CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY IN THE TELECOM SECTOR

CSR Profiling

A Corporate Social Responsibility Profile for the Telecommunication Industry

Appropriate CSR Activities in the Telecommunication Industry with the Example of BlackBerry

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Keywords

BlackBerry, Corporate Social Responsibility, CSR Industry-Specific Profile, Teleccomunication Industry

The article examines the idea of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) from both the current academic and economic perspectives and offers an overview of common CSR objectives and best practices. The objectives are arranged into a matrix that serves as an initial point to develop a CSR strategy. Clearly, there is no "one-size-fits-all" solution to it. Instead, this article argues that there is a necessity to craft an industry-specific CSR strategy based on the defined needs and characteristics of a particular branch. For this purpose, this paper refers to the telecommunication industry and recommends core elements for suitable CSR strategies. The recommendation refers to an actual example: Blackberry, a major company in this industry. By analysing similarities and differences to the environment BlackBerry is operating in, the paper closes with advice for BlackBerry's CSR strategy.

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1. Introduction into Corporate Social Responsibility

1.1 Preface

What is Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and what does it require me to do? This is probably one of the most asked questions by business executives responsible for this area – and yet it remains utterly unanswered. This does not mean that answers do not exist, rather the contrary. Van Marrewijk formulates his answer in a fitting manner that "[corporate] social responsibility is a brilliant term: 'it means something, but not always the same thing to everybody'" (Van Marrewijk 2003: 96). In a nutshell, this is the very problem with CSR and business ethics in general. Decades of debates among both academics and business executives have passed, but instead of an "all-embracing definition of CSR" (Ibid.: 96), numerous concepts and notions of a more responsible way of doing business have been developed. In the following, we highlight the most prominent concepts, CSR and Corporate Citizenship (CC), briefly mentioning the historical context and naming three approaches that have considerably shaped the landscape of business ethics. We close with various reasons why it is important for companies to pursue a CSR strategy.

1.2 Definitions and Discussions

Loew et al. (2004) provide a sufficient introduction into the history of CSR. CSR has its roots in the US when, at the close of the 19th century, successful entrepreneurs began engaging in philanthropic activities. Corporate Philanthropy may therefore be called one of the earliest pillars of CSR. A dedicated debate about the social responsibility of businesses began in the US in the 1950s, with Howard R. Bowen's publication Social Responsibilities of the Businessman (1953) being recognised as impetus. In 1962, later Nobel laureate Milton Friedman famously took a stance against CSR by arguing, "the social responsibility of business is to increase its profits" (Friedman 1962: 133)[1] and thereby adopting a position that is called the "classical view on CSR" by Quazi et al. (2000). It is labelled 'classical' because this business perspective focuses solely on the interests of the shareholder who, in the pursuit of profit maximisation, perceives any action that does not directly contribute to the company's financial well-being as an unnecessary cost. Thus, Friedman

1 Also used as the title for his New York Times Magazine article later published in 1970.

gave birth to an influential idea called the shareholder approach. It is opposed by the so-called stakeholder approach, a theory formulated by R. Edward Freeman.[2] It states that organisations have to take into account the interests of all groups which are relevant – by either affecting or being affected – when pursuing the business' objective and balance those interests appropriately. Those groups termed stakeholders include shareholders but also include employees, the society as well as the environment. The stakeholder theory indeed had a profound impact in the field of business ethics and frequently serves as the foundation for today's academic and business debates. On the other hand, a more recent approach developed by Porter and Kramer (2006) proposes "[p]erceiving social responsibility as building shared value" (Porter et al. 2006: 14), with shared value meaning the creation of value relevant for both business and society. This reflects the trend towards the attempt to align business responsibility with strategic needs.

Beckmann (2007) identifies the terms CSR and CC as by far the most prominent concepts which have evolved from the discussions on businesses' role within the social context. While the concept of CC can be interpreted as emphasising the business' role as a "good citizen" in acting as part of society and being committed to help solving the issues of its (broader) local environment, concepts of CSR seem to put more weight on the responsibility which arises from the company's operations (cf. Beckmann 2007: 5). Of considerable importance for the latter term has been the on-going harmonisation process with the OECD guidelines for responsible business conduct, the United Nations' initiative Global Compact and, especially in Europe, the commitment of the European Commission to a European strategy on corporate responsibility, which has resulted in two significant definitions of CSR. Nevertheless, an internationally accepted definition is still lacking, and the relationship between both terms is far from having been determined and universally acknowledged. Even with an agreed European definition of CSR, it has been observed that its comprehension and execution in terms of policies diverge substantially on national levels (cf. Beckmann 2007: 5; Loew et al. 2004: 17; Riess et al. 2006: 6-9). Eventually CSR seems to be the more used term and is also more often the subject of regulation, strategy and agenda setting in public policy than CC is, so that in the following, we will solely focus on the first term.

2 Freeman first introduced the stakeholder theory in his publication "Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach" in 1984.

1.3 *Corporate Social Responsibility and Profits*

Regardless of which definition or comprehension of CSR a company chooses to embrace, the business executive is left with the essential question with which motivation to pursue a responsibility strategy (beyond a possible feeling of moral obligation to do so). According to the shareholder approach, such a strategy either has to bear no costs or generates a net profit. Indeed, this points to the Holy Grail of any research on CSR: Does a distinct correlation between CSR performance and financial performance exist? Respectively, can well-chosen CSR actions generate a net profit?

In recent years, countless examinations have attempted to find an answer, yet with varying results. Aupperle et al. (1985), for example, criticised many studies which claimed to have found a positive correlation on methodological grounds and concluded as a result of their own survey that "[i]t seems there is insufficient evidence to support the claim that socially responsible firms are more profitable than other firms" (Aupperle et al. 1985: 462). The empirical study conducted by Ahmed et al. (1998), on the other hand, suggests that companies which include environmental consciousness in their strategy (clearly a sort of CSR action) perform better than their non-environmentally conscious competitors. In a comprehensive report on a CSR project initiated by the Austrian Ministry for Transport, Innovation and Technology, Jasch (2007) states that there is in fact a positive correlation between CSR and the company's performance but also emphasises the lack of adequate metrics to evaluate the success of CSR actions as a significant problem for both research and management. Then again, the meta-study by Loew et al. (2010) claims that whereas the link between good labour conditions and economic performance has been proven empirically, the studies on the link between financial performance and CSR in general do not suggest such positive correlation. Doane et al. (2005) takes an even stronger stance in arguing that "CSR as a concept simplifies some rather complex arguments and fails to acknowledge that ultimately, trade-offs must be made between the financial health of the company and ethical outcomes" (Doane et al. 2005: 24).

A most interesting conclusion is drawn by Blomgren (2010) in a qualitative study of executive perceptions on the relationship between CSR and profit margins. Blomgren concludes that "[t]he results herein support the contention that there is no business case for CSR in the sense of helping achieve profits above industry average, but only a business case in the sense of helping achieve profits at industry average" (Blomgren 2010: 272).

This brief review of literature and academic debate shows that a link between financial performance and CSR is far from being proven. Moreover, even if such a link existed, it could well be that the mechanism operates so that good organisational performance rather leads to a good CSR performance than vice versa. Even simpler, the sheer number of possibly influential factors could prohibit any sound conclusion. The fundamental problem of CSR, the lack of consistent and universally acknowledged metrics to measure the social performance, persists.

Despite this seemingly discouraging conclusion, we think there are a number of valid reasons for businesses to actively pursue a CSR strategy today:

1. Increasing pressure and expectations from the public: Reviewing the literature inevitably leads to the conclusion that public pressure from civil society, media and NGOs has increased significantly. Van Marrewijk (2003) introduces a model that depicts the relationship between state, business and civil society and compares the past and the present. His claim is that with increasing mutual dependency of business and government, civil society has gained importance, allowing it to introduce new "common" values which play a major role in shaping society (cf. van Marrewijk 2003: 100). The IMPACT Project Executive Summary from 2014 notes that pressure from NGOs and media is among the most important drivers for both large and small companies to engage in CSR (cf. Öko-Institut e.V. 2014: 18). In his extensive study, Beckmann (2007) refers to representative surveys that the public expects businesses to show social responsibility and reconstructs increasing expectations as a public loss of confidence in the principle of profit maximisation and the market system as a whole.
2. A majority of companies perceive CSR as essential: Beckmann (2007) cites several representative surveys that indicate that a majority of companies see it as their duty to take social responsibility in various aspects of their operations. The IMPACT Project suggests that "CSR is seen as a 'must have' for companies" (cf. Öko-Institut e.V. 2014: 11), and a survey by The Economist implies that corporate responsibility has risen sharply in global executives' priorities (cf. Franklin 2008: 2, chart 1)
3. 3. Governmental and institutional requirements: On a European level, the European Commission, with its definitions of CSR of 2001 and 2011, exerts significant influence and formulates expectations for businesses. The development from the first to the second definition is an

expression of increased requirements: while in 2001 CSR was defined as "a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis", ten years later, the European Commission sees CSR as "the responsibility of enterprises for their impacts on society" (European Commission 2001: 6; European Commission 2011: 6). This trend should not be ignored, also because one could imagine this definition having an increasing influence on the spirit of further regulation. Apart from the European CSR definitions, other governmental regulations and institutional requirements have to be met today. Both Britain and France, for example, have passed laws that require companies listed on the stock exchange to publicise social and environmental responsibility reports. Also, certain stock indices like the Dow Jones Sustainability Indices demand the fulfilment of standards for sustainability reporting and more in order to list a company. Subsequently, if companies want to ensure that strongly regulated or specific investors can buy shares, they have to comply with certain standards. CSR commitment can thus also be perceived as a strategic management of investor relations. Beyond these needs, the standardisation process, which has resulted in standards like ISO 26000, initiatives like the GRI (Global Reporting Initiative) and the UN Global Compact as well as CSR formulations by the OECD and the ILO (International Labor Organisation), has contributed to foster institutional requirements.

4. Making use of the benefits of CSR for organisational performance: If executed well, a CSR strategy can have a significant impact on organisational performance. The extensive research project by Hauser et al. (2008) on corporate culture, work quality, employee engagement and its relation to business success in Germany shows on the basis of a large data set that an employee-orientated corporate culture and good work quality has tremendous potential for competitiveness and economic success. Therefore, CSR actions designed to develop those aspects should pay off quite well. Apart from that, Hauser et al. also note that at least for Germany, due to demographic change, there is an increasing need to improve work quality in companies to ensure attractiveness for potential employees. We think that this opens up the interesting possibility to tackle both long-term interests of companies and fundamental social issues with a dedicated CSR strategy. Putting aside the employee dimension, Jasch (2007) and Loew et al. (2010) both suggest that environmental protection and sustainability management pay off and thus a CSR strategy should take these aspects into account. Especially in terms of environmental protection, it is likely to be expensive not to undertake measures beyond what

law already requires. Taking Europe and energy efficiency as an example, it is reasonable to expect regulation tightening in the forthcoming years; consequently, it may well be a useful strategy to pursue standards above today's regulations. Jasch (2007) also suggests that if CSR actions are integrated properly into core business, they can lead to an increase in intangible company assets such as brand awareness, customer relations and employee motivation and therefore serve as an additional differentiation function.

We believe these reasons should convince businesses to actively pursue a CSR strategy today. Even if links between organisational and CSR performance are not obvious, we support Blomgren (2010) in his conclusion that CSR as a concept may then simply be "the way business is done in the 21st century" (Blomgren 2010: 272).[3]

2. Corporate Social Responsibility in (Best) Practice

2.1 Our Comprehension of CSR

In our comprehension of CSR, we foremost follow the European Commission's definition from 2011 that CSR is "the responsibility of enterprises for their impacts on society" (European Commission 2011: 6). We therefore advocate an impact-driven approach to design CSR strategies for several reasons. One is that actions should to be evaluated based on their impact, not by their actual intention. Though the intention may be admirable, if an action does not have the desired impact, it should be stopped. As the IMPACT report notes, this is mainly a problem in terms of adequate data and lack of "impact thinking" (Öko-Institut e.V. 2014: 12ff.). Thus, we argue that it is essential to develop a framework to recognise impacts and their pathways (especially to detect unintended ones) as well as design key indicators to measure the performance of an action beforehand. This also helps companies to establish a more realistic idea of what to expect from CSR actions and thereby reduces the wide gap between companies' aspirations and their actions which has been discovered by surveys, one briefly being highlighted (cf. Franklin 2008). Furthermore,

3 See also Franklin, D. 2008. Special report: Corporate social responsibility: Just good business, in: The Economist, Jan 17th: 1–21.

an impact-driven approach fosters strategic thinking in designing CSR strategies. In their paper on the link between competitive advantage and CSR, Porter et al. (2006) remark:

> "Few companies have engaged operating management in processes that identify and prioritize social issues based on their salience to business operations and their importance to the company's competitive context. Even fewer have unified their philanthropy with the management of their CSR efforts, much less sought to embed a social dimension into their core value proposition." (Porter et al. 2006: 13f.)

Jasch (2007) underpins this thesis with results from their survey that most companies had no strategies for sponsoring and philanthropy. That prohibited any evaluation of their effects. Both Jasch and Porter et al. consequently suggest a strategic view of CSR with the latter emphasising the choice of an adequate focus to create shared value for both company and society instead of taking fragmented action.

We strongly believe this to be the right approach in designing CSR strategies as it is aligned with the European Commission's definition, emphasises an analytic decision and evaluation process and takes into account that a "one-size-fits-all" solution does not exist. Instead, as van Marrewijk points out, various CSR actions "can be structured into coherent institutional frameworks supporting a specific ambition" (van Marrewijk 2003: 103). Thus, we argue that a company should carefully choose among viable options considering which actions maximise the shared value within the company's competitive context. Like Loew et al. (2010) put forward, we think that CSR cannot replace successfully completed traditional management tasks, but instead that it is rather the responsible way of doing governance. If done well, it is less of an admirable ethical commitment and much more just good business.

2.2 Introducing the Best Practice Matrix

On the following pages, we offer an overview of such viable options as elements to develop a CSR strategy. It is important not to misinterpret these items as designated or necessarily recommended actions. Instead, we have selected 31 common CSR objectives that we regard as possible starting points in designing and developing CSR activities appropriate to a business' specific aims.

Consequently, a wide range of concrete projects can be derived from each objective. We would like to emphasise once more that we believe it to be essential that all ideas are incorporated into a framework to measure impact and performance.

However, by no means do we suppose to offer an exhaustive or complete picture but rather a sufficient overview which addresses major and minor companies worldwide to the same extent. We want to show that CSR is relevant for a variety of companies in numerous preconditions and thereby reveal a multitude of opportunities for companies to give rise to socially- and environment-friendly solutions. The objectives have been selected considering which are best practice from various actual CSR or sustainability reports of major companies, literature offering an overview of best practice measures and information on projects with small and medium-sized companies (SMEs) publicly funded by the European Social Fund for Germany (ESF). The sources offer a wide range of information on what taking action in CSR can mean and therefore provide a sufficient overall picture. The selected objectives can thus reasonably be called as common and best practice.

The 31 objectives are grouped into four categories: Employment/Work Environment, Environment, Organisation and Customers & Community. For each objective, we listed in detail the affected stakeholders (e.g. employees, community or suppliers), potential requirements or recommendations for a particular procedure as well as possible conflicts of interests.

2.3 Best Practice Matrix

TABLE 1: BEST PRACTICE MATRIX 1 – EMPLOYMENT/WORK ENVIRONMENT (SOURCE: OWN ILLUSTRATION)

NAME	OBJECTIVE	AFFECTED STAKEHOLDER	REQUIREMENTS/ PARTICULAR PROCEDURE	POSSIBLE CONFLICTS
SECURITY OF OLDER EMPLOYEES	Enabling employees to have consistent life-planning, strengthening bonds to experienced employyes	Employees (especially at the end of their careers	Far-sighted selection in employment process	Hiring of young employees decreases; Healthcare expenditures increase; Advanced careers go along with higher wages
PREVENTING HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION	Ensuring a peaceful work atmosphere and preventing conflicts inside the company	Employees	Well-organised investigation system to detect cases immediately	Funding for investigating and penalising cases of harassment and discrimination
INCLUSION OF DISABLED EMPLOYEES	Ensuring best possible outcome; enhancing workforce and potential of disabled employees	Employees (disabled)	Providing barrier-free workplace; finding customised solutions for employees with special needs	Cost for special constructions versus financial value for company; conflicts among employees
FAMILY SUPPORT	Assisting employees to raise a family, holding employees during their parental time	Emyployees (during parental period)	Providing children facilities (daycare, on-site kindergarten); enabling childcare leave; assuring re-employment after returning from childcare leave; enabling reduced working hours	Finding subistute workforce (at least in reduced work hour periods); funding for childcare facilities
HEALTHCARE SUPPORT AND RECREATION FACILITIES	Ensuring best possible health condition for all employees; reducing financial losses due to hindered workforce; offering flexible working hours	Employees (especially those who are sensitive or who work in stressful environments)	Providing on-site healthcentre; providing on-site recreation areas (gyms/ fitness facilities, parks, cafés/restaurants, sports facilities)	Funding for healthcare and sports facilities (building up partnerships with local medical and sports centres); focus on workplace character
PROMOTION OF INDIVIDUAL CAREER BUILDING	Enabling employees to achieve their full potential; enhancing the identification of employees with the company; increasing the workforce through further qualified employees	Employees	Providing qualification programs (e.g. PhD programs, exchange opportunities, part-time university course	Employees take advantage opportunities to receive further qualifications and leave afterwards; cost of qualification courses; losing workforce due to employees shifting priorities towards education programs
EXCELLENCE PROGRAMS	Promoting healthy competition among all employees; ensuring employees fulfil their entire potential	Employees	Bonus incentives depending on particular (group) achievements; annual competitions amongs departments	Costs of awarded bonuses; organisation of attractive competitions; unpleasant working atmospheres
OFFERING INTERNSHIPS ON A REGULAR BASIS	Getting to know the job market; promoting the company as an attractive workplace	University students; prospective employees	Establishing partnerships with universities (and schools) to extensively search for potential employees	Costs of enlarging the recruitment department of the company; high fluctuation of employees and frequent changes
MAINTAINING DIALOGUE BETWEEN EMPLOYEES AND MANAGEMENT	Enhancing identification of employees with the company; taking advantage of employees' general excellence	Employees, suppliers, distributers (and subsequent employees); constumers	Establishing direct communication channels with executive management, encouraging addressees by frequently approaching them; setting up complaint structures, i.e. a whistle blowing system	Costs of maintaining communication facilities; conflicts with unnoticed contributors; in case of whistle blowing: support of denunciator mentality

TABLE 2: BEST PRACTICE MATRIX 2 – ENVIRONMENT
(SOURCE: OWN ILLUSTRATION)

NAME	OBJECTIVE	AFFECTED STAKEHOLDER	REQUIREMENTS/ PARTICULAR PROCEDURE	POSSIBLE CONFLICTS
BUSINESS PRINCIPLES/ CODE OF CONDUCT	Defining principles and behabioural expectations towards employees and suppliers; shaping the identity of the company	Community, employees	Working out a document to be agreed upon by relevant decision makers with consent; communicating and demanding compliance from business partners; setting up mechanisms sacntioning and awarding respective behaviour	Arising conflicts with business partners; cost of establishing, communicating and implementing the code of conduct
ETHICAL EDUCATION	Promoting awareness of ethical issues among employees, especially executives	Employees	Establishing cooperation with external partners to design and conduct ethics training (in accordance with the code of conduct); inviting external educators to hold courses	Arising conflicts due to longer working hours; cost of setting up partnerships and specially designed courses
INTEGRATING CSR INTO CORPORATE GOVERNANCE	Ensuring integration of CSR into the considerations of the executive management; including CSR in traditional management mechanisms to merge it with everyday business and harvest all opportunities that arise from it	Employees	Establishing a CSR department with the responsibility of a director and with weight in the management's decision process	Arising conflicts between CSR and traditional management structures; funding for CSR department
REFRAINING FROM AGGRESSIVE TAX-AVOIDANCE	Contributing to communal services of home region/ home country by not fighting the state's tax policy	Community	Developing and communicating a policy ensuring fair tax payments; cooperation with relevant NGOs within the tax regulation context to promote taxpaying among other companies	Less net profit; giving up a possible competitive advantage; reducing restraint of government to raise taxes
MAPPING STAKEHOLDERS	Promoting efficiency of cooperation and relations with the company's stakeholders	All stakeholders	Analysing the relationship and intertwining between the company's stakeholders and their own stakeholder	Stakeholders meight see inquiries as an infringement in their sovereignty; cost of building up reliable information structures between the company and its stakeholders
PRIORITISING STAKEHOLDERS	Strengthening bonds with important stakeholders by holding them dear	All stakeholders	Evaluation of key stakeholders for the forthcoming business year; alignment of the company's strategy in accordance to their main concerns	Conflicts with less important stakeholders (they may feel unappreciated)
ESTABLISHING DIALOGUE WITH STAKEHOLDERS	Avoiding conflicts with stakeholders by enabling them to have a vote/voice in the management process	Customers, business partners, authorities	Establishing communication channels with business partners, NGOs, authorities and customers	Cost of setting up communication channels

TABLE 3: BEST PRACTICE MATRIX 3 – ORGANISATION
(SOURCE: OWN ILLUSTRATION)

NAME	OBJECTIVE	AFFECTED STAKEHOLDER	REQUIREMENTS/ PARTICULAR PROCEDURE	POSSIBLE CONFLICTS
BUSINESS PRINCIPLES/ CODE OF CONDUCT	Defining principles and behabioural expectations towards employees and suppliers; shaping the identity of the company	Community, employees	Working out a document to be agreed upon by relevant decision makers with consent; communicating and demanding compliance from business partners; setting up mechanisms sacntioning and awarding respective behaviour	Arising conflicts with business partners; cost of establishing, communicating and implementing the code of conduct
ETHICAL EDUCATION	Promoting awareness of ethical issues among employees, especially executives	Employees	Establishing cooperation with external partners to design and conduct ethics training (in accordance with the code of conduct); inviting external educators to hold courses	Arising conflicts due to longer working hours; cost of setting up partnerships and specially designed courses
INTEGRATING CSR INTO CORPORATE GOVERNANCE	Ensuring integration of CSR into the considerations of the executive management; including CSR in traditional management mechanisms to merge it with everyday business and harvest all opportunities that arise from it	Employees	Establishing a CSR department with the responsibility of a director and with weight in the management's decision process	Arising conflicts between CSR and traditional management structures; funding for CSR department
REFRAINING FROM AGGRESSIVE TAX-AVOIDANCE	Contributing to communal services of home region/ home country by not fighting the state's tax policy	Community	Developing and communicating a policy ensuring fair tax payments; cooperation with relevant NGOs within the tax regulation context to promote taxpaying among other companies	Less net profit; giving up a possible competitive advantage; reducing restraint of government to raise taxes
MAPPING STAKEHOLDERS	Promoting efficiency of cooperation and relations with the company's stakeholders	All stakeholders	Analysing the relationship and intertwining between the company's stakeholders and their own stakeholder	Stakeholders meight see inquiries as an infringement in their sovereignty; cost of building up reliable information structures between the company and its stakeholders
PRIORITISING STAKEHOLDERS	Strengthening bonds with important stakeholders by holding them dear	All stakeholders	Evaluation of key stakeholders for the forthcoming business year; alignment of the company's strategy in accordance to their main concerns	Conflicts with less important stakeholders (they may feel unappreciated)
ESTABLISHING DIALOGUE WITH STAKEHOLDERS	Avoiding conflicts with stakeholders by enabling them to have a vote/voice in the management process	Customers, business partners, authorities	Establishing communication channels with business partners, NGOs, authorities and customers	Cost of setting up communication channels

TABLE 4: BEST PRACTICE MATRIX 4 – CUSTOMER & COMMUNITY
(SOURCE: OWN ILLUSTRATION)

NAME	OBJECTIVE	AFFECTED STAKEHOLDER	REQUIREMENTS/ PARTICULAR PROCEDURE	POSSIBLE CONFLICTS
COMMUNICATING CSR EFFORTS	Taking credit from CSR beyond its intrinsic values; promoting the general image of CSR	Customers, community	Extensive CSR communication through promotion of products and special PR campaigns;	Danger of being suspicous to green-washing; cost of PR efforts
AFFORDABLE PRICES FOR SPECIAL GROUPS OF CUSTOMERS	Enabling customers from special groups or backgrounds to afford the company's products	Customers, distributors	Setting up product lines or offering discounts especially for groups with low budget, i.e. university students, NGOs, the poor	Cost of adjusting not necessarily profitable product lines to specific needs of particular customers
SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS ANGEL INITIATIVE	Promoting the idea of CSR with entrepreneurs from the beginning	Community	Establishing awards and financial as well as personal support for entrepreneurs through Business Angels or executives	Helping to build up potential rivals; cost of awards and support
DONATING TO THE COMMUNITY	Strengthening bonds to community; ensuring adequate reuse of (decomissioned) facilities	Community	Allowing people from the community to use company's facilities; donating material that is not in use anymore	Facilities are more frequented by community than by own employees (too much success with intiative)
ENSURING ACCESSABILITY TO GOODS AND SERVICES	Enabling customers regardless of their personal situation (i.e. disability, poor infrastructure) to do business with the company	Customers, distributors	Designing a concept of how to serve customers of different backgrounds best; setting up appropriate ways of interaction	Cost of maintaining not very profitable branches and regions

3. *Appropriate CSR Strategies for the Telecommunication Industry*

3.1 Introduction

After having given rise to definitions and discussions, reasons for pursuing a dedicated CSR strategy and outlining common objectives as starting points for developing such a strategy, in the following, we craft an industry-specific recommendation of how an appropriate CSR strategy can look and which objectives it has to consider. For this purpose, we focus on the telecommunication industry as a primary example for a branch which is fundamental to how we live today. With the establishment of the telephone and mobile phone, and much more recently the evolution of the smartphone and mobile Internet, our communication has greatly changed within the last decades and years. Today we are used to being able to communicate with each other instantly and independently from our location for both personal and professional reasons. This would not be possible without the services the telecommunication industry provides. Thus, our today's way of living highly depends on the industry, which makes it a very interesting branch to look at from the perspective of CSR.

First, we identify and point out industry-specific issues and developments that have an influence on everyday business since CSR is highly dependent on routine practices. Then we briefly discuss the need for a global versus a national strategy and close with a general recommendation which CSR objectives we believe are crucial for the telecommunication branch in particular.

3.2 Industry-specific Issues and Developments

The telecommunication industry as a whole was subject to great changes during the last few decades. As a branch that used to be mostly monopolised ten to twenty years ago, the liberal market system came to the companies as a fundamental reform of their everyday business. Government agencies had to be established to ensure sufficient competition in the market, and formerly state-owned companies had to take action to defend their position as the market's leading company. The subsequent mergers between major players gave the whole industry an alignment with which it took up its place within the globalised business world, as it is known today.

While these developments are not the most influential factors for the current market situation anymore, the on-going evolution in how people want to use telecommunications services and the hardware linked to the industry took a major step forward in recent years. Though the conventional usage of telecommunications based on voice transmission still accounts for the major part in companies' revenues, the traditional telephone call has become less important. The relevance of text, image and audio-visual transmission has increased as research and investments are more and more focused on multimedia services and the required infrastructure for fast and mobile Internet access (cf. investopedia.com 2009). The widespread implementation of high-speed Internet access and broadband technologies such as Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) have marked a new era in the consumption of telecommunication services throughout the world. This line of action is accelerated by the escalated importance of mobile telecommunication devices. They enable customers to communicate and interact with each other at almost any time. This marks a major challenge for companies in providing their services reliably.

An important aspect of this particular development is the rising significance of privacy issues. These are brought forward not only by concerned consumer-protection organisations or related governmental agencies worrying about the abuse of customers' data. More and more regions notice a considerable number of customers who are reasonably bothered by implications that arise from providing data to the relevant companies. Also, judging from its prominence in media in the recent years with social media privacy issues and data leakages as frequently-discussed topics, one can reasonably assume that awareness of privacy and data protection has indeed increased. The fact that customers expect a misuse of their data and therefore partly refuse to provide their personal information should have an impact on the entire industry's way of thinking. It affects the way people perceive telecommunications companies in general. Against the background that collecting, storing and transferring data has become cheaper and easier with the increasing number of transactions carried out (cf. Noam 1995), it is in the companies' interest to proceed further. The customer's trust in data protection is crucial. Yet, telecommunications companies must increasingly fight data theft. Preventing leakage also becomes more complicated as the number of communication carriers and service providers grows.

As it is the case in many other industries, the telecommunication industry faces a multi-segment market. Companies in this field have to serve residential customers, small businesses and corporate companies simultaneously. These different market segments diverge in profitability, strength and number of competitors and customer demands. Similar to other industries, major companies benefit from their brand strength and their coverage of all market segments while minor players concentrate on only one or two. This results in the need for different strategies depending on which market is to be served. The residential market provides a challenging atmosphere. Households demand reliable service while being very price-sensitive. Private customers usually do not promise great revenue, so success here relies on the quantity and not on the quality of customers. The underlying business model is to provide a certain level of quality at a very low price (cf. economywatch.com 2010). Companies need to reduce transaction costs and build up a strong brand to bind customers. Additionally, this segment is the most crowded one. Hundreds of competitors challenge each other in a price battle.

Small businesses as customers behave in a similar way. Due to the smaller number of customers in this market segment, it is not as crowded as the residential market. In contrast to the two segments described previously, corporate customers have very distinct requirements. Multinational companies are mostly concerned with the quality and stability of their telecommunication infrastructure because their business relations and internal communication rely heavily upon it. As a consequence, they are less price-sensitive than smaller customers when it comes to extending and improving their communication systems (cf. investopedia.com 2009).

Moreover, telecommunications companies make profit by selling network connectivity to competitors whose capacities cannot keep up with their demands. This is also an opportunity e.g. for Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to outsource their infrastructure and save the related maintenance costs. Furthermore, co-operations in this area create far-reaching networks with borderless accessibility (cf. investopedia.com 2009), which has impacts on privacy issues (cf. Noam 1995) and the quality of services that can be provided.

Concluding, one could say that telecommunications companies are fighting at five borders. These are in themselves not necessarily unique to this industry, yet the perspective and characteristic form is worth considering. To begin with, the bargaining power of suppliers on the one hand and of potential buyers on the other forces executives to perform a dangerous balancing act. As the market is highly sensitive to research and emerging new technologies, suppliers of all sorts impose a threat as the whole industry depends heavily on them. This same sensitivity causes customers to demand the latest product (e.g., a smartphone), which helps justify high prices yet can harm business. But high prices are essential to keep up with innovation and improve the network standard. Another vital challenge that is closely related is competition. Telecommunications companies face rivals not only among themselves. The broad variety of products and services makes it easy to lose grip on the market situation. New entrants to the market might not have the necessary capitalisation to be a major danger. Nevertheless, in such an embattled industry, every new competitor results in an ever-so-tiny loss of market share. In addition to that, openness and the flexibility to rapidly adapt to new developments are necessary to keep up with the mentioned pace of technological change (cf. Prieto-Munoz 2012).

3.3 Global vs. National CSR Strategy

Referring to what has been said above, the structure of the telecommunication industry has changed tremendously from state-owned enterprises to privatised multinational companies fighting with small or medium-sized enterprises (with often a more national focus) for every bit of market share. Acknowledging this development is essential. It bears implications for how companies which do business across country borders have to think about their CSR strategy in terms of conceptualisation today, in particular with regard to the regulative bodies.

> "Telecommunications is an unusual industry in that it may legitimately claim to be central to almost every important area of human activity in a way that few other industry sectors are. […] [It] is essential to public order and national security. It underpins the economic development of whole societies, as well as business activities in every sector of the economy. For most people it is an important social convenience. For some – the elderly, the isolated, the disabled – it is a lifeline." (MacLean 1997: 176)

MacLean (1997) points out correctly that the proper functioning of telecommunications is a matter of public order as kind of social and economic backbone as well as an issue for national security. This valuation is also reflected in the statute of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the organisation responsible for the development of the international telecommunication system, which as of today brings together both 193 member states and over 600 non-governmental sector members.[4] The statute, also referred to as the ITU Constitution, begins its preamble with the phrase "[w]hile fully recognising the sovereign right of each [s]tate to regulate its telecommunication" (ITU 2011: 3) and thereby emphasises the national importance of telecommunications. While the European Union and its regulative body have made great efforts to harmonise legislature and

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4 According to MacLean, since its founding in 1865, the ITU has mainly engaged in three ways "by recommending technical, operational and tariff standards; by regulating the use of the radio-frequency spectrum; and by assisting developing countries." (MacLean 1997: 176). See http://www.itu.int for more details.

regulation referring to telecommunications, in principle, it is still a subject of national interest. In terms of CSR, this would not have been so much of an issue during the pre-privatisation era since regulators and regulated industry were not separated in a clear-cut manner. Subsequently, it would have been obvious for companies that the focus of an adequate responsibility strategy had to be a national one. Yet with the globalised world of 2014 being full of multinational players that are required to abide by the laws and regulations of many countries or a union of states, the situation is different.

It imposes the question on those multinationals as to what approach to CSR strategies is reasonable to pursue. Is it the global one focusing on building a coherent framework, which is more or less applicable worldwide yet with the chance of losing grip on problems in particular countries? Or should the multinationals rather opt to design CSR strategies specifically for each country of operation and thereby possibly sacrifice the big picture? Discussing this question in exhaustive detail lies beyond the scope of this paper. We can only emphasise that the spirit of regulation is still very much driven by a dedicated national interest and thereby the expectations towards a corporate responsibility as well. Companies should be fully aware of this.

Apart from that, the decision between a coherent global strategy and dedicated national strategies is also a question of corporate organisation and brand perception. If a multinational company is rather organised or perceived as a network of strong national divisions, then pursuing dedicated national strategies probably takes the realities more into account. In contrast, if a multinational company wants to emphasise its international presence, a coherent global strategy might be more recommendable. Additionally, what also should be considered is which objectives the company wants to focus on. Many employee-related objectives are better served in a dedicated national strategy which is able to take local conditions more into account, whereas incorporating CSR into corporate governance or developing business principles should be more elements of a global strategy. We thus conclude that the decision global versus national is a very strategic one. It should be made in agreement with the entire executive management.

3.4 Recommendation for Core Elements of a CSR Strategy

In the following, we work out a recommendation for core elements that we believe to be necessary for CSR strategies in the telecommunications branch – all in line with the European Commission's

CSR definition from 2011 that states that the responsibility of companies should be directed by their impact on society. The European Commission further states:

> "To fully meet their corporate social responsibility, enterprises should have in place a process to integrate social, environmental, ethical, human rights and consumer concerns into their business operations and core strategy […] with the aim of maximising the creation of shared value for their owners/shareholders and for their other stakeholders and society at large [and] identifying, preventing and mitigating their possible adverse impacts." (European Commission 2011: 6).

Runhaar et al. (2008) provide a good overview of the main issues of the telecommunication industry against the backdrop of the principles of the United Nations' initiative Global Compact. The Global Compact is a "strategic policy initiative for businesses that are committed to aligning their operations and strategies" to the ten advocated principles in the areas of anti-corruption, environment, human rights and labour (cf. UNGC 2014). Summarising the results of Runhaar et al., it is evident that the most adversely affected stakeholders from the operation of telecommunication companies are the community, customers, suppliers and the environment. Among other things, they note the following as adverse effects (Runhaar et al. 2008: 484):

- Uneven access to telecommunications services,
- The use of conflict minerals with implications for human rights and the environment,
- Energy consumption and emissions,
- Consumer privacy and data protection, and
- Waste due to short product life cycles.

This mostly corresponds to our considerations of the industry-specific issues and previous developments and gives us insights as to what the core elements of a CSR strategy in this branch have to tackle.

Referring back to MacLean (1997), telecommunications is essential to public order and national security. Secondly, our today's way of living in a globalised world would no longer be possible without the appropriate infrastructure and all the service providers offering us access to telecommunications via their products. Everyone who has no or limited access to telecommunication services is highly disadvantaged, and uneven access has not only adverse effects on the individual but also on the society as a whole. Therefore, we argue that 'Ensuring Accessibility to Goods and Services' should be a core element for every CSR strategy. This is strongly connected with 'Affordable Prices for Special Groups of Customers', which is a reasonable objective in many ways. Offering special prices to current low-budget customers with the perspective of an increasing standard of living can lead to a stronger bond to the brand and can thus be seen as a long-term investment in customer relations. Beyond that aspect, affordable prices can also simply be a way to ensure accessibility.

As noted earlier, a characteristic of the telecommunications market is fierce competition and the fight for every bit of market share. It also reflects an industry that is highly dependent on the availability of special minerals and one able to sell their final goods across the world, thus with a solid logistics system. Additionally, the relevant production processes are very energy consuming. Hence, the industry has to deal with high levels of energy consumption and emissions for both production and distribution. The environment is an important stakeholder affected and in the light of the European CSR definition, companies should take responsibility for the adverse impact caused by their business. Consequently, we claim that the objectives 'Development of Environment-Friendly Production Processes' and 'Energy-Saving Logistics Solutions' have to be core elements. Fortunately, pursuing those objectives often has the positive side effect to reduce energy costs, which results in better competitiveness. It is thus also reasonable to think of actions serving these objectives in terms of improving a company's position in comparison to its competitors.

Both of these objectives require very active cooperation between the company and its suppliers. Today's perception is that companies are not only responsible for their own operations but also in part for their suppliers. The expectations formulated by the public have increased significantly (see section 1.4), and reports on poor conditions at plants of companies' suppliers impose considerable reputation risks. According to Franklin, CSR strategies can be seen as a way to manage reputation risks or risks in general (cf. Franklin 2008: 4). It is in the interest of a company to reduce (reputation) risks to a bare minimum, and so companies should take advantage of the opportunities that CSR actions offer. Since many suppliers of telecommunications companies (e.g. the coltan mining businesses) are located in developing countries or conflict areas such as in Africa or Asia, issues imposing various risks often arise. These are not easy to resolve as the example with telecommunications start-up Fairphone shows, which aims at producing a smartphone built from conflict-free minerals. Yet as of today, Fairphone can only guarantee that two of over 40 minerals that a smartphone usually contains are sourced from conflict-free mines.[5] This illustrates the difficulties telecommunications companies can face when aiming to reduce their impact on society and environment through their cooperation with suppliers. We thus argue that the objectives 'Business Principles' and 'Incorporating CSR into Corporate Governance' should be core elements of every strategy related to CSR. Within these objectives, a wide range of concrete projects can follow to tackle exactly such issues. These can include an intensive screening process of potential suppliers and the monitoring of existing suppliers regarding their social and environmental performance based on a reward and sanction system. In addition, the development of a comprehensive risk management system for health, energy, environment and safety or obtaining certifications such as SA8000[6] is possible.

4. *Case Study: BlackBerry*

4.1 The Economic Analysis

The story of BlackBerry as a company reads as a Greek tragedy. In 1999, the first BlackBerry smartphones hit the market. Fifteen years before, Mihal Lazaridis, a student of the University of Waterloo, founded a small business that had started with the development of LED displays for General Motors in 1984. The name of this company was Research In Motion (RIM) and it was designated to occasional development work. After General Motors lost interest and withdrew from the project, RIM went on to design digital barcode-readers to take in and read film for the National Film Board. The "Digisync" was a milestone in film editing but came with the flaw of quality. As soon as all Hollywood studios were equipped, the market was saturated (cf. Tsai 2014). At that time, RIM turned to e-mail service with the idea of making it accessible with portable devices. Following products called "Bullfrog" and "Leapfrog" (Tsai 2014), finally the first BlackBerry phone was ready for sale in 1998. This device, mainly appreciated by businesses and companies for its "rock-solid reliability and ironclad security", lifted RIM into being Canada's flagship technology

5 A Fairphone (product name and company name are the same) contains tin and tantalum certified conflict-free by the Conflict Free Tin Initiative (CTFI), see http://solutions-network.org/site-cfti for more details.

6 The SA8000 standard is a framework to measure social performance in regard to basic human rights of workers. See http://www.sa-intl.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=Page.ViewPage&PageID=937 for more details.

company with a stock well above $200 at its best times (cf. Tsai 2014). Even the 2009 stock price of $150 (cf. Russell 2012) seems out of touch for the current price just over $10.[7]

BlackBerry's situation began to turn with the development of touch devices, most prominently by the introduction of Apple's iPhone in 2007. Lazaridis and other RIM executives simply denied the relevance of touch devices to the market. Such a "plaything" (Tsai 2014) was considered to have nothing to do with a serious email device and "won't threaten BlackBerry" (Russell 2012). This attitude led RIM to miss the crucial market developments of the twenty-first century. When BlackBerry finally introduced its first touch device a year after the iPhone, it was already too late. Customers no longer demanded reliable and secure email devices only but rather a universal life assistant. While BlackBerry failed to close the gap, Apple already began to beat BlackBerry on its home territory by setting up the iPhone as a reliable business device (Tsai 2014).

Seemingly every other company except RIM recognised that competition would come to the smartphone market, but unfortunately, RIM responded to that by ignoring the signs. The company became a victim of its own success. Preceding Apple's iPhone, every other company that was meant to be the "BlackBerry Killer", amongst them well-known ones like Nokia and Motorola, failed spectacularly (cf. Castaldo 2012). Concentrating on its core business, supplying companies with efficient mobile mailing devices, BlackBerry isolated itself from important market developments and its customers. It clung to the conviction of selling hardware and software in one piece by one provider. In contrast to that, smartphones had begun to settle in ecosystems that were tailored to allow the development and usage of third-party applications. Also, companies like Apple and Samsung owe their success to hardware partnerships and a broad spectrum of products (cf. Hartley 2013). Attempting to keep up with these developments, BlackBerry took one desperate step after the other. First, by introducing Q10 and Z10, new smartphones running on the new QNX platform, RIM tried to implement smartphones without having the necessary ecosystem of applications which was the foundation of their rivals', Apple and Android, success in the first place. Not only that, the start of sales was delayed several times before one smartphone was actually delivered (cf. Castaldo 2012). Then, BlackBerry, RIM's official name since 2013, started the "Playbook" experiment. According to Hartley, it was "a desperate attempt to play catch up that amounted to a product that was incomplete, too little and too late" (Hartley 2013). Adding up to complete market failure, BlackBerry faced a complete crash of its systems. In October 2011, the

7 From June 30, 2014 to August 1, 2014 the stock price for BlackBerry Ltd. (BB, listed on the stock exchange in Toronto, Canada) fluctuated between $10.94 and $10.15. See http://quotes.wsj.com/CA/BB for more details.

company lost its email and instant messaging service across Europe, Middle East, Africa, India, Brazil, Chile and Argentina for several days (cf. Russell 2012).

Despite all of these struggles, BlackBerry is still a company operating worldwide. Alongside the mentioned smartphone lines, BlackBerry contends for a placement on the market with the attempt to establish the company's own messaging platform BlackBerry Messenger (BBM). With the comparison of BBM to the iPhone's iOS, Apple's operating system, and Google's Android, the company has tried to establish its smartphones as being capable of more than "just" business (Dingman 2014). The focus of this messaging application lies on the security of the transferred data. Additionally, it has one of the best penetrations into the corporate world (cf. Russell 2012) so it follows BlackBerry's original values and strengths. Since BBM is actually a growing platform, it could well help the company overcome the economic crisis it finds itself in. Another new product with which BlackBerry tries to find a way to recover is the Passport. It is a new smartphone that shows how desperately BlackBerry is trying to create a niche for itself on the smartphone market. By concentrating on providing a user-oriented and secure mobile workplace, the company is again referring back to the core values and strengths which built up the brand in first place (Shea 2014). BlackBerry claims that the square-shaped display provides a better reading experience than other rectangle-shaped smartphones (cf. Meusers 2014).

4.2 BlackBerry's CSR Performance

Having outlined BlackBerry's economic development over the last years up to the current situation the company is in, we turn to the company's positioning concerning CSR using a few points as a representation of the company's CSR behaviour.

Firstly, BlackBerry's dubious handling of stakeholders eroded the company from the inside. Although shareholders are considered to be the most obvious and opportunistic group of stakeholders, they still remain stakeholders. In spite of spending well over 60% of the current company worth on shareholders (cf. Norris 2013), the company failed to reward the most loyal ones. This went along with a focus on short-term value only benefitting shareholders who sold their shares of the company (cf. Chandler 2013). Another and more relevant issue for CSR at BlackBerry is the latest "Green Electronics Ranking" published by Greenpeace. The company missed the chance to distinguish itself from rivals on the market and again ranked last with only two of ten possible points (cf. Greenpeace 2012). The ranking lists 15 top electronic companies by their environmental policies and the impact of their products (cf. Gersman 2011). According to Greenpeace, BlackBerry, then still named RIM, was very much lacking a plan to reduce its impact on the environment. Nevertheless, the company was able to improve in the operational section as being one of the better scorers in terms of low use of conflicts minerals (cf. Greenpeace 2012). The Corporate Social Responsibility Report from 2012 is not a statement of success, either, as it mainly consists of very general propositions about goals and aims. The reader has to search desperately for hard facts that relate to actual CSR activities. A listing of how employees plant trees is not in any way related to the everyday business of a telecommunications company. CC is important, yet it does not influence or promote the core business and therefore has to find a dedicated place somewhere else.

A more positive point we want to take into consideration is BlackBerry's partnership with Mercedes AMG Petronas Formula One Team (cf. BerryReview Team 2013). Providing the team with communication systems and network services promotes the public image of BlackBerry's reliability and professionalism. Additionally, by equipping the drivers Lewis Hamilton and Nico Rosberg, BlackBerry is provided with the opportunity to enhance its popularity showing what BlackBerry devices actually look like being used.

Taking into account these major points of BlackBerry's CSR, it is plain to see that there is much room for improvement. In the following, we use BlackBerry as an example of a telecommunications company. A few ideas will be given to show a possible approach to shape its CSR strategy. We thereby refer to the general recommendation developed in chapter four which relies on the compilation of chapter three. Obviously, we do not aim to provide a brand new and comprehensive CSR strategy for Blackberry since this would not go along with the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, we do provide what we believe to be key issues for BlackBerry as a company. Even in its critical business situation, these few ideas could help BlackBerry create a solid strategy for CSR matters.

4.3 Recommendations for Core Elements of a CSR Strategy at BlackBerry

For different reasons, an appropriate Code of Conduct is a major pillar for every CSR strategy. By shaping one's identity, many processes can be carried out far more efficient. This may seem trivial and obvious but being uncertain at every step of a decision-making process causes a massive amount of transaction costs and leads to confusion on every hierarchical level of the company. Setting a binding code and formulating strict business principles, moreover, improves the standing of the company in its interaction with business partners. It helps to establish and enforce relations with partners because by providing a conclusive profile, one enhances security on both sides and avoids misunderstandings. The benefits of having a clear image of one's identity are not limited to one particular part of the company. Additionally, setting up business principles does not result in exceptional costs, which makes it even more attractive to businesses in general.

Especially for telecommunications companies, it is difficult to trace the imported resources back. But the fact that it is almost impossible to gather reliable information on the origin of raw material is no reason to not even pursue that aim. Many of the resources needed in the telecommunications industry are to be found in areas of the world with unstable political situations and failed states. Often, the supply chain ends with a state-owned company in an African country that is not only inscrutable but also corrupt. Since this is the only way for most companies to buy the required resources at a reasonable price, this has become a common way of ensuring supply. We have mentioned the example of Fairphone. Although this company is by far not operating independently from uncertain sources, it takes on the challenge. Doing so can be a vital advantage and a way to define a differentiation to rivals.

Another point that could well promote BlackBerry's strategy in the near future is associated with product accessibility. The company could devote itself to providing telecommunications services to customer groups, which usually have little or no access to such products and services. The reasons for this restriction in access may lie in affordability but could as well be a result of geographical problems. Through specially aligned prices and setting far-reaching ways to deliver telecommunications services and products to remote areas, BlackBerry could therefore raise its CSR efforts and generate additional profit at the same time. Obviously, this again would come with a considerable business advantage over rivals.

5. Conclusion

In a nutshell, we presented three major lines of arguments in this paper. First, after having examined the idea of CSR in the current academic and economic environment, we argued that there are strong reasons for companies to pursue a CSR strategy today – even if it does not seem to pay off financially in the first place. Second, built upon our comprehension of CSR, we developed a collection of over 30 common CSR objectives compiled in a descriptive matrix, which we argue to be a reasonable starting point for companies working out their CSR strategy. The underlying idea is to gather common CSR objectives, put them into a meaningful matrix, and in revealing what is best practice today, enable companies to select appropriate elements for their individual strategy. Third, we argued that there is a necessity for an industry-specific CSR profile since every industry has to deal with characteristics needs and fulfil certain stakeholders' requirements. A CSR strategy should reflect that. We made the case for the telecommunications industry for demonstration purposes and elaborated on a recommendation based on our best practice matrix. Eventually, we compared our recommendation to a major company in this industry, BlackBerry, to analyse similarities and differences.

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