

Corporate Social Responsibility in the Universities

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Abstract

This article is meant to shed light on how universities and other Not-Profit organizations can use Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to market their organization and improve their image. With a wake of globalization and online learning, students who are university customers have several options of universities to join hence for any university to survive, it must work on its competitive strategies and they must get it right first time and all the time. Hence this article recommends that the starting point for any university is CSR which is a principle that has been ignored for a long time in the institutions of higher learning as well as the NPO. A time has come when these institutions must show their relevancies to the society in which they do business. This article is recommending a CAID strategy, that is, Create A Difference day). This strategy must be incorporated in the organizations culture and because the institutions of higher learning have different cohorts coming in different periods, it is recommended that the projects be carried out every semester. It should be noted that little is much, it all depends with the intent of the person doing it. Organizations should adopt feedback mechanism and monitor their progress before and after using this strategy.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, Marketing tools, Universities, Create An Impact Day (CAID), Strategy, Competitors, Non-Profit Organization (NPO) and Environment.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

The current society is complex, and part of this complexity is shown in the diversity of relevant organisations that coexist and act together: public administrations, private companies, NGO, universities, and so on. All of them have a say and they construct the society from domains more shared and interrelated every time. Nowadays, limited fields of action have practically disappeared as well as environments of exclusive responsibility. Observing the evolution of relations among the social actors lately, it can be seen that contributions are increasingly more common and intense.

This tendency is the result of the consolidation of a relational society. There is no a business society neither a public administration society nor a civil society. In contrast, they all are part of a unique and shared social space. This emerging model is known by some authors as the 'relation. The vertiginous advances in telecommunications, the enlargement of the geographical environment of migration and the new environmental challenges, are tasks that cannot be faced by a society divided into three remote environments.

Since these new challenges share their origin, they should be faced by a social model in which all the actors assume their responsibilities. To share information and to communicate becomes easier. Networking allows reaching a very high degree of coordination among the actions. Organized networks are developed and the potential of the governability is increased and done in a more complex manner. The society has unified the three social spheres, appearing common objectives and new ways of reaching them. The relationship among social agents changes from clients-suppliers into partners- society' (Kotler, 2010)

This is the birth of a sustainable society. Each social actor evolves towards more sustainable social and environmental models. Therefore, the concept of social responsibility appears as a way to understand the actions of the organisations, integrated with the environment and respectful with the rights and the dignity of the people.

Social responsibility as a way of understanding organisations is linked to personal values. But if it was restricted to the day-today environment, its impact in everyday's life and in the regular operation of organisations would be very little. This personal factor should help creating management tools that serve so much for transforming and improving organisations as well as for the organisations to be capable of evaluating and knowing the results .

The social responsibility affects to all the organisation's behaviours and actions so that they assume the commitments with society, according to their values and role in the society. Therefore, this issue affects the organisation as a whole and cannot be faced by carrying out certain specific activities or planning other compensatory activities. Every action in every organisation (public administrations, companies or third sector) has an impact on the own organisation as well as on its surroundings like other Organisations and community (Porter, & Kramer 2006).

To analyze, in a structured way, the limits of social responsibility within every organisation two main areas should be considered:

1. Organisation management: the common way to analyze it is studying the main functional areas (marketing, finance, agriculture, human resources, and so on) as well as some transversal topics such as processes, strategy,

etc.

2. The relations of the organisation with the environment: clients and suppliers, environment, society...In any case, social responsibility should be considered as a way of understanding the organisation as a whole, rather than a group of separate actions, variably scheduled and with little coordination.

Marketing of Universities

Every year universities spend a fair amount of money – the precise sum will vary from year to year and from institution to institution – on marketing. Mostly this money is spent on advertising designed to attract students. Over recent years, many universities have advertised on radio or television, and on billboards or bus shelters. Some campaigns have been quite spectacular. If you consider the case for marketing from the institution's perspective, it makes a certain amount of sense: the university has facilities and staff and needs to ensure that these are utilised in the best way possible through successful student recruitment.

It is possible, one might suppose, that some of this advertising encourages students to apply to a university where previously they had not thought of entering higher education. But then again, it is also possible that the effect of such marketing is to persuade students to favour one university over another; in other words, it is not about encouraging students to develop their intellectual maturity and their opportunities in higher education, it is about persuading them to go to a particular university.

It seems to me that marketing in a university is a necessary activity, not least because the idea of higher education needs to be kept in the public consciousness, but also because universities need to survive and prosper. Whether marketing should be seen as a competitive activity designed to gain a greater share of the same market for one particular institution could perhaps be debated. This may become a yet more acute question if, as is apparently the case in the United States, public money made available to for-profit private colleges is used to advertise their services to fee-paying students. But then again, it is not easy to see how marketing could be carried out that does not promote the specific qualities of the university and, by implication, its superiority over other institutions.

Universities are not just part of a larger public sector agency. Each individual institution needs to ensure it operates in a sustainable way, and that it generates the resources it needs to maintain and grow quality programmes. Marketing is a necessary component of that. And if you do marketing, it is entirely right to do it professionally. Furthermore, nowadays it is widely accepted that the education experience extends beyond the classroom. Nostalgia for some alleged era in which pedagogy trumped all else is, like most nostalgia, not terribly useful. But having a debate on marketing may help to ensure that its use is appropriate, and ethical. Such a debate is always worth having.

Whether public or private, institutions of higher education exist in a competitive marketplace, and while the will to compete certainly varies from institution to institution, you can be certain that a true competitor will not sit idly by and allow your institution to grow and prosper at the expense of theirs. If the current trend is for students to become more competitive with one another for admission to the college or university of their choice, it is also true that the institutions are becoming increasingly competitive with one another.

Your competitors continually endeavor to create educational offerings that exceed what you are providing, and, what is more, they take steps to communicate their offerings to the marketplace. The result is that students, parents, donors, and alumni are continually becoming more knowledgeable about the state of the art in higher education, and they are therefore becoming increasingly demanding in their expectations. If the bar for student admissions is rising, so is that which defines what "customers"—students, parents, donors, and alumni—demand of the institutions that enroll them.

Marketing gets no respect in the nonprofit world. University members of management tend to hold the most senior positions in nonprofits and accordingly have the most status yet have no marketing background. Several factors account for the suspicion or disdain with which many nonprofit managers view the marketing function. Mostly, it's a matter of ignorance. Usually trained in other disciplines, nonprofit leaders often fail to understand what marketing can and can't do for their organizations. Consequently, they hold some strange assumptions (e.g. "Our good work will sell itself"), unrealistic expectations (e.g., demanding to be in *Kenya Daily Nations* once a week) and arbitrary funding theories (i.e., when fundraising is down, cut the communications budget). Compounding the challenge, few nonprofit managers recognize their lack of expertise in these areas. The same people who would never contradict a financial expert or ignore a scientist don't think twice about overruling marketing professionals on audiences, messages, tactics — the very essence of marketing strategy (Berry, 2007).

Moral: *Show marketing some respect. It is essential for mission success, but if you wait around until the need is obvious, it will already be too late.*

(1) justifies that benefits of investing in marketing may not be obvious to nonprofit leaders, the costs of failing to do so are becoming increasingly clear. With nonprofits coming under increasing public and regulatory scrutiny, organizations no longer can afford to relegate communications and marketing to second-class status.

It's a matter of survival. When the investigative reporters are circling your organization (think of the recent unpleasantness that befell the Aviation College, tertiary institutions/ colleges in Kenya among others) you will wish that you had a robust, professional communications department to handle the incoming slings and arrows. An expensive outside public relations firm is a poor substitute for people who know your organization and command the trust of the staff.

Forward-looking nonprofit leaders, however, will recognize what their counterparts in the for-profit sector understood long ago: marketing is essential.

When a non-profit chooses to invest in marketing, they can give their audience an idea of what they are about. A sporting goods company can portray the urge and desire to win to their customers, while a baby food company can make parents feel safe about what they give their offspring. A non-profit that deals with charity, if they so wish, can make people think of helping others and a sense of community; it all comes down to how they advertise themselves. Universities and colleges who basically offer education can make people understand their uniqueness among their competitors because these institutions offer almost similar products to the customers and marketing can enable an institutions to explain the uniqueness or the added features in their product offerings.

But simply letting people know that the organization exists is not enough. All of the marketing in the world cannot fully assure people that a non-profit is legit and is worthy of their attention. With enough marketing out there, the media will eventually notice and want to bring it to the attention of their audience. People are more apt to trust established news sources, and if these seasoned experts say that the organization is reliable and something worth looking into, the consumers will believe it; this should not be dismissed by any means.

Marketing can also mean getting the organization out into the public eye. It is difficult for any organization, whether they are looking for profit or not, to get attention if few people know that they exist. The more information they put out about themselves, the more they will be placed into the spotlight. This does not have to mean spending more than can be afforded; in fact, some outlets such as social sites on the Internet can provide brand awareness for free or very little cost. Some effort to get the word out is better than nothing at all, as anybody with business experience could attest. This can also lead to product positioning. Think of 20 years ago, that is, 1994, Tree Top drink was the product to beat. Then, what happened, it was overtaken by the competition because they were insensitive to the changing marketing environment. What about the Teachers Training Colleges in Kenya, as late as 2005, it was still hard if not impossible to get opportunity to join these institutions. Compare with what is happening today, there is fierce competition from colleges and universities who are offering certificate and Diploma courses and if not enough marketing and product repositioning is done, they will soon "die natural death." (Best 2009)

It is also important to remember that feedback is also possible when a marketing campaign is set forth. Unless the group is actually hearing from the average person on the street, they will not completely know how to improve themselves. They will not know what they are doing wrong and what they should change. If there is anything that is being done improperly, it could go on without the knowledge of it. Feedback of any kind is crucial and can make or break the survival of the non-profit organization. Even if it is never taken to heart, the fact that it is at the group's disposal is significant.

To conclude, although a number of non-profit groups do not think they need to market who they are and what they do, it can actually prove harmful if they do not. They need to get their name out there, get recognized, and get the feedback that anybody requires in order to grow. They have to utilize what is at their disposal, and send a message so that people can understand what they are all about.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as a marketing tool

David (2003). confirms that the current society is complex, and part of this complexity is shown in the diversity of relevant organisations that coexist and act together: public administrations, private companies, NGO, universities, and so on. All of them have a say and they construct the society from domains more shared and interrelated every time. Nowadays, limited fields of action have practically disappeared as well as environments of exclusive responsibility. Observing the evolution of relations among the social actors lately, it can be seen that contributions are increasingly more common and intense.

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higher education, and they are therefore becoming increasingly demanding in their expectations. If the bar for student admissions is rising, so is that which defines what “customers”—students, parents, donors, and alumni—demand of the institutions that enroll them.

What Marketing Is—and Isn’t

Before we can even seriously think about marketing a college or university, we have to confront two issues. First is the way in which most institutions of higher education view marketing. Second is the fact that many people who market these institutions do not understand that their mission is fundamentally different from marketing such physical goods as beauty products, gym shoes, or iPods. Both of these issues can be dealt with effectively, but doing so takes preparation and understanding.

In approaching the first issue, we have to begin by admitting that marketing, as a discipline, has been misunderstood and maligned in academia for years. Stroll any campus, stop any faculty, staff, or administrative person you encounter, and ask for a definition of marketing. The likelihood is high that you will get something back about advertising or sales. That, we shall see in a moment, is a serious misunderstanding of what marketing is, yet this type of definition, though mistaken, is at least preferable to some of the other responses you might expect to receive. Many in the academy are convinced that “advertising”—by which they mean marketing—represents hucksterism, the selling of lies, or, worse yet, an attempt to impose certain business strategies on faculty by telling them what they have to teach and how. To many academics, marketing is something to be feared and fought, especially in the context of higher education, where the pursuit of truth for truth’s sake is a noble calling and must not be compelled to pander to anyone, not to the business office and not to students. The fact is that many professionals working on the college campus, particularly faculty members are likely to feel that implementing marketing techniques limits and compromises academic freedom. In addition, they may also feel that the real business of marketing is to create illusions. Beautiful pictures of a college campus on a fall day, combined with well crafted ad copy, seem to offer promises that cannot be kept.

Such responses actually betray an inflated view of marketing, as if it were a philosophy or a way of life. In truth, marketing is neither more nor less than a tool, and, like any tool, it can be used skillfully or clumsily. Moreover, as a tool, it is just one of many that university administrators and officers have at their disposal.

Recently it has been noted that universities are applying unethical marketing to get students with some of them offering courses which they do not have any professionals. Others walk from school to school and negotiate with the principles of secondary schools who give them the names and index numbers of form four students. These students are in turn given provisional admission letters with a course chosen by the university management. We need to bear in mind that these provisional admissions are sent to students even before the results are out. As much as this strategy may work to some universities, is it ethical? your answer is as good as mine. NO. because, customers should be allowed to make choices best on consent and desired offerings and benefits in each product or service. This then means that universities should device ethical ways of reaching their target market (students, parents and community) and withhold their integrity.

Cases have been reported of universities using caravans to market their products where big speakers and loud music and half naked dancing girls are used. The big question is, does this portray the image of the university? Imagine a parent sees these half naked girls dancing on a big caravan, suppose he/she decides to take his/her child in that university, the first thing which will ring in the mind of the prospective customer is the nature and the quality of professionals in that particular university. The university should strive as much as possible to enhance and maintain its image in whatever it does whether in marketing or any other activities undertaken by it. University should be able to differentiate between marketing for products and service, without clear guideline, they are bound to mess up the universities’ image and integrity.

Create An Impact Day (CAID) Strategy

Table 1: course to be offered during CAID events

| Courses | Objectives |
|-------------------------|---|
| Entrepreneurship skills | to help them in development viable business ideas which is sustainable. |
| Basic accounting | enable them manage their finances |
| Logistics | To enable them understand the distribution of their products to their customer |
| Basic Marketing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To provide them with the knowledge of identifying their target market as this will determine the quality and type of products - Enable them understand how to promote their products to get a competitive pricing for their products |
| Basis economics | - To enable them understanding the forces of the market |
| Economics farming | - To enable them understand maximise land use for high productivity |

On the other hand, School of agriculture will be able to shed light on the type of soil, the right fertilizer to be used as well as the type of crops to be planted in these areas. Because of global warming, there have been unpredicted rains and so the staffs will be able to enlighten these groups on the irrigation process and also train

them on the importance of tree planting. Other schools can be intergrated in the process to enhance livelihood of the community and society in general.

Benefits of Create An Impact Day (CAID) project

This program aims at training local young people on business, vocational and life skills in order to enable them to start and manage income generating activities and link them with industry players. In line with this purpose, CAID promotes income generation through three phases: “Skill Training”, “Enterprise Incubator” and “Agricultural techniques”.

In most universities, the Citizenship agenda will be designed to contribute to economic growth through the creation of enterprises and employment opportunities. This touches on the way we will manage our business, how we deal with our people and the products that we create for our customers. Our work in local communities is an important part of our investment programmes

This is a very strong marketing strategy, as seen earlier; there were 4198 people who qualify to join university on the basis of age at either certificate, diploma, degree, masters and PhD programs in various schools within the university. Just as our savior Jesus Christ in the book of Luke Chapter 10:1-23 sent the 72 disciples and instructed them to start from Jerusalem then Jericho and spread to the whole world, even universities need to follow the same principle starting marketing from the local before attracting students from the neighboring countries and then the whole world. The community needs to embrace the university and have a feeling that university is part of them. This initiative will also enhance strong relationship between the community and the university. When this initiative is embraced, it will develop unbreakable bond and lead to even referrals of their friends, relatives and acquaintances which will increase students’ admissions into our programs. Apart from referrals and positive word of mouth (WOM), this will also reduce conflict between the universities and the communities as has been experienced in the recent past where a fight has broken between the university students and the community. Also to keep in mind is that with high student enrollment and the university wholly depend on the local community to provide accommodation for the high number of student enrollment. It now goes without saying that CSR project i.e the CAID strategy is the best strategy ever to be implemented by any university which has a clear mission and strategy.

Embraced, it will also enhance product positioning so much so that whenever a student or a parent thinks of taking his/her child to the university, that University will become the University of Choice across the globe. This will also improve the ranking.

Frequency of the program

People grow and advance in age every single day. As much as age is just a unit of measurements, the truth is as we grow so does the responsibility. With this in mind, this project should be incorporated in the university culture so that it is done every semester and should involve all the stakeholders. It should also be a continuous process and not a one off initiative as this will enable other organizations which are keen on community initiative to partner with the university and even make it a bigger project which attracts wider coverage.

Conclusion

As university, we need to stand out and be counted and this can only be realized when we embrace initiatives which give us competitive advantage over other colleges. As the number of universities grow both private and public so does the urgency on part of the universities to show their uniqueness. This uniqueness can not only be achieved on the nature of courses offered as almost all universities offer the same courses but also on other services we offer apart from the courses and having qualified teaching staff.

A thousand miles starts with one step and as we strive to change our marketing strategy, we need to have a background on which we base our arguments. Marketing generally is often seen as expenditure and not revenue generated which a wrong perception (that is a story for another day). However, this mind set has to be changed from the top management down to the lowest level employee in the university. Try this project and give feedback.

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