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Business Ethics: The Magazine of Corporate Responsibility

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MGMT 5900- Ethics
Dr. Martin Sivula
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Business Ethics- The Magazine of Corporate Responsibility

By Michael Connor

<http://business-ethics.com>

Summary/Overview of the Blog

The “Business Ethics- The Magazine of Corporate Responsibility” blog focuses on the fields of ethics, governance, corporate responsibility and socially responsible investing. The blog discusses mainly the purpose of a corporation or the purpose of corporations in general. It seeks to answer the question in a practical perspective which will significantly affect in an academic sense. The author, Michael Connor, appears frequently in national media and appears as a speaker in conferences and corporate events. He is also a journalist who writes about field of business ethics, corporate responsibility and sustainability. He is a regular speaker at conferences and seminars and has been called on frequently for expert commentary by national media, including CNN International, CNBC, ABC News *20/20*, *USA Today* and public radio. In 2010 he was named a Media Fellow in Stanford University's Rock Center for Corporate Governance. The Business Ethics as an online magazine accepts cash advertising and sponsorship from major influencers. The blog survives through compensation from companies, non-profit organizations, and third-parties for writing, broadcasting, speaking, consulting and the management of projects beyond the scope of his work. It also has a separate section called “Polls” which seeks to find opinions from readers about business ethics topics. Its mission is “to promote ethical business practices, to serve that growing community of professionals and individuals striving to work and invest in responsible ways”.

In the past, corporations were built not on profit per se. Corporations used to participate in activities which involve public service such as waterworks and building bridges to facilitate transportation. How corporations are being run today is way different than how it was run a decade ago. But part of the truth is, corporations enable society to achieve things which will not be available without focusing on capital and managing risk. On a critical view, corporations have a social role that goes far beyond attending to the interests of its shareholders.

Business schools started introducing the addition of ethics and corporate governance to their course offerings due to corporate scandals in the last decade. The blog featured some articles about how business schools dealt with the subject matter in form of electives which are taught by adjunct instructors and several discussions about the purpose of corporation were made overall.

Positive Criticisms for the Blog

There was a clear disclosure of the authors and sponsors. Specific authors were cited properly. The information seemed fairly current. The polls are an additional unique feature which compared to some other blogs for ethics are not present.

In terms of navigation, there are places on the blog that link to secondary resources and related blogs so they got it covered for the most part. They have links to secondary navigation in the sidebar.

From a design perspective, they did a good job in keeping the content easy on the eyes although it can improve on the readability (for those who have not so good eyesight). The visual content is short, broken into paragraphs and includes formatting which is easy on the eyes.

As for the content, it is elaborate and I could not think of any more specifics which they could add. I agree to some of their points such as the purposes of corporation. As the story goes, the purpose of a corporation is to make money for the sake of its shareholders. This way of thinking has been connected to several financial crises experienced in the past and those that are still being experienced in the present. Behaviors which were exhibited in the corporate world have been directly connected to this paradigm. The current interest of the masses towards “corporate responsibility” came from several tensions in the society and the role corporations play in our everyday lives. As people continue to seek answers related to corporate responsibility, corporate governance, and corporation purposes, there will be undoubtedly a movement by corporations into the social area due to social pressures and their self-interest. This corporate conscience will be viewed by the majority as the answer to the current corporate problems.

Constructive Criticisms for the Blog

The blog has great content but the advertisements on the home page are distracting. the font sizes and styles are not readable but the format of the blog is straightforward and simple- not too many tabs and landing pages.

For the navigation, an additional link to check out PR/Media page would be good to have if they want to see more ways to get in front of their readers (for marketing purposes). Their “About” page needs some improvement as this can be helpful in referencing the page to partner with other bloggers or sponsors.

From a design perspective, the fonts and style should be kept standard across the whole blog. They can also improve on adding color to the pages consistent with the images and design elements similar to the rest of the blog.

For content, the pages are missing links to capture potential partners or sponsors looking for specific content. The search bar is not big enough to find what exactly readers are looking for. The content quality varies, as does the tone and style, which gives an impression of no single voice or personality which is not quite consistent with the About page. The About page states that

Business Ethics is “owned by New Mountain Media LLC, a New York-based media company controlled by Michael Connor.” My suggestion is either to make it a multi author blog or a single author blog with a single voice. The best route to growing the blog more is to go for the multi author path. Otherwise, they need to put more of “You” and make it conversational.

It is essential to attract a specific audience with something useful to them in this way they can grow a group of subscribers which will become their niche. These will be the people who want to hear from them.

There are some points which I disagree on such as topics pertaining to corporate social responsibility. What does it mean to say that a business has responsibilities? Moreover, what does it mean to say that a corporation has responsibilities? Is not it that human beings are the entities who can handle responsibilities? A corporation is technically not a person. A corporation is an artificial person and hence will have artificial responsibilities. I disagree that a “business” as a whole can have responsibilities. The first step in identifying what the social responsibility of every business, is to know precisely to whom the responsibilities are for. Presumably, the individuals who are deemed responsible for a corporation are the owners, businessmen, and corporate executives. Most of the articles in this blog (and the discussions in some books and other blogs) are directed at corporations having social responsibility. CSR is supposed to be a win-win. Companies make profits while society benefits from it. But does the society really wins? When corporations perform a simple act of philanthropy, they are giving away their shareholders’ money for some reasons which are unknown. It could be for improving their image by associating themselves with a cause or to just use it as a way of exploiting cheap vehicle for advertising. There could always be a financial motive so I am not certain that CSR is something I will adhere to.

Reference:

Connor, M. (1987). Business Ethics. Retrieved from <http://business-ethics.com/about/about-mc/>