Corporate Social Responsibility and Employee Recruiting in the Tourism Industry

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most discussed issues in contemporary literature is corporate social responsibility (CSR). Although the concept of modern day CSR can be traced to the early 1920's (Asongu, 2007), debates about its definition, implementation, measurement, and outcomes persist as of this writing. The World Business Council for Sustainable Development (2000) defines CSR as "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 the local community and society at large" (as cited in Dahlsrud, 2008).

A large number of organizations practice social responsibility today even with its grey areas. The motives for implementing these practices may range from genuine concern for the stakeholders, to strategic moves to preempt government regulation or intervention, for recruiting quality workforce or purely for financial gain through reduced costs and improved consumer perception.

The primary purpose of this paper is to (a) Examine whether recruiters from tourism and hospitality organizations that already have existing CSR programs or goals are more attracted towards individuals who are involved in socially responsible activities, (b) Identify recruiter's perceptions of their own company's CSR programs, and (c) Examine how recruiters evaluate college student's social responsibility as a selection factor.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Even though the use of terms such as "sustainability", "CSR", "Corporate Citizenship", and "social responsibility" have become so common, authors such as Daley & Cobb, 1989 claim that institutional practices have not changed much (as cited in

Fenwcik & Bierema, 2008). According to Enz & Siguaw (2000): "No hotel can have excellent operations without excellent employees – and that requires excellent human-resource practices" (p. 48). Generally, components of a human resource management system in an organization that has a fully developed HR department include recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal and feedback, pay and benefits, and labor relations. Human resource managers use the component of recruitment and selection to "attract and hire new employees who have the abilities, skills, and experiences that will help an organization achieve its goals" (Jones & George, 2009).

In the past, studies have focused on how Corporate Social Performance (CSP) of an organization helps in attracting employees and/or enhancing their reputation to gain a competitive advantage (Albinger & Freeman, 2000; Greening & Turban, 2000; Backhaus, Stone & Heiner, 2002). CSP is a way of assessing how well an organization is meeting its corporate social responsibilities (Albinger & Freeman, 2000). Wood (1991) defines CSP as "a business organization's configuration of principles of social responsibility, processes of responsiveness and policies, programs, and observable outcomes as they relate to the firm's social relationships" (as cited in Albinger & Freeman, 2000, p. 1).

A number of authors have stated that attracting top-quality employees is essential in order to achieve organizational success (Jackson & Schuler, 1990; Offermann & Gowing, 1990; Rynes, 1991; as cited in Turban & Greening, 1996). A study reported by Forbes states that "more than half of the 2100 MBA student respondents indicated they would accept a lower salary to work for a socially responsible company" (Dolan, 1997; as cited in Albinger & Freeman, 2000). Albinger & Freeman (2000) suggested that CSP is important for organizations that are trying to recruit employees – especially when CSP is linked to reputation and employer attractiveness. Corporations have started including their social responsibilities in their recruitment brochures. For example, Marriott has a separate folder in their informational package to describe their social responsibilities. These types of brochures provide information to potential candidates and possibly provide the recruiting organization a competitive advantage (Albinger & Freeman, 2000).

PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

In the present exploratory study the researcher proposes the use of interviews. The researcher believes that by interviewing recruiters, she will be to collect qualitative and the most accurate data possible. The participants will be recruiters from companies that will come to the Purdue campus during the Hospitality and Tourism Management (HTM) spring 2010 and fall 2011 career fair. While, there is no guarantee that the participants (recruiters at the career fair) that will be interviewed will have the final say on if a job applicant is going to be hired or not; the author expects that the participants will be key influencers in the job screening process.

There are 40 companies expected to attend the fall 2010 HTM career fair at Purdue University. The researcher will examine each company's website and only those companies that show any commitment to CSR will be contacted personally to participate in the study. The researcher will follow Fenwick & Bierema (2008) by using semi-structure interviews, this will ensure that the information obtained is consistent and easy to compare. Additionally, the structure of the interviews will also allow flexibility incase the participants want to give a detailed explanation or share their experiences. The interviews will be taped and fully transcribed. The researcher expects that this preliminary study will be followed by a larger quantitative study.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Our industry has a relatively higher turnover rate as compared to other industries (Baum 2007, p.1389). The turnover rate in some segments such as hospitality continues to exceed 100% (Ricci & Milman, 2002; as cited in DiPietro & Condly, 2007). Thus, there is almost always a need for recruiting new employees. It is important to understand whether our industry is interested in recruiting individuals that show involvement in CSR activities or not. At the same time, it is important for academic institutions to know what employers are seeking in future graduates and whether or not they need to change their curricula to include CSR issues.

POSSIBLE LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This is only an exploratory study and thus will be limited by a small sample of companies that will be recruiting at the HTM career fair at Purdue. The responses of the participants may be biased and some companies may decline to participate in the study. Lastly, this current study examines the role of college recruiters and recognizes that these recruiters may not be the final decision makers in the selection process.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY

The current research is designed to provide insight into the relationship of CSR in the recruiting process. Future studies will examine the impact of the changing roles and the skill sets required by potential recruits as the hospitality industry continues to implement CSR activities.

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