

Corporate Social Responsibility in Professional Sport

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Session 13: Organizational Theory Workshop (75-minute)

Friday, June 1, 2007

8:00 AM - 9:15 AM

This symposium is designed to highlight issues related to corporate social responsibility (CSR) in professional sport from theoretical as well as practitioner perspectives.

Participants in this session, researchers as well as an expert working in the field, will discuss the opportunities and challenges faced by professional sport leagues, teams, and athletes engaging in CSR efforts. Specifically, the following topics will be discussed:

- The significance of CSR to sport management.
- Inherent CSR challenges and opportunities in professional sport.
- The domains of CSR in professional sport (e.g., the negative to positive CSR continuum; instrumental elements of CSR-cause marketing, strategic philanthropy)
- How professional sport is uniquely positioned to effect society.
- Different models of CSR that have been adopted in sport.
- Pragmatic issues practitioners face in creating and developing their CSR efforts (i.e., assessing the appropriate metrics to assess CSR and philanthropic efforts).
- Theoretical frameworks and a research agenda to examine CSR in sport.

The core principle of CSR is that the corporation incurs responsibilities to society beyond profit maximization, as "corporations possess the power to control and influence the quality of life of employees, customers, shareholders, and residents of local communities in which they operate" (Pava & Krausz, 1997, p. 337). The importance of corporate responsibility has risen to the forefront of concern for businesses in North America (Birchard, 1999; Kitchin, 2003; Korhonen, 2003; Margolis & Walsh, 2002; Waddock, 2004; Zwetsloot, 2003). The challenge faced by companies in the current environment is to "use their capabilities and capacities to contribute in a traditional business sense while accepting a social role" (Jonker, 2005, p. 20). Adopting this dual perspective, many leading U.S. corporations have been shifting from a traditional charity perspective to strategic CSR which attempts to integrate corporate donations and community service activities with business operations and interests (Dean, 2003). Similarly, cause-related marketing, whereby firms link the promotion of their product to a social cause and contribute a share of the revenues to the cause, is an increasingly common manifestation of business-society linkages (File & Prince, 1998; Gupta & Pirsch, 2005; Higgins, 2003; Irwin, Lachowetz, & Clark, 2003; Irwin, Lachowetz, Cornwell, & Clark, 2003; Meyer, 1999).

In a parallel fashion, the concept of CSR is gaining considerable currency in the sport industry. As recently as ten years ago, CSR issues did not play a significant role in sport (Kott, 2005; Robinson, 2005). Professional sport organizations, however, are entering into socially responsible initiatives at a rapid pace. All professional sport organizations currently engage in various forms of community outreach efforts, and many are creating foundations to support social causes in their communities (Robinson, 2005).

A large body of work has explored the relationship between corporate economic outcomes and CSR (Margolis & Walsh, 2003). However, very little attention has been paid to the content and societal outcomes CSR efforts (Margolis & Walsh, 2003). Further, this area remains relatively unexplored in the area of professional sport.

Given that relatively little CSR research has been conducted within sport, we will discuss a number of theoretical frameworks which can serve as bases for in depth investigations of CSR in sport. More specifically, the following theoretical perspectives will be brought to bear in the presentations: the resource based view of the firm (Barney & Arian, 2001), strategic responses to institutional pressures (Oliver, 1991), strategic philanthropy (McAlister & Ferrell, 2002), and Carroll's (1979) inclusive framework which incorporates the potential for positive and negative organizational influences on society.

While three symposium presentations will be theory based, a practitioner, an expert in the field, will discuss the relevance of the

2007 North American Society for Sport Management Conference (NASSM 2007)

research directions proposed by the academics. The practitioner is an excellent position to do so, as the the organization he represents is the preeminent organization attempting to help professional sports organizations across the U.S. in every major league make an impact on the health and well-being of their communities.

The symposium will be organized as follows:

CSR In Sport Symposium Format

- 1) Introduction; An Overview of CSR in Sport
- 2) CSR: Is the Sport Context Unique?
- 3) CSR in Sport: A Case for Strategic Philanthropy
- 4) CSR: The View from the Field
- 5) Panel Discussion
- 6) Open Discussion

Each of the presenters will take 10 minutes. An important objective of this symposium, however, will be to engage all in attendance. With this in mind, substantial time is planned for a panel discussion (10 minutes), as well as for open discussion with all in attendance (25 minutes).

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