



ProBM 2

Citizenship and professional values

Understanding and Developing Business Models in the Globalisation Era

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Knowing and setting-up a business includes directing attention towards social and political aspects, since an entrepreneur is firstly a citizen and a member of a community, and together with one's own interest and gain, one also has to deserve the attention of one's community, to allow for the growth and prosperity of one's activity together with society. Paying attention to the inclusion of citizenship and professional values when setting up a business model allows a company or enterprise to be more sustainable, profitable, socially accepted and supported by society and its community.

Purpose

The purpose of this module is to supply some basic knowledge on what Citizenship and Professional Values mean and how they may be fruitfully merged into a business model.





Learning Outcomes

After the completion of this module the learner will be able to:

- Understand the meaning of citizenship and professional values;
- Realize that a business is not only an economic, but also a social and political commitment;
- Understand the importance of citizenship and professional values in a business model;
- Understand the benefits of adopting citizenship and professional values in other parts of the business model





Keywords

- Citizenship
- Professional values
- Social impact
- Political impact
- Collectivity



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Theoretical background

- The word “citizenship” comes from the Latin word civis (citizen) and civitas (condition of being a citizen), and from classic antiquity it denoted the relationship between an individual and the city. It incorporates a scrutiny of the political and social nexus between the individual and the collectivity (both vertical and horizontal), precisely identifying its characteristics and “behavioural” patterns.
- *“Citizenship is the main instrument of any initiative aiming at building up a common project”* (Delors, 1996)
- *“The health of a democratic society may be measured by the quality of functions performed by private citizens.”* (Alexis de Tocqueville)
- *“Citizens are not born; they are made.”* (Cruikshank, 1999)





- In a broader sense, the **key objective** of citizenship is to equip citizens with interpretative, critical planning instruments in order to relate with each other and to develop an individual and social sense of responsibility.
- This starts from the fact that a citizen is an economic, social and political agent who has the task to act for his own benefit, considering likewise the benefit of the collectivity in which he acts. A citizen is linked with the collectivity and cannot grow, gain and prosper despite, or independently from, the social context. The entrepreneur is an economic agent, as well as a citizen, therefore both a social and political agent, with rights and duties.
- It is essential to encourage and motivate entrepreneurs, who are also citizens, to act as cooperative members also in their professional activity and to demonstrate that they possess all the necessary virtues to assume a proper professional role with a sense of responsibility and loyalty.
- From this viewpoint, proper professional values encompass a pertinent environment of our own action in doing business.
- In this field, citizenship also includes the professional values in situations where value conflicts with others may arise (in business).





The possible gap of professional values and sense of citizenship must be focused.

- On one hand, it is necessary to evaluate and scrutinize to what extent a business model aims at transferring values and abilities from a specific profession to a social and political integration of the business itself;
- On the other hand, it is necessary to evaluate whether citizenship and professional values create awareness among entrepreneurs, particularly regarding their abilities to encompass social and political responsibility (the capacity to exploit participation in collective life, rights and duties, promote collective benefit), to participate and contribute with loyalty and critical spirit within institutions and to develop a sense of membership and respect for the collectivity.





Currently there is a consistent demand from companies to equip their employees and workers with cultural and social responsibility related competences, and this should start from the entrepreneur.

Companies also indicate a demand for professional and technical competences (hard skills) but these are now merged with other more transversal sorts of competences linked to citizenship values, social and political awareness (soft skills). Since a possible gap between society and the economic environment is often identified as an issue, it must be considered as an important and concrete problem raised by the companies.

A serious consideration of citizenship and professional values when designing a business model is a concrete answer which addresses the gap.





Citizenship and professional values

When developing a business model, focussing on citizenship and professional values allows for:

- Social gain and political reliability;
- The improvement and strengthening of the links with local stakeholders (customers, institutions, etc.);
- An increase in reputation as a fair and just entrepreneur;
- Promotion of social acceptance of the business;
- Benefits to the local social environment;
- The attraction of more reliable workers;
- The attraction of customers by offering them a social, concrete and observable plus
- Improvement of your turnover.



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Example 1

How can businesses also have an active voice and role in society:

The Channels module of this training provided an example of this with the Nike and Benetton Advertising examples. These organizations decided to use their promotion channels to make a social statement. They consciously decided not to avoid controversial themes linked to citizenship, but rather to embrace them, creating a bridge between the values of the company and the values inherent in the messages. For more information, please refer to the Channels module.





Example 2

How business can also have an active voice and role in the society:

In end March 2020, during the Covid-19 outbreak, Giorgio Armani, the main shareholders of the homonymous Italian fashion brand, decided to convert the production of all Italian production sites to manufacture medical clothes and smock equipment to be supplied at lean production cost to hospitals and sanitary institutions. This is an example of direct link with the collectivity, representing a participation of a company in supporting and sharing the main social problems affecting a community. This behaviour reflects citizenship dimensions such as participation and membership, and is also a concrete application of positive and beneficial professional values.





Personal reflection

- As entrepreneurs, do your responsibilities start and end with your day job?
- Can you use your unique skills and capabilities to help others or to help your society (by producing value not just as an economic benefit)?
- How can you go beyond your working role while balancing your work, family, leisure time and other busy life commitments?
- As entrepreneurs, how can you share more material and immaterial benefits than you usually do to grow together with the local collectivity?





Reflection

Given the systemic nature of many of our socio-economic and environmental challenges, your task at hand, as an entrepreneur, is to admit that you are dealing with a level of complexity in which a multiplicity of perspectives is needed. In a values-based society, one cannot quantify everything, so some activities have to be undertaken by looking beyond immediate financial gain. It is relevant to understand that these may lead to an immaterial benefit, that sometimes may also be useful for a concrete benefit.

- How can progress be evaluated and reported upon, when societal and political change is not evident?

Citizenship thinking requires serious consideration of how any action can affect other parts of the related economic, social, and political system around us, which has a direct or indirect relation with us.



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