Advances in Business-Related Scientific Research Journal (ABSRJ)
Volume 3 (2012), Number 1

21ST CENTURY INNOVATIVE BUSINESS: GLOBALLY AGILE YET SOCIALLY, CORPORATELY AND ETHICALLY RESPONSIBLE

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Abstract

Greed, fraud, and deception among corporate leaders in American businesses led the country deep into a recession and the public in a state of stagnation, mistrust, and uncertainty. Corporate accountability have declined in businesses as many corporations in an effort to stay competitive with the increasingly changing business models. Globalization has changed the face and heart of today's businesses. The requirement for speed and agility to stay competitive does not negate ethical practices. In this paper, the authors outlines a governance plan for today's innovative businesses and discusses the balance between corporate competition and changing business models with the responsibility of businesses to exhibit socially responsible behaviors and ethical practices.

Key Words: ethics, social, corporate, key agility, business

Topic Groups: management consulting, organizational behavior, critical management

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In a world filled with economic uncertainty, in which corrupt business practices seem to be catching on like the common cold, business governance appears to be a highly essential, important part of business operation and functioning. Without a good business governance plan, businesses can operate as they please without accountability. Greed, fraud, and deception among corporate leaders in American businesses led the country deep into a recession, and the public in a state of stagnation, mistrust, and uncertainty. Chopra (2009) believes the mindset and culture of corporations is one of abuse, greed, peddling, bureaucracy, leading to the current economic climate.

Corporate accountability has declined in businesses. From the obvious imperialism of Wall Street giants to the highly leveraged corporate positions and industry wide lack of risk management (Huq, 2008), accountability and responsibility appears to have taken a back seat to the political agendas and corporate takeovers. The changing business models force many corporations' into extreme efforts to stay competitive and increase the bottom line by any means. Globalization has changed the face and heart of today's businesses. The requirement for speed and agility to stay competitive does not negate ethical practices. In this paper, the authors outline a governance plan for today's innovative businesses and discuss the balance between corporate competition and changing business models with the responsibility of businesses to exhibit socially responsible behaviors and ethical practices.

Background of the Problem

Globalization has changed the structure, culture, and face of today's businesses. Businesses practice with speed, flexibility, and innovation to stay competitive. Today, businesses that understand global agility and are willing to take risks, are those who thrive and survive, even in turbulent markets. Businesses that rely on speed, accuracy, and consistency even in a new or unfamiliar market and environment have seen higher than expected dividends (Network World Asia, 2009). Global agility means shifting business thinking from one that is traditional to a global mindset, which embraces opportunities globally (Canton, 2009) and applies innovation and technology, recognizing cultural differences and diverse practices, yet balancing the responsibility and governance in the global marketplace. Chitakornkijsil (2009) believes a critical need exists for business leaders to think globally, which leads to cross-cultural collaboration on products, services, and ideas.

Businesses may be reticent to venture into the global marketplace because corruption and bribery issues are still alive and quite prevalent in foreign countries. When business transactions occur across global borders, very different cultural norms and regulation regarding bribery exist (Baughn, C., Bodie, N., Buchannan, M., Bixby, M., 2010). Business who do not understand the risk factors and how to avoid the pitfalls of entering covert corporate deals which fail to follow guidelines of good business governance, can become entangled in the negative risk factors of globalization. Some considerations are market differentiation, competitive pricing, licensing aspects, brand identification, accomplishing technological superiority of certain products and how to maintain high quality consumer service (Chitakornkijsil, 2008). Much potential exists to overlook or ignore those considerations. This leads to the plight of 21st century businesses concerned with global agility and corporate competition in the global marketplace.

Decline of Corporate Accountability and Responsibility

The political implications of business governance can be viewed from the perspective of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) by looking at the businesses' responsibilities socially. Businesses have grown into global enterprises that further complicate social responsibility, largely influencing the political system. The CSR story is regularly told from a micro perspective that details the internal costs and benefits to a firm such measures may bring. However, the sheer increase in the size and activity of multinational corporations (MNCs) over the past decade guarantees that their CSR efforts, or lack thereof, will significantly impact on the external, social, and political in which they operate. Put bluntly, a company's decision of and how to pursue CSR efforts matters greatly to the workers, communities, and nations, in which they invest (Detomasi, 2008).

Given the current economic crises and state of the American economy, questions about business integrity continue to exist. America's financial system largely affects other global systems because other financial systems in the global economy exist interdependently of the American system. The demise of the financial system crumbled at the heart of a presidential election year. What this means for the political parties depends largely on who looks favorable in the eyes of the public. The public should have a choice in deciding how one should handle unfavorable practices in corporations particularly when it directly influences the financial well-being of America. Yet as recently as the year 2008, where bail-out deals were extended to many large corporations, decisions were made behind closed doors by political giants who claimed to be working on behalf of the public yet appeared to lack full consideration for the public's interest. The public believed the bailout decisions was history repeating itself only to make the wealthy wealthier, adjusting old debt to start new ones (US News and World Report, 2008).

The public believed that corporate giants deemed responsible for the crumbling of the American economic system should own the responsibility of cleaning up the mess. From a political perspective, business governance may not always serve the interest of the public. Private politics differs from public politics by not relying upon law or the legislative process to resolve disputes. Instead, private politics entails attempts to change corporate behavior via the mechanisms of public protest and consumer choice, rather than through legislation (Detomasi, 2008).

Balance between Corporate Competition and Changing Business Models

In the midst of global and local competition, organizational leaders face challenges focusing on external competition versus changing business models to fit the current needs of the organization. Strebel and Ohlsson (2006) suggest that organizations are more successful with managing competition by focusing on multiple aspects of change, including customers, internal processes, and effective business models. These authors conducted a study on changes made within organizations and the results demonstrate that a "complementarities" approach seems to be an effective approach to change (p. 79). Leaders can focus on the competition as well as new business models, identify shifts that impact business, and allow internal innovation. The shared leadership model may align with this approach to managing change within the organization. Shared leadership allows individuals with different skills to take the lead to ensure that all aspects of managing change are effective (Atter, 2008).

Along with the challenges of focusing on the appropriate strategies to manage competition, internal leadership struggles may impact this process. Regardless of the structured governance, internal struggles for power, and influence among leaders can occur. The struggle for power and influence and the internal politics that occur can have a negative impact on the performance of the organization and as well as the interaction between the board members and the executive leadership team. Pfeffer (as quoted by Skaerbaek and Melander, 2004) indicate "Politics involves organizational activities to acquire, develop, and use power and other resources to achieve a preferred outcome in a situation where uncertainty about choices exists" (p. 7). Although involving various team members in the development and maintenance of a business governance plan is important, this inclusion process can create some dissension and concern among the members of the team.

Power struggles that exist in organizations exist because of the ongoing pressures that leaders face to meet the demands of stakeholders, customers, and superiors (Franken, Edwards, & Lambert, 2009). These internal struggles can impact execution of new strategies to address ongoing complexities and competition. As a result of internal challenges, organizational leaders may consider specific steps that can assist with implementing organization change effectively. Some steps include: 1) assessing the organizations prior success with implementing and executing strategic change; 2) establishing consensus among the leadership team regarding the need to improve execution strategies; 3) determining and agreeing upon specific elements of focus for strategic change; and 4) establishing, prioritizing, and outlining the strategic execution model (Frenken, Edwards, & Lambert, 2009). Following specific steps to establish a solid execution plan may assist with creating a balance between focusing on external competition and implementing effective business models.

Ethical Practices and Socially Responsible Behaviors In Corporations

Corporations and organizations achieve integrity from putting the interest of those they serve; the customers and stakeholders first, meeting the business mission and goals, and exhibiting transparency with business dealings not allowing a trace of impropriety to slip into business practice. Although clear ethical guidelines are useful to those within the organization, one cannot rely entirely on a set of rules and regulations to make the organization one that practices with integrity. What it takes is a culture that embraces integrity beginning with the leadership and allowing those behaviors to permeate the organizational environment.

True leadership requires a balance among three elemental pre-requisites; “Energy, Expertise, and Integrity” (Singh, 2008). When synchronized, they unleash the latent potential in any organization. Out of these three interacting gears of leadership, integrity ensures that an organization is run in the right direction, with a view toward collective good rather than selfish motives. Therefore, integrity is the most non-negotiable of the three elements (Singh, 2008). Hernez-Broom, G., McLaughlin, C., and Trovas, S. (2008), introduce the idea of self-promotion as a strategy for promoting integrity as a leader. There exists some truth to the fact that good news does not make the news. This is also true concerning good leaders doing good things. Unfortunately, the good isn’t always highlighted because one expects good. Rewards can emerge from self-promotion for both individuals and leaders in their organizations when used intentionally and strategically.

Self-promotion creates visibility and communicates value and is an essential part of the job of a leader. Self promotion is also the key to leadership effectiveness and long-term success (Hernez-Broom et al., 2008). McKoy (2007) offers several principles that leaders should follow to avoid integrity issues in organization. They are as follows. (1) Develop a moral compass (2) Be intentional about learning (3) Build trust with peers (4) Understand and embrace the covenants of the organization (5) Keep open communication (6) Be comfortable with ambiguity, paradox, uncertainty, and risk (7) Surround self with deep trusting relationships (8) Measure performance fairly (9) Choose clients fairly (10) Listen (11) Learn to lead the gray areas (12) Prepare for events that test. These principles are not always present in businesses and among those who lead in organizations. When these basic principles are absent, leaders are free to engage in irresponsible and sometimes illegal behavior impacting the organization, business, and public.

For one to achieve success in the face of increasing challenges, businesses need to create a no nonsense governance system that leads toward achieving the three Rs of business; i.e., everyone doing the Right things, and doing them Right, at the Right time. (Smart Solutions, 2008) A business governance plan must include at the very minimum but is not limited to the following components. They are as follows. (1) Strong board of directors (2) Policies and Procedures which incorporates laws and regulations governing business practices (3) A fiscal and financial management system (4) A strong leadership with a knowledgeable and skilled management team (5) Business and management systems and tools to ensure that the business runs smoothly and effectively (6) Information technology (IT) systems.

Strong board of directors

Under traditional theory, the board acts as an active management monitor for shareholder benefit. The board not only decides when to engage and when to terminate a management team, but also acts to provide supportive management oversight between these two points. The concepts of independence and equity are central to this active monitoring. To fulfill their oversight responsibilities effectively, directors must be holders of a personally meaningful equity stake in the enterprise and remain independent of management (Gandhiist and Sonnenfeld, 2004). The importance of a strong board of directors means that another body exists, an independent entity making sure that the business does what it set out to do with a sense of responsibility to its stakeholders and the public.

Policies and procedures

Ensuring that work practice is compliant to regulations and industrial standards is an increasingly important issue in business systems (Lu, R., Sadiq, S., & Governatori, G., 2008). Internal policies and procedures which guide business practice should incorporate the rules and regulations that govern public and private business practice. The business' policies and procedures are also an essential component of business governance which ensures that everyone within the organization or corporation understands the practice expectations and aspire to implement and comply with the procedures that are written down.

Compliance essentially means ensuring that business processes, operations, and practice are in accordance with a prescribed or agreed set of norms. Compliance requirements may stem from legislature and regulatory bodies (e.g. Sarbanes-Oxley, Basel II, and HIPAA), standards and codes of practice (Lu et al., 2008). An imperative part of the business' policies and procedures is its ethical practices that must be folded into the policies and procedures of that company. Another important factor is consulting with a legal entity to ensure that the policies and procedures established and the language of these procedures are sound and based on best practice business standards and regulations.

Fiscal management system

The finances of a company tell a major part of the business' story because corporations exist to make money. Included in the company's fiscal management system should be a system of checks and balances including clear financial statements (balance sheets, cash flow statements, and balance sheets) that make sense and do not elude the reviewer by covering up pertinent data. Technology has made financial management in businesses less painful as many corporations do away with traditional accounting for more sophisticated systems that help them manage the financial side of the business. Consequently, these systems can be very costly but are a necessary part of business governance.

Internal controls are very much in the spotlight at organizations today because of implementation of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002. Much scrutiny exists on internal controls that monitor financial transactions. Stakeholders blame the Sarbanes-Oxley Act for adding complexity and cost to corporate governance. The costs of implementation and compliance have steadily risen since 2002 and many companies continue to struggle with Security and Exchange Commission (SEC) guidelines for administering Sarbanes-Oxley directives (Sprague, 2008).

Strong leadership

Leaders, who demonstrate due diligence and show courage in decision-making, are inclusive, communicate well with stakeholders, foster a sense of integrity, create an environment in which there exists openness and trust, and leads by example throughout the organization are considered strong leaders. A strong leadership team is an essential component of a business governance plan. The lack of trust in businesses diminishes further by a larger atmosphere of distrust within a society. Society has been exposed to numerous transgressions by politicians, clergy, athletes, and the media. The problem, while simple, is serious, a lack of trust in business. The solution, while perhaps simple as well, is substantial; rebuilding stakeholder trust in business. The method, however, is not at all simple but is multifaceted and protracted, integrating principle-centered leadership and organizational transparency into corporate governance (Bandsuch. Pate, & Thies, 2008).

Business and management systems

Businesses have numerous choices today regarding business models and management systems useful to manage their business effectively. It seems that stakeholders become cynical as businesses leaders work to find the right model, which fit for the culture and practice of the business. Good governance calls for useful and effective models, which aid the business in effectively operating whether scanning the environment for changes, managing risk, forecasting, maintaining quality, and using teams more effectively to carry out the goals of the company. For some companies, there isn't one method that fits the practice. Therefore, an eclectic approach or a compilation of various models might spell good governance for that company. The point is a management system is in place whereby managers are held accountable, their personal interests do not prevail, and the organization can ensure quality and continual improvements.

Purpose

The purpose of the qualitative research in this article was to explore the views of business leaders to determine if and how businesses could balance 21st century innovation and global agility with responsible business practices. The participants surveyed were 500 business leaders who encompassed business leadership groups from the global networking group, LinkedIn, an on demand office service group in Washington, DC consisting of small business owners with diverse business practices, and a small, local, disadvantaged group of business leaders certified as "small business enterprises" with the Washington, DC government.

Demographical Data

Of the 500 business leaders surveyed, the respondents were 16 business leaders. Despite the low response rate, the data in this article has value and can be useful to businesses in understanding the balance between global agility and social and corporate responsibility for success in operating 21st century businesses. The majority of respondents, 73.3% were executive level business leaders, possessing an average of 10 years or more experience in their roles as business leaders. Females, 53% made up the majority of the respondents, while males were 46.7% of the respondents. The respondents, 33.3% ranged in age from 41-50. The charts below, charts one to four, provide a graphical representation of the respondents' demographics.

Design and Methodology

An online Likert-scale survey design was used to collect data. A survey link was created and submitted via email and through LinkedIn to potential participants, who were 500 business leaders from diverse locations. The respondents were asked to provide their opinions on five statements regarding the balance between global agility, business competitiveness, and corporate responsibility. The scale included in the survey allowed respondents to provide their opinions based on the statements provided. The categorical options for response were strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. The following represents the five research statements used to collect data.

1. Businesses can be globally agile, competitive, and innovative, while balancing their social, corporate, and ethical responsibilities.
2. Innovative businesses have a responsibility to educate the public/consumers and be transparent about technologically advanced products and services.
3. It is acceptable for businesses who desire the competitive advantage in order to set trends, to innovate, take risks, bend rules, and challenge the status quo with secondary consideration for social, corporate, and ethical responsibility.
4. The rapid growth of technology and global innovation increases the risk of unethical business practices and corporate and social irresponsibility.
5. Businesses who are innovative and globally agile, are less likely to be socially, corporately, and ethically responsible.

Research Findings and Discussion

Twenty-first century innovative business models require the consideration of three important change factors. Nagel (2006) names these factors as “product change” involving solution and experiences, “process change” encompassing technology, “information tools, and outsourcing and market change” which involves globalization, customization, and speed and agility. Encased in these requirements for 21st century innovative businesses is the continual responsibility for businesses to exhibit socially and corporately responsible behaviors. The research in this article was conducted to explore the perceptions of business leaders to determine if there can be a balance between ethics, social, and corporate responsibility while being globally agile. A survey was sent via e-mail to approximately 500 randomly selected business leaders. The business leaders were selected from various business groups including an on-demand office service group, small business owners who are certified as a small business enterprise, and a business networking group, LinkedIn. The participants were given a two-week period to respond to the anonymous survey. Of the 500 participants surveyed, only 16 business leaders responded.

The respondents represented 32% (16 out of 500) of the total participants surveyed. The low response rate can be attributed to the sensitive nature of the subject matter. In light of the current decline in business trust and integrity related to the downfall of major corporations following irresponsible and unethical practices, business leaders have somehow become jaded by any belief in corporate responsibility and business governance. In spite of the fact that globalization has stimulated economic growth in global nations, the intricacies of corporate social responsibility continue to loom over companies holding them accountable and responsible for the economic growth and development of the society in which they exist and do business (Tsoi, 2009).

Many companies continue to avoid addressing issues related to the continuous challenges around corporate responsibility. This may be a good reason to explain the possible meaning for the low response rate, in that there may be a lack of trust that could potentially be traced to the respondent. Another possibility is the lack of time to devote to responding to survey questions. Finally, there may simply have been a lack of interest in the subject. Based on the statements asked of the respondents, 56.3% of the respondents strongly agreed that businesses could be globally agile, competitive, and innovative, while balancing social, corporate, and ethical responsibilities. The respondents, 56.3%, also strongly agreed innovative businesses have a responsibility to educate the public/consumer and be transparent about technologically advanced products and services. Some respondents, 37.5%, disagreed that businesses who desire the competitive advantage to set trends, innovate, take risks, bend rules, and challenge the status quo with secondary consideration for social, corporate, and ethical responsibility, whereas, 25% agreed with the statement. More than half, 31.3% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed that the rapid growth of technology and global innovation increases the risk of unethical business practices and corporate and social irresponsibility. Finally, 50% of the total respondents disagreed that businesses who are innovative and globally agile, are less likely to be socially, corporately, and ethically responsible. Table 1 below, provides a graphical display of the respondents' responses to the five statements used as research statements.

Qualitative Responses

The respondents provided qualitative responses to three qualitative statements that encompassed global agility, responsible business practice, innovation, and taking risks. The statements and responses are as follows.

Statement 1: Please share ideas on how businesses can balance innovation and global agility with responsible business. This statement received 13 qualitative responses.

1. "Focus on transparency and integrity instead of all the fine print qualifications."
2. "Simply stated, don't let losses control your destiny. Work harder and better - don't take short cuts."
3. "By making it their point of departure. Share the beliefs within your business network and let social control being the driver in those business networks."
4. "Follow ethical standards."
5. "Organizations are driven by values. You can combine innovation with responsible behavior."
6. "There are two types of businesses: Personal (e.g. sole proprietorships or closely held corporations) and corporate (e.g. publicly traded companies). The former can seek that balance by injecting the owner's value system into the corporate charter. For the latter, any discussion of balancing anything "responsible" or "ethical" practices is meaningless, because it is unlawful for the managers to do the right thing for the right reason (e.g., to give to charity for the sake of charity, to avoid polluting for the sake of a clean environment). They are obligated to make the most money they can for the shareholders, and "being responsible" can be nothing more than a public PR image to help make more money. If we want corporations to take note of social or ethical responsibilities beyond a self-serving PR purpose, we must pass laws obligating compliance. It's that simple."
7. "Have enforceable corporate policies that prohibit irresponsible business practices."

8. "Any responsible business has an interest in combining the elements listed in the normal conduct of affairs."
9. "Adhere to good business ethics."
10. "A business person should consult the organization and companies that regulate his/her field. And follow rules and regulation regarding as best as he can."
11. "Workshops for consumers and new hires to outline mission and goals."
12. "Good ethics and management."
13. "Do what is right, regarding all laws governing said given business, either nationally and/or internationally."

Statement 2: Please identify challenges business may face with competiveness, risk taking, and setting trends while balancing social, corporate, and ethical responsibility. The statement received 13 qualitative responses.

1. "Operating in different cultures and under different governmental rules/values."
2. " Those of us who are ethical always risk the chance of losing clients/business opportunities, it's the nature of business. The challenge is to continue to hold firm to your ethics remembering that God always wins."
3. " Short term goals versus long term goals. Management principles from shareholder to stakeholder value."
4. " The challenge of misusing business practices and bending rules to achieve goals."
5. " Not everybody wants to be a rat. A challenge is to be a normal person and not to kill everybody out there."
6. "The biggest challenge is the race to the bottom. That is, if the competitor can make more money or gain more market share by polluting more, lying more, paying lower wages, and so on, the race to the bottom is on. Good, solid, tough, clear, strong laws setting a minimum standard of conduct can place a "finish line" on that race to the bottom, and ensure the public that all businesses will be on the same level playing field when it comes to those minimums. A good example of this in action is lead in children's toys. Without a law prohibiting lead in children's toys, the only balancing a corporation would do is one that includes the difference in cost and quality from using lead, the positive PR that might be gained if "no lead" is considered to be a selling feature, and the cost of liability for poisoning children multiplied by the probability of being sued by, and losing, a child-poisoning lawsuit. But with a law banning lead, the business need not try to compete by finding an economically beneficial level of child poisoning.
7. "Eliminate Greed in the Market Place."
8. "The greatest challenge is an educated and informed public able to distinguish between irresponsible reporting and popular trends as well as a regulatory framework which is clear, explicit, and responsible.
9. "Deciding how best to set and establish rules to accomplish the goals of balancing social, corporate, and ethical responsibility."
10. "A challenge in business is taxes and licensing."
11. "When members of the same team have conflicting missions, values and agendas."
12. "Integrity issues."

13. "Lower overhead and increase productivity."

Statement 3: Please identify successes business may face with competiveness, risk taking, and setting trends while balancing social, corporate, and ethical responsibility. Statement 3 received 13 qualitative responses.

1. "Many consumers are attracted to ethical businesses."
2. "Growth."
3. "Companies adopting the new principles will be the survivors of the 21st century."
4. "Being a more responsive corporate citizen ad being more transparent."
5. "Set the law bar high, make it a publicly demanded trait (e.g. environmentally friendly, low fat, long lasting, set rules to prevent cheating (e.g. calling all sorts of polluting products "green" and the competition will reward those that, rather than spend millions lobbying against these minimums, embrace them ahead of the competition. Consider Google's motto, "Don't be evil," as an example of using "not evil" as a distinguishing feature in competition with other businesses. But don't miss the April Fool's Day 2009 reflection on it."
6. "Business would maintain responsible reputation while prospering which would increase their prosperity and leadership in their field."
7. "Any discernible success would be sustainability and economic stability for the territories in which it operates."
8. "Stronger more appropriate trade agreements."
9. "A good representation as an honest business."
10. "Winning over those that they may impress with their trend setting that incorporates principles and ethics."
11. "Longevity."
12. "Higher revenue and the possibility of a bigger market share."
13. "Work within, the competitive, and social rules, while observing all national and international laws and rules."

Recommendations: Innovative Corporate Governance Plan

The idea of corporate governance has been in existence since the 19th century. Corporate governance was born out of capitalism and free enterprise and the need for investors to have the assurance that the companies in which they invest operate with integrity and business smarts to yield profits (Morck, 2005). Despite the requirements of business governance setting standards by which business should practice, governance plans do not deter unethical practices and stimulate corporate responsibility. Twenty-first century business climate and the challenges of globalization and technology, requires a more innovative mindset where governance and corporate responsibility is concerned. New and innovative thinking in corporate sustainability requires a sense of urgency because of increasingly changing markets (Grayson, D., Zhouying, J., Lermon, M., Rodriguez, M., Slaughter, S., Tay, S., 2007).

Companies with innovative mindset in which the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is concerned can implement certain tenets to achieve sustainability. Some tenets as outlined by Grayson et al. (2007) may include the following. (1) Fold innovation for sustainability into the company's vision (2) Develop strategies with sustainability embedded into the core of the strategies (3) Place emphasis on actionable steps instead of focusing on the words of sustainability (4) Ensure that the company's board and stakeholder are concerned about matters pertaining to sustainability (5) Emphasize relationships and networks with like-minded businesses (6) Emphasis should not be placed only on the business reporting requirements but on a lifestyle of sustainability.

The tenets outlined in this article align with the research findings. The belief that businesses must have a newer mindset to sustain as a business delaying instant gratification of the "microwave" success through returning to the idea of hard work, honesty, fairness, integrity while embracing 21st century business innovation requiring some risk taking, stepping outside the box to set trends and improve society for all mankind. Through this change in the business mindset, success will come because of the laws of nature, wherein good will always yield good and success.

Limitations

There were some limitations in this research study. The study is limited by the low response rate. The sample was drawn from diverse business leadership groups in Washington, DC and a social networking group. Although, the survey was extended to the recipients for a period of 30 days.the majority of the recipients chose not to submit their opinions. Additionally, there were geographical limitations. The data collection was limited to the United States. As a result, the study did not fully represent the global business world. The lack of a representative sample from the international business world, contributed to the threat of external validity. Along with the low response rate and limited geographical representation,, the results suggest respondents' reluctance to address the topic area. The idea of responsible business practice is not a common topic of discussion among business practitioners although corrupt practices are widespread (Reigngold and Reingold, 2006). Further, the qualitative research design limited the research to an exploratory study, which could have been expanded to a qualitative or mixed-method design. The qualitative approach could provide participants with an opportunity to discuss their lived experiences within organizational settings and the mixed-method approach would allow for the study to include quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell, 2002).

Implications for Business Science

The research in this article provides important information for business practice where the advancement of businesses and ethical practices are concerned. The implication for business practice is that scholars continue to raise concerns about the increase in unethical business in the age of globalization. The research adds to the existing body of knowledge on corporate responsibility in business practice and the idea of global agility. As businesses become more competitive, they are challenged by the realities of the need to compete in a business environment that dictates speed and agility while balancing responsible business practice. The reality is that some businesses operate without a moral and ethical compass, and continue to exist and increase in number. Little legal, financial, and political deterrents exist that seem to solve the ongoing problems of business corruption.

Future Research in Corporate Responsibility

Based on the low response rate included in this study, future research could include an evaluation of the unwillingness or desire to discuss or provide an opinion on social, corporate, and ethical responsibilities. As the use of technology increases in organizational settings, future research could also include the effectiveness of technological systems used to manage internal processes. For example, future research in business science might examine the effectiveness of innovative technology such as E-governance systems designed to redefine government and holds executives, legislatures, and citizens, accountable (Singla, 2008). E-governance is about making governance inexpensive, responsive, and truly transparent (Singla, 2008). Future research should examine the relationship between E-governance technology and the reduction of corruption in business practice. Additionally, future research should explore if E-governance technologies are transferrable into corporate business practice and whether financial incentives for E-governance use in business can increase accountability and reduce corrupt practices. Future studies could encompass a qualitative or mixed-method design to strengthen and further validate the results of the study.

Conclusion

Globalization and technological advancements changed the way businesses function and compete in a free market. With rapid, pervasive, innovation, and technological advancement, globalization and technology have coevolved (Rycroft, 2002). Businesses who are globally agile, flexible, competitive, and risk-takers do so with the challenge of balancing their responsibility to the public, and their responsibility to practice ethically, within the standards and guidelines of governance. Honest business practices that focus on responsibility must have greater rewards with financial incentives for businesses.

Complexities exist where global business practices are not aligned and laws that govern practices in one jurisdiction, does not mean the same in another. The need for instant financial gain and greed may lead to covert operations which lack transparency. Twenty-first century business models require businesses to take risks, think globally, and set trends to stay competitive. Consequently, there exists a need for a renewed mindset where businesses think innovatively while embracing internal controls with a commitment to do the right thing for the right reasons even if it means delaying instant profit for long-term gain.

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