

Organizational Values, HR Bundles & Collaboration with Nonprofit Organizations: A Conceptual Framework

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This paper elaborates on how organizational values influence the adoption of HR bundles which in turn shape the collaboration motivations and the type of collaboration that a business seeks to establish with a Nonprofit Organization (NPO) to fulfill its corporate social responsibility. Using the interpretive paradigm of sensemaking, this paper suggests that organizations with a value system based on egoism adopt calculative HR bundles and those with values system based on benevolence and principles adopt collaborative HR bundles. Organizations with calculative HR bundles are more likely to have episodic collaboration motivation and enter into philanthropic/transactional collaboration with NPOs while organizations that adopt collaborative HR bundles are more likely to have enduring collaboration motivation and enter into integrative collaboration with NPOs.

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All over the world, cross-sector collaborations have been accepted as an effective and powerful route to addressing economic, social and environmental challenges. (Koschmann, Kuhn & Pfarrer, 2012). Businesses are reexamining their traditional practices and increasing community engagement in ways that also have corporate relevance (Austin, 2002b). Therefore, collaborations between businesses and Nonprofit Organizations (NPOs) are increasingly gaining prominence. Despite the growing trend and importance of Business - NPO collaborations, research is rather fragmented and limited (Arenas, Lozano & Albareda, 2009). The objective of this paper is to develop a conceptual framework to understand how organizational values and internal HR practices influence the kind of collaboration that ensues between a business and an NPO.

The case in point is India's Companies Act 2013, article 135 which mandates that companies with a net worth of Rs. 500 crore or turnover of

Rs 1,000 crore or net profit of Rs 5 crore or more in a fiscal year are required to spend at least 2% of their average net profit on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities. Economic Times (2018) estimates that the total CSR spending by top 500 companies is likely to cross Rs 50,000 crore (7000 million USD) in 2019, since the applicability of the CSR law in 2014. This is quite an achievement in terms of investment in social responsibility by for profit businesses. However, many companies have neither the capability nor the infrastructure to pursue social goals. Organizations increasingly partner with nonprofit organizations to implement their CSR projects (Fontana, 2018). KPMG (2018) reports that in 2016-17, a total of 1895 CSR projects were implemented in India out of which 967 projects were executed through implementing agencies demonstrating the importance of business – NPO partnerships in fulfilling this important social mission.

Businesses and NPOs work with very different motivations. Businesses aim at maximizing shareholder's wealth while NPOs have a public interest in mind. This difference in philosophy is likely to create conflicts when the two collaborate for a common goal. If we look at it from the business' perspective, a basic question facing practitioners and researchers alike is what kind of collaborations will suit the needs of businesses (Austin, 2002b). If the motivation of the business is clear to the NPO, it can selectively and more efficiently engage with the business.

Prior research on Business - NPO collaboration is normative in outlook proposing that alliances evolve from a lower order to a higher order interaction (Austin, 2000a; 2000b) or finding the most effective way of co-creation of value (Austin & Seitani, 2012). Research on why collaborations happen is largely scattered with researchers looking at isolated causes of collaboration like reputation and image improvement (Kourula & Halme, 2008; Stuart, 2000); employee motivation, retention, increased customer patronage and appreciation by investors (Austin, 1998). There have been calls for more in-depth researches exploring the factors that determine how collaborations between corporates and NPOs are formed (Fairfield & Wing, 2008).

People 'socially' and 'symbolically' construct and sustain their 'organization realities' (Gioia & Pitre, 1990), which help them retain a meaningful character and give them a sense of direction. An important purpose of human resource management is to create and maintain this coherent understanding that sustains relationships and enable collective action. This paper uses sensemaking (Weick, 1995) as a theoretical base to suggest that the value system in organizations form the interpretive frame of reference through which the management and employees look at the current working environment which greatly influences the way they take decisions and the HR practices that they employ. We propose that the HR practice that gets adopted in an organization depends on the value system that an organization has, which in turn influence the motivations for collabora-

tion with NPOs thereby resulting in different types of business - NPO partnerships.

“The cornerstone for building a richer value exchange is the identification of overlapping missions and compatible values” (Austin, 2000b: 24). In the context of Business - NPO collaboration, the present research provides a framework that enables businesses to opt for the collaborative strategy that fits their values and human resource practices. It draws from Austin’s (2000a, 2000b) research on strategic collaboration between non-profits and businesses to suggest which partnering style would be the most likely to fulfil collaboration motivation for Businesses.

Organizational Values

Core values are the fundamental reasons why people unite for a common purpose giving an organization its “timeless character” (Collins & Porras, 1996). These values guide the actions and decisions of organizational members and form an important part of their organizational identity (Grant, 2010). Organizational values are shared and accepted norms (Argandona, 2003) that suggest what is expected of organizational members and how the allocation of resources shall happen (Edwards & Cable, 2009).

Values define the ethical character of organizations describing what ends are worth pursuing and what means are admissible (Enz, 1988). Values manifest as work climate which forms ‘psychologically meaningful’ description of prac-

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tices (Schneider, 1975). In their research on ethical climates, Victor and Cullen (1988: 102) posit that “organizational norms have an ethical basis” which inform members of the organization what they can do and what they ought to do. They show that ethical criteria used for organizational decision making could be of mainly three types - ‘egoism’, ‘benevolence’ and ‘principles’. The value of egoism is largely concerned with company profit and efficiency while the value of benevolence and principles are more to do with team interest, professional codes and social responsibility. Organizations seek to achieve multiple goals, but these values are reflected in whatever decision is taken, whatever strategy is formulated and whatever practices are adopted.

Human Resource (HR) Bundles of Practices

Research largely supports that human resources are a source of long-term competitive advantage for a firm (Wright, McMahan & McWilliams, 1994; Huselid, 1995) and that human resource management practices and systems enhance organizational performance (Schuler & Jackson, 2005). Human Resource Management (HRM) is a broad term that encompasses - HR practices like recruitment, selection, compensation, performance management, rewards and recognition. HR policies which direct and also

constrain the development of specific practices and HR philosophies which specify values that inform both policies and practices (Jackson & Schuler, 1995). Jackson and Schuler further suggest that these practices, policies and philosophy comprise a system that attracts, develops, motivates and retains employees who ensure effective functioning and survival of the organization.

The importance of HRM in the fulfilment of strategy has gained a foothold in both strategy and HRM literature. “The strategic perspective of HR, which has been labeled strategic human resource management (SHRM)” seeks to demonstrate how HRM practices impact organizational performance (Delery & Doty, 1996: 802). SHRM categorizes the modes of theorizing into universalistic, contingency and configurational approaches (Delery & Doty, 1996; Gooderham, Parry & Ringdal, 2008). Universalistic theories concern themselves with the best HR practices that are generalizable and promote organizational success (Huselid, 1999; Pfeffer, 1994). Gooderham et al. (2008) reject the universal applicability of HR practices and contend that universalistic theories fail to take into account the firm context. Contingency theory posits that HR policies need to be in synch with other aspects of the organization like ‘strategic position’ in order to be effective (Delery & Doty, 1996). The configurational perspective moves away from a bivariate contingency theory (Doty & Glick, 1994) to a more holistic inquiry that seeks to identify “unique patterns of factors” or HR bundles that together are responsible

for maximal performance (Delery & Doty, 1996).

Previous research combines interrelated HR practices into bundles (MacDuffie, 1995) and categorizes them as ‘Calculative’ and ‘Collaborative’ HR bundles (Gooderham et al. 1999). Calculative practices are mainly ‘efficiency-seeking’ which focus on assessing employee’s performance and then rewarding the individual accordingly. The main assumption behind a calculative approach is that systems designed to reward individual performance will cumulatively add up to give an overall better performance (Poutsma et al., 2006). Poutsma et al. further elaborate that this approach involves individualized reward systems and individual performance appraisal mechanisms. Gooderham et al. (1999) specify that collaborative practices have a more humanistic and developmental focus, in which employees are considered ‘active partners’ and not ‘passive inputs’. Such practices aim to foster ‘employer-employee mutuality of interest’ (Gooderham et al., 2008 :3). In a collaborative approach, employees are viewed as participants in decision making and the focus is on cooperation and communication (Poutsma et al., 2006).

Business – NPO Collaboration

Business and NPO collaborations are becoming increasingly common the world over. These alliances are not only emerging because of compliance with CSR mandates imposed by law but also because businesses are re-examining their traditional practices and looking for

newer ways of engaging with their communities that have higher social impact and greater corporate relevance (Austin, 2000b).

Austin (2000b) categorizes the partnerships between businesses and NPOs on the basis of degree and form of interactions as philanthropic, transactional and integrative which he calls a 'collaboration continuum' on which collaboration may evolve. Austin further describes a philanthropic relationship as one in which businesses assume largely the role of a charitable donor and the NPO is the recipient of financial aid and other resources. Such collaborations are "highly circumscribed in terms of resources deployed and points of interaction" (Austin, 2000b:21). In a transactional relationship, there is a higher degree of interaction but limited mainly to specific events like event sponsorships, paid service arrangements, cause-related marketing (Austin, 2000b). For example, organizing a marathon for an NPO that deals with disabled children for spreading awareness. The business not only sponsors the event but also helps through its human resources in organizing and managing the event while at the same time uses the opportunity for reputation building and marketing. Austin describes an integrative relationship as one in which it resembles a "highly integrated joint venture that is central to both organizations' strategies" (2000b: 26). The collaboration experiences more collective and integrated action.

In order to develop a holistic conceptualization of business - NPO col-

laboration, it is very important to understand the specific reasons for these collaborations to come into being. When a business envisions collaborating with an NPO, it has certain collaboration motivations which may range from compliance to mutually solving a societal or environmental problem. It can even be inward-looking and as profound as the development of employees and co-creating knowledge bases.

Research on why business - NPO collaborations happen is largely scattered with researchers looking at isolated causes of collaboration like reputation and image improvement (Kourula & Halme, 2008; Stuart, 2000); connecting with stakeholders (Austin, 2000b); co-creation of knowledge (Murphy et al., 2012), increasing motivation of employees, retention of employees, increased customer patronage and appreciation by investors (Austin, 1998). The Corporate - NGO Partnerships Barometer (2014) lists the following as the reasons why companies partner with NGOs - achieving organizational reputation and greater credibility, long term stability and impact, developing innovative ways of dealing with complex problems, access to people and contacts, human resource development, effectiveness and efficiency, access to knowledge and access to new markets.

From the scattered literature on collaboration motivations, we observe two distinct sets of characteristics emerge. One is short term based on a single event like access to new markets, access to partner's knowledge, reputation building, compliance, etc. We call such motivations

to collaborate 'Episodic' in nature because points of interactions are limited and they are based on a short-term horizon. These motivations are transactional in nature with a clear view of what the business is giving to the relationship and what it will get back. The other type of collaboration motivations is 'Enduring' in nature. These are more pervasive and far-reaching mainly to do with long-term stability and impact, co-creation of knowledge not limited to the event at hand but with respect to solving some other complex problems later on, development of human resource by increasing their overall motivation, etc. Organizations may have multiple collaboration motivations, but these can be largely put into either of the two categories.

Adoption of HR bundles and collaboration motivations lay deeply embedded in the internal value system of the organization.

The three streams of literature on organizational values, adoption of HR bundles and business – NPO partnership appear in the large part staggered and not talking to each other. An important question for researchers and practitioners alike is to understand how these three independent concepts are connected and influence each other. Using organizational values as the starting point, we elucidate on how they relate to the adoption of a particular HR bundle and how that, in turn, influences Business-NPO collaboration motivation and actual collaboration. We draw upon the lens of sensemaking to explicate these relation-

ships and propose that adoption of HR bundles and collaboration motivations lay deeply embedded in the internal value system of the organization.

Sensemaking

Organizational sensemaking is a fundamental social process through which organization members interpret their environment through interactions with others. It results in the construction of relevant narratives that allows them to comprehend the world and act collectively (Isabella, 1990; Weick & Roberts, 1993). It is a critical organizational activity (Weick, 1995). Top managers typically engage in sensemaking activities such as environmental scanning and issue interpretation which significantly influence organizational decisions (Gioia & Thomas, 1996). Sensemaking considerably affects how other stakeholders "construct" their identities (Pratt, 2000), preserve their organization's image (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991), and respond to organizational crises (Gephart, 1993).

When new strategies are formulated, changes are brought about or the organization is altered in some way, members may find that their existing references are no longer sufficient to make sense of the situation (Soderberg, 2003). In such situations they need "something that preserves plausibility and coherence, something that is reasonable and memorable, something that embodies past experience and expectations, something which resonates with other people, something that can be constructed retrospectively, something that captures both feeling and

thought, something that allows for embellishment to fit current oddities”. (Weick, 1995:60-61).

Organizational Values & Adoption of HR Bundles

Values are fundamental in shaping strategies and are responsible for long term success (Argandoña, 2003). Organizational values provide the frame of reference to look at a new strategy in order to make sense of it. Whatever HRM practices get adopted in an organization are also a function of their values. Both strategy and HRM practices evolve in the larger ambit of organizational values which provide organizational members coherent and plausible explanation of current and future events.

Values and ideologies make the interpretation of the environment and strategy formulation possible. Strategy making, according to the interpretive model, is concerned with ‘metaphors’ and ‘frames of reference’ which allow the members of the organization to make plausible sense of the organization and its environment (Hart, 1992). Hart further states that in this way, stakeholders are motivated to act in ways that are expected to produce favorable results for the organization. In a similar vein, the formal HR policies and the informal HR practices evolve or are designed within the scope of the organizational values in order to keep people inspired to work towards the organizational goal. The senior management formulates strategies by making sense of the greater organizational purpose, which is guided and in-

formed by organizational values. They interpret the environment in the context of the organization and decide if changes are to be made in the current scheme of things. Organizational values permeate the entire organization and serve as an interpretive frame of reference through which sense is made of the working environment.

Previous research suggests the adoption of calculative or collaborative HR bundles depends on the strategic configuration of organizations (Delery & Doty, 1996) and institutional factors like labor representative bodies in firms, legislative pressures and management autonomy (Gooderham et al., 1999; Poutsma et al. 2006). Erstwhile research on HR bundles has ignored the role of organizational values in the adoption of specific practices. We propose that the adoption of a particular HR bundle is done with a view of internal value fit with the organization which enables the employees to make plausible sense of the HRM practices.

If practices that are adopted are not in sync with values, they are rather short-lived.

Whenever HR practices are adopted, they are done with a mindset of preserving the existing interpretive scheme employed by employees and other stakeholders in the organization. Paull, Boudville and Sitlington (2013) argue that sensemaking can be used as a diagnostic tool to comprehend - “what is going on here” and to determine - “what action is needed”. Adoption of HR prac-

tices is largely consistent with the value system of the organization. We argue that if practices that are adopted are not in sync with values, they are rather short-lived. Weick (1995) explains that sensemaking is largely social and enactive of sensible environments. The organizational values provide routines and scripts for appropriate conduct. If the organization is guided by predominantly economic logic, the HR practices will reflect the same. The focus will be on calculative bundles like performance-based rewards, formal evaluations, training, etc. Therefore, the company with a value system based on egoism (Victor & Cullen, 1988) focusing heavily on company profit and efficiency will adopt more calculative HR bundles. If the organization has a humanistic or mutual development perspective more collaborative bundles are adopted like more instances of strategy briefing to various stakeholders, participative decision making, etc. As a result, a company which emphasizes on values like benevolence and principles (Victor & Cullen, 1988) as ethical criteria for decision making delving into team interest, social responsibility, and professional codes, is more likely to adopt more collaborative HR bundles.

It is not to undermine the importance of any of the two bundles with respect to organizational performance. Neither does it mean that the bundles are mutually exclusive (Poutsma et al., 2006). At any time both kinds of bundles will be operative in an organization, but the focus will be determined by what core values are embedded in the organization. Organizational values will help the employees to make

plausible sense of the HR bundle that gets adopted. If an organization that has an economic philosophy, starts to employ collaborative HR bundles, employees will become skeptical. And if an organization with humanistic philosophy adopts calculative HR bundles in a large way, employees will get frustrated.

Proposition 1a): Organizations with a value system based on egoism are more likely to adopt calculative HR Bundles.

Proposition 1b): Organizations with a value system based on benevolence or principles are more likely to adopt collaborative HR Bundles.

HR Bundles & Business – NPO Collaboration

People ‘socially’ and ‘symbolically’ construct and sustain their ‘organization realities’ (Gioia & Pitre, 1990), which help them retain a meaningful character and give them a sense of direction. Businesses and NPOs work with very different motivations. Businesses aim at maximizing shareholder’s wealth while NPOs serve public rather than private interests (Hansmann, 1996). Since both the organizations have different philosophies guiding each one of them, it is very important to see how sensemaking takes place when these two collaborate.

Businesses and NPOs work with very different motivations.

Weick (1995) suggested that sensemaking is retrospective in nature.

We rely on past experiences to interpret current events. In order to give meaning to the present, we compare it with our past. When organizational stakeholders make sense of the collaboration motivations with NPOs and decide on what course of action they should follow, they look at how the internal practices of the organization are structured because that gives them a sense of reasonability and coherence. The other characteristic of sensemaking that Weick (1995) explains is that it is 'grounded in identity construction'. He suggests that the way we see the world is influenced by our identity and the factors that have shaped our internal context. The collaboration motivations that are in sync with prevalent HR practices in an organization will resonate with management and employees in the organization.

Earlier we propose that organizations with an egoistic value system will tend to focus more on calculative HR bundles. The same approach will be reflected in their partnership with the NPO. Their motivations for collaboration with an NGO will be episodic i.e. limited to short-term horizons like access to markets, people and knowledge; compliance; building reputation, etc. Calculative HR bundles will provide the businesses with a coherent frame of reference to make sense of episodic collaboration motivations.

In the previous section, we suggested that organizations which adopt collaborative HR bundles have a value system based on benevolence or principles. These practices are aimed at forging psy-

chological links between the organization and the employees by promoting the goals of both the employee and employer (Gooderham et al., 2008). Collaborative HR bundles engender a common sense of purpose. The same will be reflected in their collaboration motivations with NPOs. When such organizations partner with NPOs, they would most likely opt for enduring collaboration motivations that will help them in generating long term stability and impact, developing innovative solutions to complex issues based on mutual cooperation, developing their human resources and achieving greater credibility.

Proposition 2a): Organizations with a focus on calculative HR bundles are more likely to have episodic collaboration motivations for partnering with NPOs.

Proposition 2b): Organizations with a focus on collaborative HR bundles are more likely to have enduring collaboration motivations for partnering with NPOs.

Maitlis (2005) points out to an important aspect of sensemaking that it produces accounts or 'ordered representations' and the actions that are based on these accounts. She further explains that these accounts allow individuals to work, decide and negotiate in the working environment. Organizations with a value system based on egoism, which have adopted calculative HR bundles, and which have episodic collaboration motivations will enter into a philanthropic or transactional relationship with NPOs rather than going for a higher-order inte-

grative relationship. This will provide them with plausible accounts of how collaboration with NPOs is to be shaped and taken forward.

In a philanthropic relationship, NPOs generally limit themselves to submitting a grant proposal to the business organization and then acknowledging the donation (Austin, 2000b). For a business, these relationships are relatively simple to administer and do not require a high degree of involvement between the two parties. Businesses consider them as a “peripheral part of their activities and minimize their time investment” (Austin, 2000b:22). In transactional relationships, the number and points of interaction increase but largely remain limited to specific events. Volunteers from businesses interact with NPOs and work on a common platform to deliver on each other’s expectations. We propose that organizations with episodic collaboration motivations will enter into philanthropic or transactional collaboration with NPOs. The collaboration may not evolve into a higher stage because the value system of the organization is based on egoism.

Organizations with episodic collaboration motivations will enter into philanthropic or transactional collaboration with NPOs.

Similarly, organizations which look for more avenues of interactions and want to connect directly involving important resource exchanges to increase the magnitude of benefits will make attempts to understand each other’s vision. In an in-

tegrative relationship, individual value creation is replaced with joint value creation, the culture of the two collaborating organizations begin to influence each other and to manage the growing complexity processes and systems are instituted for mutual exchange of ideas, values, capabilities, resources, skills, and outcomes (Austin, 2000b). Therefore, organizations with enduring collaboration motivations are more likely to enter into integrative relationships with NPOs. This will help them construct accounts that allow them to comprehend the relationship and act collectively to make the collaboration a success.

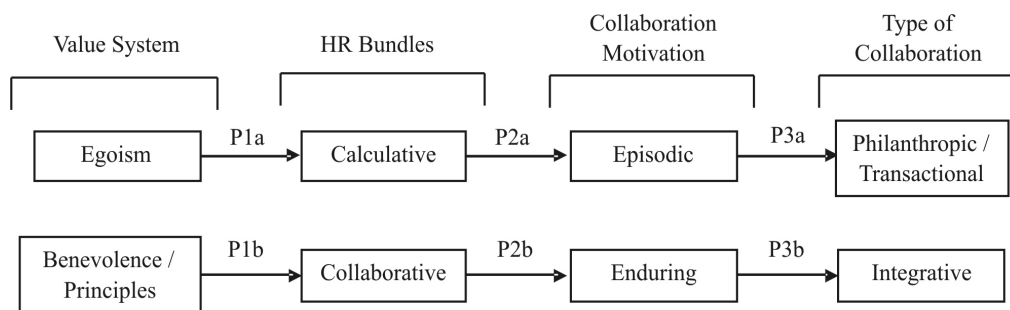
Organizations with enduring collaboration motivations are more likely to enter into integrative relationships with NPOs.

Proposition 3a): Organizations with episodic collaboration motivation are more likely to enter into philanthropic or transactional collaboration with NPOs.

Proposition 3b): Organizations with enduring collaboration motivation are more likely to enter into integrative collaborations with NPOs.

Discussion

A major purpose of this research is to understand how organizational values and internal HR practices influence collaboration motivations and types of collaboration with NPOs. Using the sensemaking paradigm we proposed that organizations with a specific value sys-

Fig. 1 Conceptual Model

tem adopt particular HR bundles. Focus on a specific type of HR bundle will influence collaboration motivations and these, in turn, will decide what type of collaboration will eventually happen between the business and the NPO, as demonstrated in fig. 1.

The first major contribution of our study is the simultaneous investigation of internal practices and external collaboration drivers. Previous research on business - NPO collaboration is normative in approach suggesting stages of 'collaboration continuum' (Austin, 2000a, 2000b) or finding the most effective way of co-creation of value (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012). We linked the internal HR practices to collaboration motivations and proposed that not all business - NPO partnerships will evolve into a single type of relationship and that there is no best form which collaborations need to finally assume.

The second contribution is to classify the various reasons why businesses and NPOs collaborate into two types - episodic and enduring collaboration motivations. Although these reasons individu-

ally have received scholarly attention, research has not consolidated the findings. This paper suggests that the HR practices adopted in an organization point towards what collaboration motivations a business will have when it seeks to partner with an NPO. We propose that organizations with a value system based on egoism will adopt calculative HR bundles, which will in turn lead them to have an episodic collaboration motivation and will result in philanthropic/transactional collaboration with NPOs. Organizations with a value system based on benevolence and principles will adopt collaborative HR bundles. These organizations will have enduring collaboration motivation and enter into integrative collaboration with NPOs. Our model and propositions lend themselves to empirical testing. We provide theoretical backdrop and practical clarifications as to how the model can be empirically applied and tested. We encourage future studies to consider the empirical and practical implications of our model, as well its potential limitations.

Another contribution is using the sensemaking paradigm to unravel the linkage between organizational values, adop-

tion of HR bundles and business – NPO collaboration. We propose that both strategy and HRM practices evolve in the larger ambit of organizational values so that management and employees make plausible sense of what is going on in the organization. These organizational values also form the frame of reference for deciding the nature of collaboration that the business forms with the NPOs to fulfil their social responsibilities.

Overall, our study integrates the isolated research streams on HRM and business - NPO collaboration. It also proposes sensemaking as a reasonable theoretical underpinning to substantiate the overall framework that highlights the importance of organizational values and internal practices in understanding the collaboration motivations and type of collaborations that a business will seek when it enters into a partnership with an NPO.

Implications for Practice

Our study highlights the role of organizational values in making sense of HR practices, collaboration motivations and type of collaborations that a business seeks to establish with NPOs. Whenever a collaboration is to be operationalized organization values shall be kept in mind to see if it provides people a coherent and plausible understanding. For businesses, the study suggests that if their organizational values and HR bundles are of a certain kind, they would be better off by having those kinds of collaboration with NPOs that are in alignment with their values. Our study suggests that an isolated practice which does not tie in

with the larger organizational philosophy is bound to fail.

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Financing is a vital need for NPOs. Our study informs NPOs by suggesting that not all businesses are looking for the same level of interaction and engagement. NPOs shall keep their visions broad enough to accommodate multiple businesses with varying collaboration motivations in their portfolio and engage with them at different levels. They shall have the conviction of purpose and yet the flexibility to accommodate the requirement of businesses in order to get monetary and human help from them.

Conclusion

Business - NPO collaborations can go a long way in solving some of the social and environmental problems that the world is facing today. Given the immense contributions of such collaborations, it is critical that scholars develop a good understanding of the field based on theory and empirical evidence. We call upon researchers to test our model with empirical data. It is important to understand what drives collaborations and what type of collaborations are preferred by businesses. Our paper suggests that organizational values and internal HR practices play a substantial role in determining collaboration motivations and type of collaboration businesses seek when they partner with NPOs. NPOs shall keep

these motivations in mind and forge suitable collaborations with the business for their long-term sustainability and lasting impact.

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