

Workshop: Vusiness [Business & Values]

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Abstract

International financial crises have a strong impact on economic activity, destroying thousands of jobs, increasing unemployment and causing a deterioration in social conditions. Globalization is increasing the unbalanced use of non-renewable finite energy resources and is not contributing to the equitable distribution of wealth, but rather generating macroeconomic imbalances. Automation and robotization can involve the massive destruction of jobs. Climate change represents a pressing threat with potentially irreversible effects. These aspects highlight the vulnerability of the current economic system and the need for companies with values: open, democratic, sustainable, inclusive and technologically intelligent companies that inspire the future. Given this situation, this workshop draws together 30 to 50 people to work on and debate companies with values in a participatory, active manner in working groups, with the aim of overcoming myths, prejudices and stereotypes and finding solutions related to different areas of business.

Keywords: workshop, companies with values, sustainability and inclusiveness

1. Introduction

International financial crises are once again revealing the vulnerability of the current economic system. The wave of recessions is becoming increasingly frequent, profound and global, which is exacerbating poverty, insecurity and exclusion in society (Hadad Hadad & Valdés Llanes, 2010). Employment, the distribution of wealth and macroeconomic equilibria are strongly influenced by relations with the international system. Globalization raises fundamental questions, the resolution of which depends on development and integration. The recession has impacted economic activity by destroying thousands of jobs, increasing unemployment and causing a significant deterioration in the living conditions of a significant part of the population (Commoner, 2015).

In the current environment, companies are increasingly adopting strategies related to the relocation of production in countries with low production costs, fostering a type of zero-quality employment that does not guarantee workers escape from poverty. Recent studies estimate that 168 million children work in the world, half risking their lives, and many of them do so in regions devastated by conflicts and catastrophes (United-Nations, 2015).

According to Echazarreta and Costa (2018), climate change represents a pressing threat with potentially irreversible effects. In the current economic environment, globalization significantly increases the unbalanced use of non-renewable finite energy resources. Energy consumption has increased dramatically due to transportation costs and the use of less efficient technology. In contrast to the current economic growth model, strong reductions in global emissions are urgently needed to address climate change and promote development. Otherwise, the uncertainty associated with technological evolution may lead to ecological ruin.

Lombardero (2015) has stated that: “Technology is the great trigger of economic progress. At the beginning of the current decade, emerging digital technologies –mobility, Cloud Computing, Big Data, the Internet of Everything (IoE), Smart Cities and Industry 4.0– comprise the group of technologies that make digital transformation possible for

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the traditional industrial and services companies that provide 90% of employment, and with this they are paving the way to the Fourth Industrial Revolution or the Digital Age. The digital age [...] is going to allow the development of a new economic model for Europe that will allow us to escape from the current crisis.”

However, it is important to note that estimates calculate 47 percent of current jobs may be susceptible to replacement by automation, a factor that could lead to a very serious and socially alarming situation of unknown dimensions. This is why, according to Álvarez (2017), there now exists a need and a challenge to “create employment in new sectors, products or services in the face of the massive destruction of jobs resulting from automation and the advent of a robotic era; make changes to the traditional employment model manifested in a new direction of human resources with the risk of a more pronounced individualization and perpetual availability of time; and address obstacles to the viability of social security and welfare systems in the face of insufficient contributions”.

Research by Eguiguren (2011) concludes that the current economic and social situation has accelerated the search for alternative economic models that minimize the effects of the crises and overcome the shortcomings of the current system. According to this author, companies are required that act in the marketplace with a sense of responsibility, transparency, democracy, participation and ethics; companies led by corporate policies and values based on of a sustainable business culture at a social, economic and environmental level”.

It is within this context that the **Vusiness model [that is, “Business” with a “V” for values]** has been conceived. A model promoting open, democratic, sustainable, inclusive companies that make intelligent use of technology, and which must serve to build a better world. The project is promoted by the ARPA Research Group (*Grupo de Análisis de la Recepción de las Pantallas Audiovisuales*), which belongs to the University of Girona’s Philology and Communications Department.

The current environment requires sustainable companies capable of eradicating and minimizing the effects of crises and overcoming the shortcomings of the current economic model. That is why our mission is to accelerate the necessary transition towards a more just and equitable world.

In order to compile the theoretical corpus that supports the Vusiness model, since 2015 we have been conducting a thorough, structured and methodical bibliographic review to select the most relevant studies, with the aim of laying the scientific basis for the creation of this alternative model of companies with values.

During this period, three Forums for reflection and debate have been held on the subject of inclusive, open and democratic companies. The first was entitled “People, the core of companies”, the second “Smart companies, generating future” and the third “Sustainable companies, facing up to climate change”. In each of these, a dozen experts from different institutions and companies reflected on each central axis: inclusiveness, technology and sustainability.

The model has been presented at different universities to propose collaborations: Harvard University, MIT-Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Emerson College, Boston College and Suffolk University in Boston. Currently, 50 professionals are jointly creating a Valometer, a tool to measure 50 business values linked to identity, administration and management, people, sustainability and smart technology in companies.

2. Description of the workshop

The workshop brings together 30 to 50 people to work on and debate companies with values in a participatory, active manner in working groups, with the aim of overcoming myths, prejudices and stereotypes and finding solutions related to different areas of business: identity, administration and management, people, sustainability and technology.

2.1. General aim of the model

In line with Stafford-Smith, et al. (2017) and taking into consideration the challenges defined in the new sustainable development agenda approved by the United Nations in September 2015, the following general aims are proposed for the Vusiness Model:

- To promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and dignified work for all.
- To promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.
- To guarantee sustainable consumption and production patterns.
- To guarantee inclusive, equitable and quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
- To achieve gender equality.
- To adopt urgent measures to combat climate change and its effects.

- To guarantee access to affordable, safe, and sustainable modern energy.
- To promote fair and inclusive societies.

2.2. Specific aims of the workshop

The main specific aim of the workshop is to raise awareness about the possibility of generating a model for companies with values that act as an alternative capable of overcoming the shortcomings of the current economic model, which has unleashed global economic and financial crises. A series of concrete aims are specified for different areas of business.

Inclusivity

At the level of inclusivity, in line with the conclusions of Echazarreta and Costa (2017a), the following specific aims are proposed:

- To overcome the current economic system, which is a source of inequality and exclusion.
- To promote inclusive businesses that generate opportunities for development and aim to improve the quality of life of people who suffer from social exclusion.
- To describe the main characteristics of inclusive companies, which are based on four fundamental principles: values, team management, corporate social responsibility and responsible marketing.
- To promote inclusive businesses that contribute to the common good, championed by leaders that promote the use of information technology and communication as a means to improve citizens' quality of life.

Sustainability

Regarding the environment and mobility, in line with the conclusions of Echazarreta and Costa (2018), the following aims are proposed:

- To describe the main characteristics of sustainable companies, based on ideals and values committed to developing the planet, consuming fewer resources than are generated.
- To promote renewable energy resources, sustainable development, preservation of the environment, responsible energy consumption, minimization of emissions, eco-efficiency and the circular economy at the environmental level
- With regards to mobility, to promote collective public transport, electric vehicles, clean and non-motorized mobility systems.
- To promote sustainable companies that combine business development with that of the environment and the protection of the planet.

Smart Technology

At the level of smart use of technology, in line with a study by Echazarreta and Costa (2017b), the workshop aims to:

- Inform attendees on the effects of the global economic and financial crises that have accelerated the search for alternative business models.
- Describe the main characteristics of smart companies capable of overcoming the shortcomings of the current economic system.
- Promote smart companies championed by leaders that promote the use of information technology and communication as a means of improving citizens' quality of life.
- Nurture companies and consumers that act in the free market in a responsible, ethical, supportive and fair manner, capable of making their economic growth compatible with the distribution of wealth.

2.3. Methodology

Presentation

The facilitators will start the workshop by welcoming and thanking attendees.

With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation [complete workshop attached as a PowerPoint file], the facilitators will **briefly introduce themselves and explain the Vusiness project**, emphasizing that it promotes companies with values as a sustainable business model, and the need for this in the face of phenomena such as globalization, economic and financial crises, child labor and climate change. [A PDF file is attached with the workshop presentation and the Vusiness model. Download file]. (Estimated time: around 10 minutes).

Introduction to the Vusiness concept

Next, participants will be invited to participate in a **game of Kahoot!**, a very useful on-line tool for learning concepts in an entertaining way. The game entails each participant answering the 20 test questions that appear projected on the screen with their Smartphone; these then lead to discussion and debate. The workshop game is called “Vusiness Model Presentation” and can be accessed after filling out the platform’s registration form at www.kahoot.com. Attendees access the game via the website kahoot.it. It allows a quick tour via some surprising and alarming data related to the areas that motivated the creation of the Vusiness project. Kahoot! rewards those who achieve a higher score for successful answers and speed by placing them at the top of the ranking, which always engages attendees and encourages participation (estimated time: around 20 minutes).

Myths

Once the game has finished, participants will be divided into 5 groups. Groups of 5 or 6 are recommended to facilitate the participation of all members. At random, each group is then assigned a document with **myths about the environment, women, immigration, technology and entrepreneurs**. By discussing and reflecting on these myths, the members of the group write an opportunity or a problem for companies and businesses related to each topic on a post-it. A single yellow post-it is recommended for each challenge or problem. After twenty minutes, a representative from each group is invited to explain the main challenges or problems for companies detected in a specific field [PDF document is attached with the myths. Download file]. (Estimated time: around 30 minutes).

Vusiness Categories

In the same groups, the following instructions are given: *take each post-it with an opportunity or problem and attach it to the category where it fits best: identity, administration and management, inclusiveness, sustainability and smart technology*. [PDF document is attached with the names of the categories to stick to a piece of cardboard. The participants attach the post-its with the challenges or problems to the card with the categories. Download file]. (Estimated time: around 5 minutes).

Solutions

Each group is randomly assigned a card with a category: **identity, administration and management, inclusiveness, sustainability** or **smart technology**. From there, the group has to propose solutions for each opportunity or problem. A single post-it of a color other than yellow is recommended for each solution. More than one solution can be given for each problem. After twenty minutes, a representative of each group is invited to explain the proposed solutions to each challenge or problem. (Estimated time: around 30 minutes).

Reflection and debate

After sharing solutions, the facilitators present the **Valometer**, an instrument used to measure companies’ values designed by a forum of 50 professionals from different fields and sectors of activity within the Vusiness project. During the presentation of this tool, the facilitators establish comparisons and parallels between the solutions proposed by the participants before the challenges and indicators defined by the Valometer. This opens a space for debate and reflection among the attendees (estimated time: around 25 minutes).

Collaboration proposals

In order to expand the base of people interested in contributing to raising awareness, training, disseminating or generating knowledge around the model of companies with values, the facilitators propose five forms of participation:

- **Core members:** Participate as a member in the project and be proactive and dynamic proposing new lines and activities.
- **Research:** Participate in specific research lines.
- **Projects:** Actively participate in educational, entrepreneurship and business projects.
- **Agreement:** Participate actively in campaigns, communication, creating material to be applied, knowledge transfer to society.
- **Scientific Committee:** Possibility of being invited by other universities as a visiting professor, reviewing articles, occasionally participating in research.

2.4. Length

The workshop has an approximate length of two hours.

2.5. Target audience

The profile of the target audience for the workshop would be:

- High school students taking a business subject
- Entrepreneurs
- Businesspeople
- Faculty
- Members of the public with an interest in the company sphere

3. Results

Each group presents the solutions to the challenges and problems arising from the reflections on the myths and prejudices in the first part of the workshop. If a group is not inspired to propose solutions, the workshop facilitator can suggest some solutions as an example. The solutions usually proposed by business area include the following:

- **Identity:** value proposition, entrepreneur, mission, vision, values, benefits, responsibility, relationships with the environment, transparency and ethics.
- **Administration and management:** solution, benefit, market segment (customer), channels, indicators, available resources, indicators, costs and revenues.
- **People:** leadership, teamwork, fair remuneration, equality, medical and health care, collaboration, updating and recycling, professional development, relations with the community and health and welfare programs.
- **Sustainability:** environment (energy generation with photovoltaic panels, smart environmental sensor networks and smart metering, energy efficiency, integrated water cycle management and smart irrigation, efficient lighting, environmental protection, reduction, reuse, recycling and smart waste management) and mobility (smart public transport, toll control, access to restricted areas and smart parking, traffic management and fleet management, non-motorized mobility, electric vehicles, shared use, access to buildings with folding bicycles).
- **Technology:** open data, service and product management platform, digital commerce, digital marketing, advanced communications networks, social wifi and security (video surveillance, emergencies, heritage protection and infrastructures and cybersecurity).

4. Conclusions

Based on the interventions of all participants in the different workshops held using the Business model of companies with values, we can draw the following conclusions:

- The workshop gives participants a more in-depth look at concepts such as sustainability, inclusiveness and smart technology for combatting myths and prejudices around the environment, women, immigration, technology and entrepreneurs. The workshop concludes by proposing an approach to companies with values, which provide solutions to the challenges posed by globalization, international financial crises, automation and robotization and climate change.
- First of all, it highlights the need to seek out companies with sustainable, inclusive values that make an intelligent use of technology, in order to provide for a descriptive and in-depth analysis that facilitates understanding of the new model.
- Secondly, the results and conclusions are intended to represent some ways of raising awareness of and visualizing the need and possibility for transforming the current economic model, which generates such social imbalance and inequality. The results should be considered as preliminary and require confirmation in subsequent workshops. Research in this field should be constant and multidisciplinary.
- Thirdly, descriptive studies are needed that define quantitative and qualitative indicators on companies with values to facilitate their analysis and thus more easily raise awareness among, inform, advise, train and consolidate entrepreneurs, businesspeople and the population in general. Studies with experimental designs will then be needed to assess the results of the model.
- And finally, we recommend further development of didactic materials and informative and training contents for the new integrating model, in different formats and translated into several languages, in order to raise awareness, train and advise people on companies with values that are open, democratic, sustainable, inclusive, technologically smart and inspire the future.

The presentations and text documents necessary to carry out the workshop are available on the Society for Applied Anthropology website.

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