money to a local division of Project Lead the Way, an organization that encourages interest in STEM field careers at an early age (this helps in providing a skilled workforce for many of the company's clients). A marketing and PR firm provides communication services, newsletters, and event planning services to the Boys & Girls Club of Lancaster, and also help their clients communicate to the public about what each client is doing CSR-wise through sustainability reports, websites, PR messages, social media, etc. A development company reuses older buildings instead of building new ones, which they say "is the greenest thing anyone can do in the construction/building industry – suiting new users' needs with existing construction." One project I found very unique was a refrigeration company decorates old fridges as pumpkins at Halloween time, sells them, and then donates the money to the American Cancer society. Participating in the make-a-wish truck convoy/parade is one way that a heating oil and natural gas company practices CSR, as well as being a member of the US EPA SmartWay Alliance that institutes environmental metrics and the use of green practices. This same company also takes steps to ensure that all of their drivers safely deliver materials and that their clientele has safe/up-to-par products by testing every client's tanks once a year to be proactive and fix problems before they occur.

Changes to CSR Strategies

In order to see what, if any, recent changes have developed in CSR, interviewees were asked if their organization had implemented any new or discontinued any old CSR initiatives throughout the years. A few managers mentioned that during bad financial times, their companies made less charitable donations. Another company recognized their shift towards donating to more local charities, stating that, "Lancaster has a great need and we like to be able to see our actions helping people around us." Additionally, a manager mentioned that when their organization acquires another company, they work to bring their best practices into that company. All other companies said that their CSR strategies have remained mostly consistent throughout the organization's life.

Influences in CSR Strategy Development

CSR strategies can either be employee-driven, customer-driven, or management-driven. Employee-driven strategies are seen as ones that are grass-roots, and not a top-down approach. Some companies have implemented a steering committee for social and recreational activities, as well as community service initiatives. In regards to customer-driven strategies, many companies said that they try to first keep in mind the customer, then the community, and then the company. One manager mentioned taking note of what clients are doing (in regards to being socially responsible) and choose whether to participate as well. Some companies felt that clients with a need that they aren't sure how to address often come to them looking for guidance. Organizations felt that their CSR strategies were employee-driven and customer-driven to the extent that if the initiative affects something close to an employee or customer, then management feels that it affects them too and they take action.

Management-driven CSR strategies seemed to have a deeper analysis conducted and more time spent on their development. Most interviewees spoke of how their business does a cost/benefit analysis, as well as a value-added analysis, when choosing which CSR strategies to commit to. This takes a lot of research on the part of the leadership team consisting of upper and middle management. Others, however, said that they don't develop business plans and act more intuitively; this could be due to the fact that these smaller companies like to be involved directly with initiatives and are able to be more so than large, multi-national companies. One manager stated that, "While it is important to recognize CSR has an impact on company reputation, it is important to not be greedy for business benefit in regards to products/services." CSR strategies, even coming from the management-level, seem to be tied to a sense of "innate compassion" and are "self-driven."

Communication of CSR Strategies to the Public

Some companies feel that it is important to communicate their CSR strategies to the public while others don't see the priority in reporting their initiatives. One interviewee noticed that while it was not something they explicitly advertise, it gets around by word-of-mouth and this has given their company a reputation for being socially responsible. Others felt that publicizing their CSR actions would be, "doing it for the wrong reasons – doing it for business, not the community," and a manager said that, "we don't want to 'toot our own horn'." One business felt very strongly about the fact that, in their mind, some businesses over-promote themselves, stating that, "We do not participate in 'blatant marketing', our word gets out through 1-on-1 conversations and the networking feeds on itself." Another said that, "We don't advertise stuff and it's not obvious to customers. We have contemplated making statements regarding environmental actions on the website but I feel that businesses who advertise their contributions to the community – while I am very appreciative of what they are doing – it is annoying because it seems they are often using it to make more money."

On the other hand, without letting the public know what your company is doing can make it hard to benefit from CSR strategies. Several companies reported a variety of ways they make consumers aware of their initiatives, such as e-blasts to customers that integrate safety tips and give them knowledge, sending out holiday card to let clients know about the company's holiday project, sending out customer newsletters twice a year with bill inserts explaining safety measures and the benefits of their product, and noting CSR initiatives on the company website and in their firm profile/qualification statement that is used to attract clients. One company said that while they don't have customers 'strong-arming' them into different things, they feel that they currently don't let their customers know about their socially responsible actions as much as they should. To improve in this area, the company noted the fact they are working on building up their social media outlets, such as Facebook and LinkedIn. Another interviewee mentioned how while their company doesn't explicitly advertise what they have done that is socially responsible, the non-profits that they have helped out usually publicize what the company did for them in some way. This is very beneficial in that it doesn't appear so much as self-promotion, instead it shows how grateful other organizations are for the actions of the company's CSR strategies.

CSR Strategy Effects on Company Reputation and Success

When interviewees were asked about how they felt CSR affected their company there were a wide variety of answers, ranging from clear, positive benefits to actual negative outcomes. Many interviewees felt that their CSR strategies have helped them build relationships that have contributed to their positive reputation and thus influenced their bottom line. Others mentioned that, "you reap what you sow," and, "the more you give, the more you get;" these comments spoke to the fact that many saw a return on their investment. Managers seem to feel that socially-concerned strategies are 'reputation boosters' and that a company would be perceived differently if it were not doing these things. Many companies noted that it is, "important to be efficient but to treat employees like humans," and their CSR strategies, "give them [employees] a direct say and voice about how time and resources are used." This often boosts morale and gives workers more flexibility, increasing their job quality. One manager mentioned that fact that through CSR strategies, “you hope you are teaching people to do the right thing – benefiting future generations,” and, “changing one person at a time to have a positive impact on the world and community.” By being able to gain credibility, boost reputation, increase workforce quality, lower employee turnover, create a positive work environment, provide good leadership training, and make it able to recruit talent well, companies seemed to be on the same page that their CSR strategies contributed to their overall success. One manager summed this mindset up perfectly, saying that, “we wouldn’t do it if they weren’t beneficial.”

Other companies, however, felt that CSR strategies, “from a purely business perspective it is very demanding but we have stuck with it because it is the right thing to do as long as you can still pay the bills.” This similar mindset of a negative or no effect on a business was heard in a statement by one manager that said that their CSR strategy of hiring ‘hard-to-employ’ workers (ex-cons, drug addicts, etc.) has had, “the opposite of positive bottom line contribution – very expensive and time-consuming.” They stated that they, “could go out and hire someone that would provide better quality and service to customers, but business success for me isn’t defined as making a profit, it is about the quality of people,” and he felt that in life, one should be, “working to make a living, not a killing.” Others felt that while CSR strategies may be beneficial in some ways, their contributions were mostly intangible. One interviewee said that, “you can’t draw direct comparison or pull numbers to see if SR strategies influenced the bottom line,” and others very clearly stated that there “is no direct correlation” between CSR and bottom line. Even with these comments though, businesses still seemed to have the idea that even when conducting CSR strategies that have “no bottom line benefit,” they have been able to “maintain profitability” and “it won’t put us [them] out of business.” An interesting comment was made in regards to how government looks at CSR and awards companies for it; apparently, “product businesses can more easily get government recognition for donation of commodities but service businesses that donate expertise/knowledge/skill can’t claim that as a charitable donation.” Additionally it was mentioned that, “the Chamber of Commerce has zero interest in social or community matters so we [the company] decide to support Sustainable Business Networks (operated by BALLE) instead, which are non-profit and for-profit organizations working together for the community’s best interests.”

Currently, most businesses are not measuring the effects of CSR on company reputation and success in a systematic way and are instead basing their views off of anecdotal evidence and intuitive feelings. It is important for companies in the future to develop a systematic way to see capture how and in what ways CSR is really affecting their company.

Future Changes to CSR Strategies

In looking towards their future CSR strategic goals, what most companies seemed to have in mind was doing more. The comment was made that, “We will take opportunities as they present themselves and try to stay on top of the next greatest thing – it’s a crystal ball, you don’t know what is around the bend.” Others mentioned how, “there is more work to be done and a lot more that we can do.” Some companies had more specific goals in mind for the future, such as continuing current strategies but also focusing more on volunteering time, for organizations such as Habitat for Humanity and having key managers serve on non-profit boards instead of just giving money. Another company said that they, “want to educate and increase the public’s knowledge through our website, on-hold phone feedback messages, and Facebook presence." To accomplish this goal the company recently hired a marketing coordinator. Two other managers spoke to how they are focused on working to bring younger employees up in the company, "training the next leaders" but also leveraging their more "communicative/tech-savvy" knowledge to educate the public about how and why their company is doing certain things. Additionally, one manager mentioned how they have taken on the goal of having two meetings a year with the president of the company and each branch/department in attempts to allow employees to weigh-in and develop a sense of employee ownership.

Results

An expected outcome of this project was that having an effective and deliberate social responsibility strategy impacts organizational reputation and success positively. After reviewing the literature on this topic, as well as conducting the previously mentioned study, it can be concluded that CSR strategies are beneficial to organizations. None of the organizations interviewed in the study said that they wanted to be less active in CSR, even if they felt it didn't directly impact their company's bottom line. Instead, most, if not all, companies said that they wanted to be more socially responsible in the future. What were cited as the most beneficial aspects of CSR strategies were mainly intangibles, such as reputation, customer loyalty, employee involvement, etc. This study found that these intangibles are what impact a company's ability to reap tangible benefits; one example of this is happy employees, make for happy customers, which translate into more sales for a business.

Discussion

According to not only the literature reviewed on this topic, but also the interviews conducted, CSR strategies are most effective when they are tied in some way to the business's operations and/or industry. Instead of just generic CSR, such as donating food during the holidays, and contributing in more of a specific way that leverages the company's skills, such as donating consulting services to a non-profit, companies are able to make more useful and positive impacts. This is not to say that generic CSR should not be done, it is important to the community, environment, and society that organizations continue to make these types of contributions as well, however, when looking to take on more CSR initiatives, companies should look for ways to tie these aspects into their business operations.

As previously mentioned, organizations need to develop ways to measure the effect of each CSR strategy they undertake on their business's reputation and success. This needs to be conducted in a systematic way, such as surveys, focus groups, and/or interviews of employees, customers, and/or investors. It is important to see what the reality of a company's CSR strategies' effects are and not just to judge them by how one may think they are affecting those involved. This goes hand in hand with the need for continual evaluation and discussion of CSR strategies. Just like any other business strategy, it is not a decision that is made and then acted upon without ever looking back. Reflection and revision is key to success and should be done periodically, depending on the amount of strategies in place and the timelines of those strategies.

Additional Research

It is important that more research on CSR strategies and their effects is done; currently research is not conclusive on this topic and it is necessary to work to explore and further test theoretical conceptions. Additionally, how to apply CSR to small versus large-sized organizations and in varying markets is an area that needs to be examined, as well as the difference between CSR strategies that are most effective in developing versus developed countries. Similar to developing versus developed, research on varying responses to CSR in different regions of the United States (south versus north, east versus west) would be a key topic to look into. Another interesting area to explore is whether the corporate structure of a business, family-owned versus publically held, etc. affects what the best CSR strategies to use are. Family businesses often are tied very closely to the entire family, not just in the marketplace but in the social community as well. A family business's reputation often times becomes the family's reputation. This can lead to an increased want to do well and compete successfully in order to reflect positively on the family. Non-family businesses, on the other hand, are not inherently tied to the individual executives' family reputations and therefore may not have that extra drive to go the extra mile in order to establish a good name for their families. While this study was limited and specific in approach, a more generic approach and methodology covering a wider population would be extremely beneficial in contributing to the research done on CSR strategies and their effects.

Conclusion

It is the duty of businesses to act in a certain way so that society accepts them, if they fail to do this, they will lose their so-called 'license to operate' and essentially go bankrupt. When it comes down to it, consumers are the ones who dictate whether or not a business thrives; if a business has no customers due to the fact the public views them as unethical or not being good corporate citizens, then they will fail. Being socially responsible, while previously was more of a voluntary action, has become increasingly expected of companies by society. Individuals and organizations count on CSR strategies of businesses to positively contribute in some way. The most productive, efficient, and effective way that a company can implement CSR strategies is by incorporating it into their business operations and making it industry-specific. This allows companies to leverage their skills and do what they do best to help those in need. It is important that more businesses recognize the needs in their communities and in society, analyze what they can do to make a positive difference, and take action. Once an organization takes action, it is crucial that they critically look at how their actions are affecting those around them and whether or not they should make changes to their strategies as time goes on. Reflection and planning ahead is key to having a successful CSR strategy that not only positively contributes to society, but also positively contributes to one's own company, creating a win-win situation every time.

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Appendix

IRB Approved:

Project Title: [838562-1] The effects of social responsibility strategies on organizational reputation and success

Principal Investigator: Lydia Dearie

Interview Guide:

1. Briefly describe your company and the products/services it provides.

2. Did you start the company or take over an existing company?

3. How long have you owned/managed the company?

4. Were there initially any socially responsible strategies in place?
    - If so, what were they?
    - If not, have you since implemented any?

5. Have you chosen to stick with one SR strategy or have you made changes/additions/removals to the strategy over the years?
    - If so, what were your reasons for the changes and the expected outcomes?
    - What were the actual outcomes?

6. When choosing an SR strategy, what influences your decision? Could you describe the SR strategy development process? Is it an individual or a team process?

7. Do you actively make an effort to let customers know of your company's SR strategies?
    - If so, how?

8. As a business owner/manager do you think SR strategies are beneficial to a company?
    - Why/how?

9. What future changes, if any, to your SR strategy do you plan on making in the future?