Nonprofits Doing It All: An Examination of Nonprofit Social Responsibility

Kelly Rose Cousins

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Instructor: Marco Tavanti
INTRODUCTION

This research is based on the belief that all organizations, of every size and type, bear responsibility for their impact, both positive and negative.

Using Corporate Social Responsibility as a jumping off point, I sought to examine whether nonprofits are using their global actor-hood to expand beyond their mission.

Nonprofit Social Responsibility: “anything an organization does, beyond the scope of their direct mission, that integrates social and environmental concerns in their operation and in their interactions.”
OBJECTIVES AND VALUES

Nonprofit Social Responsibility has the potential to dramatically amplify the positive impact of nonprofit organizations.

PURPOSE STATEMENT: to identify barriers preventing nonprofits from participating in Nonprofit Social Responsibility Programs.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

1. Are nonprofits currently doing things to contribute to social and environmental good, beyond their mission?

2. If they are not participating in anything beyond their mission, what is preventing them?

3. What are the potential solutions to support incorporating more social good beyond a nonprofit’s mission?
The data analyzed for this project utilized a mixed methodology to target a variety of unique experiences and perspectives.

6 Expert interviews

- Interviewee 1: Executive Director at a Social Justice Nonprofit
- Interviewee 2: Executive Director at a Nonprofit Advocacy Firm
- Interviewee 3: Corporate Social Responsibility Professional who previously studied Nonprofit Social Responsibility
- Interviewee 4: Director of a Corporate Social Responsibility Program
- Interviewee 5: Development Director at an Environmental Nonprofit
- Interviewee 6: Director of an Environmental Office within an Education Nonprofit

19 Survey Responses

Collected through:
- USF MNA Group on LinkedIn
- Personal Facebook account
- Social shares from friends and co-workers
Data Analysis
DATA ANALYSIS – INTERVIEWS

Mentions of Barriers in the Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barrier</th>
<th>Count</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Buy-In</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission Drift</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overworked Staff</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency Policies</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tbody>
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### Other Elements Represented in the Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Natural Extension</th>
<th>Terminology</th>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>Partnerships</th>
<th>Certification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nonprofit Social Responsibility is a natural extension for nonprofits because of their propensity for social good (9 instances)</td>
<td>There is a disagreement or lack of understanding of Nonprofit Social Responsibility Terminology (4 instances)</td>
<td>Nonprofits have a tendency to underplay communications, especially when not directly related to the mission (6 instances)</td>
<td>Partnerships between nonprofits could be a valuable resource for Nonprofit Social Responsibility (11 instances)</td>
<td>There are certifications for Corporate Social Responsibility, but not for Nonprofits, although they are valuable for measuring impact (4 instances)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DATA ANALYSIS – SURVEYS

Significance of Barriers, As Represented in the Survey
DATA ANALYSIS – SURVEYS (Cont.)

Side by Side Comparison of Helpful Resources

- **Additional Funding**: 3.89
- **Staff Time**: 4.26
- **Leadership Buy In**: 4.21
- **Education / Training**: 3.95
IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
1. The primary barriers to implementing and sustaining Nonprofit Social Responsibility programs are **Funding Availability** and **Staff Ability** (Time and Capacity).

2. The inconsistencies relating to **Buy-In/Motivation** suggest that the question was asked incorrectly, and should in future research be expanded to include not just leadership.

3. **Communication** surrounding Nonprofit Social Responsibility is often avoided, internally and externally, possibly to avoid perceived mission drift.
Setting Up Success for Full MIssion Style Programs

Empower your Organization
Do not shy away from your good work, make it a part of your brand

Simple Solutions
Nonprofit staff are already overworked Solutions must be easy to implement

Designate Time
Make designated space and time to talk about NSR problems and solutions

Find a Champion
Someone within your organization with a passion for the project

Stable Funding
Ensure your organization has consistent stable funding

This is not a one size fits all solution. Examine your nonprofit and any unique barriers you may be facing.
RECOMMENDATIONS

TERMINOLOGY
Nonprofit Social Responsibility is not the right term for this field
Suggestions: “Social Impact Programs” “Do Good Programs” and “Full Mission”

COMMUNICATION
Future research into confidently communicating a nonprofit’s “full mission,” which could potentially support branding and public support

CERTIFICATION
There should be a certification for nonprofits to measure and report their impact beyond the obvious implementation of their mission
REFERENCES


NONPROFITS DOING IT ALL: AN ANALYSIS OF NONPROFIT SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY
Kelly Cousins, MNA - Master of Nonprofit Administration - Capstone Project

SUMMARY
Corporate Social Responsibility is an increasingly trendy topic in the modern business world, but while consumers are becoming more concerned with the ethical practices of the companies they buy from, nonprofits rarely receive such scrutiny. This study sought to determine whether nonprofits are involved in Nonprofit Social Responsibility, which I defined as “anything an organization does, beyond the scope of their direct mission, that integrates social and environmental concerns in their operation and in their interactions on a voluntary basis.” This includes everything from Socially Responsible Investing to Environmental Sustainability, to Responsible Sourcing. Hopefully, this research will identify key barriers to implementing Nonprofit Social Responsibility programs, as well as suggesting possible avenues to address those barriers.

DATA AND ANALYSIS
Mentions of Barriers in the Interviews

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Significance of Barriers, As Represented in the Survey

- **Cost**
- **Staff Time**
- **Staff Capacity**
- **Leadership Buy-in**
- **Awareness**
- **Education**
- **Mission Drift**
- **Other**

Methodology

**Research:**

My hypothesis is that with the removal of barriers, or addition of resources, more nonprofits would choose to extend their impact beyond what is clearly stated in their mission.

- Research Question:
  - Are nonprofits currently doing things beyond their mission to contribute to social and environmental good?
  - If nonprofits are not participating in anything beyond their mission, what is preventing them?
  - What are the potential solutions to support incorporating more social good beyond a nonprofit’s mission?

**Methods:**

This study used a two pronged method to study nonprofit professionals and their relationship with Nonprofit Social Responsibility. First, six experts in the field were interviewed, including four Directors in nonprofits, and two experts from the for-profit Corporate Social Responsibility field. These interviewees were found through purposive and snowball sampling. Additionally, survey data was collected through a convenience sampling format, using social media. Unfortunately, only 19 responses were usable. While this study is not statistically significant, it still offers some very interesting perspectives, and avenues for future study.

**Discussion:**

Setting Up Success for Full Mission Style Programs

- **Empower your Organization**
  - Do not shy away from your “odd hours, make it a part of your brand.”
- **Simple Solutions**
  - Nonprofit staff are used to overlooked solutions must be easy to implement.
- **Designate Time**
  - Make designated space and time to talk about RSI programs and solutions.
- **Find a Champion**
  - Someone within your organization has a passion for the project.
- **Stable Funding**
  - Ensure your organization has consistent funding.

This is not a one size fits all solution. Examine your nonprofit and any unique barriers you may be facing.

**Recommendations:**

1. **Terminology:** Nonprofit Social Responsibility is not the right term for this field.
2. **Communication:** Future research into confidently communicating a nonprofit’s “full mission”, which could potentially support branding and public support.
3. **Certification:** There should be a certification for nonprofits to measure and report their impact beyond the obvious implementation of their mission.

**References:**

- Signori, Silvana. (July 1, 2010). Nonprofit Organizations and Socially Responsible Investments: The Case of Italian Foundations.
- We did it!