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PARTNERSHIP RELATIONSHIPS IN CREATING STAKEHOLDER VALUE IN TODAY'S MARKETPLACE

Alicja Katarzyna KRZEPICKA

SGH Warsaw School of Economics; akrzep@sgh.waw.pl, ORCID: 0000-0002-0056-248X

Purpose: The purpose of the article is to present, based on literature sources, the essence of the concept of building partner relationships and their importance in creating stakeholder value, which can be a kind of antidote to the uncertainty and turbulence of the globalized modern market. It is assumed that the skillful formation of relationships with stakeholders promotes the obtaining of value for the parties involved in the relationship.
Design/methodology/approach: The purpose of the study was realized based on the analysis of selected literature sources.
Findings: A significant role in shaping company-stakeholder relations is played by the knowledge of building relationships with them. Thus, the creation and development of partnerships with stakeholders, given the operation of companies in an uncertain and turbulent modern market environment, is an important role in shaping their value and can become an important contributor to building competitive advantage.
Practical implications: The article can be a source of valuable inspiration for companies interested in deliberately shaping relationships with the business environment, particularly contributing to the creation of stakeholder value.
Originality/value: The author draws attention to current and important issues occurring in the process of building relationships with stakeholders, especially the creation of stakeholder value and the importance of relationship building for the operation of enterprises in the turbulent modern market.

Keywords: relationships, stakeholders, value, stakeholder value.

Category of the paper: Theoretical article.

1. Introduction

In the environment of any enterprise, there are many entities that have an interest (hence the name stakeholders) in how and with what effect the enterprise operates. These stakeholders interact with the enterprise, as well as with each other, and can have a real impact on what decisions are made within the enterprise (Friedman, Miles, 2002). Relationships are not only the foundation of personal life, but also play an important role in business. Creating, developing, "nurturing" relationships with stakeholders is becoming an intrinsic feature of organizations doing business in today's market, where doing business is increasingly difficult. This applies not only to businesses, but also to other organizations, including those classified as public sector or NGOs. All entities establish and form relationships with a wide and diverse group of stakeholders, often with different needs, expectations, preferences, requirements and even sometimes conflicting interests, recognizing the undoubted benefits but also the importance in creating stakeholder value. In addition, in many companies, they are the basis for the development of the business model. In this aspect, it is worth emphasizing that building positive relations with stakeholders should be based primarily on ethical PR, which should comply with the following code of ethics:

1. Public relations communicates only truthful information. A public relations specialist (PR specialist) is obliged to disseminate information that, to the best of his knowledge and experience, is true, accurate and not misleading to the recipient. If there is any doubt about the reliability of the information, it is the PR specialist's duty to verify it.
2. In order to exercise special care, integrity and honesty, a PR specialist is required to report the facts in their proper context, without distortion or manipulation.
3. Public relations must not, under any circumstances, serve disinformation. In the event of becoming aware of unconscious or unintentional misinformation, it is the PR specialist's duty to immediately correct the misinformation and make it known to all those who may have been affected by the misinformation.
4. The media are an immanent part of the public relations ecosystem, and journalists are an integral partner of PR specialists in the professional performance of their profession. It is the duty of agencies and PR teams of companies and institutions to respect the principles by which the media shape their cooperation with public relations entities, and PR specialists are obliged to respect journalistic independence and freedom of interpretation of the content they provide to journalists.
5. A PR specialist may not represent conflicting or competing interests unless the parties involved, after all the facts have been presented to them, agree to do so.
6. A PR specialist is obliged to protect the privacy, honor and personal dignity of his clients and colleagues, as well as to respect the personal rights of the addressees of his actions.
7. The PR specialist is obliged to protect the confidentiality of current and former clients and employers and must not take steps to disclose confidential contents of which he is the holder, unless the persons to whom the secrets relate or who have entrusted them give their consent or when required by law.
8. A PR specialist must not engage in any activity that seeks to corrupt the mass media. Information provided to the mass media should be provided for publication and use without payment or hidden financial or personal benefits offered to journalists.

9. If it is necessary to maintain the initiative and control of information dissemination, the PR agency or PR team of the company or institution has the right to buy space or broadcast time, in accordance with applicable laws relating to advertising and sponsorship activities and in accordance with publicly available information on the rules of cooperation with individual media outlets.
10. A public relations agency or a company's or institution's PR team must not enter into any contract in which it guarantees a result that depends on the autonomous decisions of other entities, such as the media, public institutions, etc.
11. PR professionals must not unfairly compete with other public relations professionals and the organizations they represent and damage their reputations (Barlik, Hope, Olędzki, 2022).

The principles of the above code form the basis of communication with stakeholders and should be strictly adhered to.

2. The essence and types of partnerships

In colloquial terms, relatio (Latin relatio - to relate, to state a case), means an eyewitness account of the course of an event, or indicates a relationship occurring between people or social groups (Bańko, 2005, p. 1078). The term was first used after 1985 by B.B. Jackson to describe the reciprocal relationship between organizations (Jackson, 1985, p. 125). In contrast, according to Ph. Kotler and K.L. Keller, relationship marketing aims to build mutually satisfying, long-term relationships with key members in order to gain and retain their business (Kotler, Keller, 2009, p. 20). Relationships between individuals or organizations are the basis for the operation and development of any enterprise. Business entities, by virtue of their interaction with each other, initiate various types of relationships, the most common of which are those between: an enterprise and a customer, an enterprise and another enterprise, an enterprise and government entities (Danielak, 2012).

According to A. Werr, J. Blomberg and J. Löwstedt, the interorganizational relationships in which companies enter can be grouped into the following five categories:

1. Vertical relationships, including suppliers, intermediaries (distributors) and customers.
2. Horizontal relationships, including competitors, cooperators and various associations/networks.
3. Hierarchical relationships (headquarters and subsidiaries).
4. Personal relationships (referring to interpersonal ties unrelated to economic interests, e.g., family, collegial, friendship relationships).
5. Relationships with experts i.e. consultants, specialists (Werr, Blomberg, Löwstedt, 2009, p. 451).

According to T.L. Powers and W.R. Reagan, there are five basic stages of relationship development, consisting of:

1. Partner selection.
2. Defining the goals of the relationship.
3. Defining the boundaries of the relationship.
4. Creating value.
5. Maintaining the relationship (Powers, Reagan, 2007, p. 123).

Relationships can be both short- and long-term, more or less valuable, also there can be casual relationships and sporadic relationships limited to single transactions. Relationships are usually unique to the people, places and businesses in which they are formed. Their multidimensional form is seen to have many benefits related to, for example, access to valuable resources, as well as diffusion or absorption of knowledge aimed at finding innovative solutions. Also the potential dangers associated with the loss of value of relationships due to their weakening, gradual disappearance or termination.

In business practice, the implementation of the goals set by enterprises involves the need to establish various types of relationships with internal and external stakeholders. Relationships are built in a process of sequential, gradual development over an extended period of time, within the following stages:

1. Initiating: a) initiating the concept and procedure for initiating the relationship, b) presentation of the offer, marketing activities.
2. Formalization: develop a procedure for formalizing internal and external relationships (through contractual and non-contractual arrangements. Contractual settlements are one of the factors that influence the building of trust that is the basis for relationship building).
3. Relationship development: a) analyzing the quality and value of relationships, b) identifying changes, c) investing in development.
4. Evaluation: periodic evaluation of the quality and value of relationships, communication procedures, interaction.
5. Improvement: improving quality and value from interactions (management and employee involvement plays a key role).
6. Termination: a) develop a procedure for ending the relationship, b) evaluate the benefits and costs (Chomiak-Orsa, 2013).

Given the above process of relationship building, it is not hard to disagree with the statement that each relationship is unique in terms of its dynamics, development and realization of expectations (Skrzypek, 2015). Each stakeholder makes specific contributions and expects specific values. The specific results obtained should foster efforts to develop and consolidate relationships with stakeholders. The reasons for the termination of the relationship may also relate to independent variables existing in the environment, which are usually not directly influenced by the parties to the relationship.

It is also worth noting, although relationships do not have a physical form, they can be managed. However, in order for the management process to be effective, it is necessary to plan, organize and motivate the employees responsible for shaping the relationship, and the relationship must be controlled.

The disappearance of the relationship may be influenced by the weakening capabilities of the partners, inactivity of the client, opportunistic attitudes or loss of trust. On the other hand, the termination of existing relationships can occur with the expiration of the period for which they were concluded, also due to the resignation of one of the parties, but also due to the negative impact of external factors. Relationships can be considered terminated in the absence of ties between the parties involved.

3. The concept and types of stakeholders

The term "stakeholder" was first used in 1963 in a Stanford Research Institute document to describe groups of stakeholders to whom the owners of a business should be accountable and without whose support the organization would cease to exist (Freeman, 2010, p. 31). R.E. Freeman defines stakeholders as any individual or group that can influence or be influenced by an organization in pursuit of its goals (Freeman, 2010, p. 33).

In the cited definition, attention is drawn to the so-called feedback of stakeholders and the organization, since their relationship can be diverse in nature; moreover, both stakeholders can influence a specific organization, and the organization can influence its stakeholders.

According to T. Donaldson and L. Preston, stakeholders are individuals or groups that have direct or indirect contracts with an organization (Donaldson, Preston, 1995, pp. 65-91).

Enterprises operating in the modern market are increasingly dependent on the environment, which on the one hand influences a change in the patterns of action of managers managing them, and on the other hand implies the creation of business models based on the creation and development of partnership relations with stakeholders.

The classic division of stakeholders distinguishes two basic groups, namely:

1. Internal stakeholders: employees, shareholders, boards of directors.
2. External stakeholders: exert influence operate in the organization's environment. These include: customers, suppliers, competitors, state authorities, state institutions, special interest groups, the media, trade unions, other stakeholder groups.

In the broadest classification of interest groups influencing a company's operations, primary and secondary social and non-social stakeholders are distinguished (Table 1).

Table 1.
Interest groups

Interest groups	Social	Non-social
Primary	- local, national, international communities - suppliers and business partners - customers - investors - employees - management - lenders (banks, bondholders, etc.).	- environment - other species - future generations
Swcondary	- government - the public market - regulators and supervisors - trade organizations - competitors - social pressure groups - trade unions - media and commentators - opinion leaders - research and academic centers - non-governmental institutions - environmental organizations	- environmental pressure groups - animal rights activists

Source: own elaboration based on Wheeler, Sillanpää, 1997; Hund, Engel-Cox, 2002, p. 219.

A different but relevant division of stakeholders in terms of their value to a given organisation is proposed by M.A. Rodriguez and J.E. Ricart, who distinguish the following types of stakeholders:

1. Substitute stakeholders - the company cannot function without them. These include employees and owners.
2. Contractual stakeholders - associated with the enterprise on the basis of a formal or informal contract. These include customers, suppliers, competitors, financial institutions.
3. Contextual stakeholders - play a crucial role in achieving the enterprise's reputation and public trust for its business. These include local, regional and national administrations and the media (Rodrigez, Ricart, 2002, pp. 26-33).

4. The essence of stakeholder value and its measurement

Values vary from one to another. Value responding to customers' needs and expectations arises from the appropriate allocation and configuration of capabilities and resources. Good relationships are not always fixed. They are the result of a combination of individual attributes such as honesty, integrity, respect, dedication, trust, confidence, as well as employee commitment and company reputation (Lau, Rowlinson, 2011, pp. 633-659).

Just as not all relationships contribute to value creation, not all relationships provide opportunities for development. Indeed, in the value system, it is important to develop stable, strong and long-lasting relationships based on trust and cooperation.

An important element of relationship development is the goals and expectations of the parties to the relationship, which change as the relationship develops. As the relationship develops and commitment increases, uncertainty is reduced and trust increases.

Valuable relationships provide satisfactory added value for the company's stakeholders. In order to measure the effectiveness of forming collaborative relationships, with respect to individual stakeholders and their needs, appropriate evaluation criteria and metrics should be defined. Examples of metrics that can be used include:

1. For owners: total shareholder return (TSR) or relative TSR.
2. For directors: average remuneration or average remuneration as a percentage of the average remuneration of directors of companies in the comparator group, percentage of company shares held.
3. For employees: average salary in the company compared to the average salary in the country.
4. For creditors: liquidity and solvency ratios, ratings assigned by independent agencies.
5. For customers: market share ratio, percentage of returns (complaints), percentage of repeat customers, average delivery time, etc.
6. For government: amount of taxes paid.
7. For the local community: the amount of employment, the amount of investment in municipal infrastructure, the amount of funds donated to social activities.

Companies should conduct an analysis of their interest groups in order to know their expectations, relationships and how to achieve their objectives. In principle, all stakeholder groups should be interested in increasing the value of the enterprise, given that they not only participate in the creation of this value, but also benefit from it.

5. Summary

Relationships are formed as a result of interactions between individuals who are pursuing certain goals. Relationships are extremely important, due to the fact that it is through them that it is possible to realize the goals of individuals but also of organizations. This is because they allow access to external resources and capabilities, including specialists in various fields. Moreover, they are an important source of value for the individuals and entities involved in the relationship.

Businesses operating in today's market should focus primarily on the processes of creating and then developing and maintaining partnerships with various stakeholder groups. Relationships play a key role in the value creation process, especially in terms of building valuable relationships with stakeholder groups that are important to the company.

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that the skillful formation of relations with stakeholders is gaining importance due to the changes occurring in today's dynamic market environment forcing flexibility of action in the ability to solve problems and make decisions with the involvement of the competencies and capabilities of internal and external stakeholders. It is worth bearing in mind that the formation of relationships with individual stakeholders very often requires an individual approach, due to their contribution, role, competencies and also the expected value from the relationship.

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