Chapter 10

Corporate Social Responsibility: Practice Models for Building Business–Community Collaborations

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ABSTRACT

Recent years have seen a considerable increase in the phenomenon of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Some scholars posit that CSR includes four main aspects: economic growth, ethical marketing, environmental sustainability, and community involvement (Muthuri, Matten, & Moon, 2009; Udo & Pawlowski, 2011). This chapter deals with the fourth aspect of the business-community relationship. Exploratory qualitative research was conducted among ten community social workers who are involved in CSR activities. The findings indicate four main models of CSR relations: (1) the organizational, (2) the multi-organizational, (3) the municipal, and (4) the national model. These are described in terms of four comparative measures: (1) definition of the parties involved in the relationship, (2) characteristics of the relationship, (3) advantages of the model, and (4) disadvantages of the model. The chapter offers a new theoretical framework for business-community collaborations, which can increase the chances of success for collaboration on the practical level.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been a notable increase in the number of businesses that demonstrate social responsibility in the community. This trend has gained momentum over the last decade in the United States (Besser & Miller, 2001; Muthuri, Matten, & Moon, 2009; Rochlin & Boguslaw, 2001; Vilke, 2011) and in Israel (Boehm, 2005; Boehm, 2010; Makaros, 2011; Nuttman-Schwartz & Gadot, 2003). For the purpose of this chapter, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is defined as follows: “The continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the local community and society at large” (Holmes & Watts, 2000, p. 8).

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The growth of such activity might be attributed to reasons such as the decline of the welfare state, globalization, and the failure of socialism (Hopkins, 1997; Lamberty & Lettieri, 2009; Turban & Greening, 1997). In this context, the social work profession and other community work agencies have had to cope with considerable cutbacks in resources (Korazim et al., 2007; Nuttman-Schwartz & Gadot, 2003; Shechter, 2012). In an attempt to find creative solutions to these problems, social services organizations have begun to collaborate with the business sector (Boehm, 2010; Makaros, 2011). The motivations of the business sector for this collaboration derive from the economic gap between social classes in Israel, which has widened as a result of privatization of public assets and services (Nuttman-Schwartz & Gadot, 2003). This collaboration offers many advantages, but also presents new challenges and professional dilemmas (Vilke, 2011). The present chapter aims to describe four new CSR practice models for interventions aimed at building relationships between social organizations and business companies.

These models might improve the collaborations between businesses and social organizations by impacting the effect of the business firms on the environment and communities. Collaborations between businesses and social services organizations usually develop through implementing mutual projects. Hence, models proposed here can facilitate the selection of an appropriate working model in accordance with the unique characteristics of business and social organizations.

The findings are based on an exploratory qualitative study conducted among 10 community social workers who represent the majority of social workers serving as business-community liaisons in Israel. In the chapter, a framework for collaboration between social workers and businesses is proposed in an attempt to enhance understanding of the implications of business-community relations on both sides.

**BACKGROUND**

**Business-Community Collaborations**

CSR includes four main aspects:

1. **Economic Growth:** Which benefits stakeholders in the business activity,
2. **Ethical Marketing Practices:** Activities that follow the law, regulations, and ethical norms related to managing a business,
3. **Environmental Sustainability:** Commitment to avoid damaging the physical environment, such as pollution or waste, and
4. **Community Involvement:** The contribution of businesses to the community by developing social projects and collaboration with social services organizations (Muthuri, Matten, & Moon, 2009; Udo & Pawlowski, 2011).

Rochlin and Boguslaw (2001) have defined business-community collaboration as Business and Community Development (BCD). Their definition relates to the social responsibility of businesses as organizational strategies and organizational business practices that increase the economic and social assets of low-income individuals and communities, and create an approach of economic-community integration as part of the overall work model of the business.

The process of collaboration between social services organizations and businesses is based on a perception that emphasizes the principles of reciprocity and win-win relations. The contribution of businesses to the community is not seen as a charitable act on behalf of weak communities, but as a mutual relationship in which each party has something to give and something to gain (Austin, 2000; Rochlin & Boguslaw, 2001). Businesses gain, in tangible and intangible ways, an improved public image, additional political power, tax ben-