

6/98

Concept Paper and Annotation for Community Support - B21

According to Besser (1997) the Collective Action Framework posits that people act collectively for the public good. Businesses, like individuals, are influenced by communities that promote a sense of "collective identity, cohesion, norms of reciprocity, trust and involvement" (p 7). In addition existing research has addressed social responsibility from the perspective of big business. The family business research project involves businesses of all sizes, from the largest to the smallest, in addressing perceptions of community support (B21).

The literature cites numerous examples of the need for support from the community, particularly in rural communities. Communities traditionally dependent on farming have had to shift relationships from individual farm owners to understanding and supporting changes that affect retail businesses, all in an effort to maintain the rural community through support of local business (Dickerson, K. G., Dillard, B. & Froke, B., 1994). A sense of community is believed to be promoted by the involvement of local business owners in civic activities for the purpose of business networking. Other factors inherent in community support include civic engagement through voluntary associations and church attendance. Small retail businesses are believed to encourage community support by providing an environment for informal public involvement. This "social glue" promotes support to business and population alike and maintains communities (Irwin, M., Tolbert, C., & Lyson, T., 1997, p. 44).

Community support as defined by businesses in the literature includes availability of employees (Annual Survey of Small Businesses, 1997), regulations and taxation (Annual Survey of Small Business, 1997), availability of support services (including child care and transportation), financing and marketing connections (Johnston, F., 1995; Leistriz, F. L., Ekstrom, B. L., & Zetocha, D. F., 1990; Raheim, S., 1997; Developing Entrepreneurial Economies in Rural Regions, 1998; Walstad, W. B., & Kourilsky, M., 1996), Internet access (Hixon, P., 1998), competition or customer support (Gaskill, L. R., Van Auken, H. E., & Manning, R. A., 1993), and asset identification (Page-Adams, D., & Sherradan, M., 1997), and networking associations. The literature suggests that business type and size have little to do with accessing or contributing to community support (Besser, 1997). Accessing agency or organizational support services (B17) may be related to perceptions satisfaction with community support. Two-thirds of home based businesses surveyed in Nebraska had not sought agency assistance and 40% had sought some sort of external assistance (Payne, K., & Lebsack, D., 1992).

Little is known about the perceptions of community support from family businesses and how those perceptions are related to business manager and household manager. Understanding perceptions of community support will enable businesses and communities to address methods of strengthening the bond that supports both entities.

Annual Survey of Small Business. (1997). Dun & Bradstreet Corp. New Jersey: Murray Hill.

Besser, T. L. (1997). The significance of community to business social responsibility. Unpublished paper, Iowa State University.

The author focuses on the relationship between business and community. She assesses the impact of business operators' perceptions about norms of collective action in a community on the level of their support for and commitment to their communities. Perceptions are found in her study to be better predictors of business operators' commitment to and support for community than demographics. Results suggest that a community's norms of collective action are more important predictors of a business's support for a community than characteristics of business owners.

social capital

Concept paper for computers and technology questions B22, B23, and B24

Technology has taken giant strides in the last 20 years. Utilization is not limited to large business, but involves functions in all business sizes and types. The development of the Internet has created a sense of urgency for businesses seeking to expand markets. Yet, businesses vary in their acceptance, adoption, and utilization of computer technology. Questions B22, 23 and 24 address the use of computers and the Internet in family businesses. Inclusion of these three questions addressing the use of computer technology in the family business is based on the trend toward the general availability of technology and the rapidly advancing "information age". These questions will aid in understanding the adoption and application of technology and its relationship to types of ownership, owner (minority and women), business size, business management, decision making, and communication and relationships to family functioning.

The literature indicates that adoption and utilization within businesses of information technology or computer technology is influenced by several factors. The Theory of Planned Behavior (Harrison, D. A., Mykytyn, P. P., & Riemenschneider, C. K., 1997) has been used to explain the adoption of information technology (IT) within small businesses. Among the variables identified in the adoption decision process are perceived attitudes, social expectations, and perceptions of control to overcome obstacles (Harrison, D. A., Mykytyn, P. P., & Riemenschneider, C. K., 1997; Iacovou, C. L., Benbasat, I., & Dexter, A. S., 1995; Stoneman, P., & Kwon, M. J., 1996); individuals' perceptions related to ease of use and usefulness to the individual and business (Iacovou, C. L., Benbasat, I., & Dexter, A. S., 1995; Igbaria, M., Zinatelli, N., Cragg, P., & Cavaye, A. L. M., 1997; Kirby, D. A., & Turner, M. J. S., 1993; Thong, J. & Yap, C. S., 1995); business size (Harrison, et al, 1997; Iacovou, et al, 1995; Kaplan, Johnson, Pearce, & George, 1997; Variyam, J. N. & Kraybill, D. S., 1993); human capital (Variyam, J. N. & Kraybill, D. S. 1993); business sector (Julien, P. A. & Raymond, L., 1994); business structure and management/owner gender (Julien, P. A. & Raymond, L., 1994; Variyam, J. N. & Kraybill, D. S., 1993); strategic plan and timing (Julien, P. A. & Raymond, L., 1994); and life cycle stage (Swanson, C. E., Kopecky, K. J. & Tucker, A., 1997).

Various types of computerized information technologies are available to businesses. Only when a technology is adopted does it become useful in the business and to the individual (i.e., business owner/manager) (Swanson, C. E., Kopecky, K. J., & Tucker, A., 1997). It is evident that the Internet will reshape how business is conducted. Frank (1997) believes that businesses electing not use electronic commerce will become "irrelevant, because competing in the new millennium without electronic commerce capabilities will be similar to trying to compete today without a sales force or a telephone" (p. 30). New business opportunities await those businesses that become adept at Internet trade. Until recently, Internet technology was not recognized as critical to competitive advantage for small firms (Kaplan, T. E., Johnson, I. W., Pearce, C. G., & George, G., 1995), yet even the smallest of businesses, home based businesses, are finding they can successfully compete because of advanced computer technology and skills (Bank Marketing, 1996). Access and use of the Internet and World Wide Web (WWW) home pages is changing rapidly. Ten years ago only one half of small businesses used computers in conducting business. In 1996 74% used computers (Friedman, 1997, p 18) and 26% used an Internet service (p 18). Use of WWW home pages increased from 13% in 1996 to 30% in 1997 (p. 18). A 1997 study of men and women-owned home based businesses in 5 midwestern states revealed that 73% of these businesses used computers and the majority believe the Internet is becoming more important to business success (Rosenthal, B., 1997).

Family businesses must be understood from the standpoint of adoption behavior that impacts how products are marketed (Wiefels, P., 1997). Information technology (IT) is used to communicate and

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Prepared by Pamela J. Brown, Ph.D. Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist-Consumer Sciences, Texas Agricultural Extension Service, The Texas A&M University System.