Corporate social responsibility is not just a trend or passing "movement" to improve society while engaging in business - many organizations today consider CSR to be high priority when it comes to the goals and strategies of their business plan. Society, as a whole, has placed increasing pressure on organizations large and small to focus their CSR efforts on causes that affect local communities, infrastructure and other societal contributions great and small (equality, pay equity, diversity, community growth and development, education, sustainability, etc.). Smart partnering or strategic alliances only make these CSR efforts more impactful and successful in the long run. It is very important that an organization focus on building a great, long-term relationship with the partner/stakeholder (whether that be a competitor, supplier, customer, or other business partner) because the more open and realistic each partner is within the relationship, the more successful and sustainable the partnership will be.

A strategic alliance is difficult to establish and maintain, much like most long-term relationships. Each entity needs to remain independent but find common ground to work together to identify each each other's weaknesses, strengths and how they can create value for each other. If the partners within the alliance are vastly different when it comes to running their businesses, it can be difficult to work together and may not be a great partnership. For example, Starbucks partners with both Target and Barnes & Noble - establishing space within most of their stores to run their business and encourage visitors to shop with a drink and snack in hand. If Starbucks did not have a big focus on CSR (they do), and happened to experience a viral social media mishap with an employee/customer or was found to be doing something very sinister with their business, both Target and Barnes & Noble would want to distance themselves from that relationship, if not sever ties altogether - and they would be affected by the negative impacts because they are considered to be "partners". Customers would then distance themselves from all three companies just because of the "guilty by association" aspect. In this case, all three organizations focus heavily on CSR within their respective organizations, but this is a great example of why corporate social responsibility is so important when it comes to partnering with another organization or establishing strategic alliances.

Businesses are scrutinized very closely by the public, the reputation and values of a company are important to consumers; CSR has become even more important to society so it is even more critical that companies working to form a strategic alliance are both keeping CSR a high priority themselves. "We live in a customer-centric and highly connected world where consumers not only want to feel good about their purchase but also want to make use of communication channels, like the social media, to share the story behind the purchase. And more than certainly, consumer sentiments can make or break businesses. Having a positive social purpose and a core message that resonates with the values of the community can be they key business differentiator." (Govindasamy, 2018)

References:

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