

Small Business, Big Change:  
How Start-ups Positively Affect the Community Around Them

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### Abstract

Usual measures of success refer commonly to financial means. In a world where success is synonymous with money, small businesses may appear to fall short of the standard. However, these measures do not comprehensively translate to small, family, or start-up companies.

Incorrect measurements of success can skew the data when it comes to start-ups and family businesses, but new standards can bring to light just how large an impact small business can make. This thesis seeks to identify better ways to measure success for small businesses through non-financial means, research current examples for relevance, and provide insight for start-ups on the best ways to successfully make an impact.

## Small Business, Big Change: How Start-ups Positively Affect the Community Around Them

### **Introduction**

To live in the present is to live in a world where power is prevalent. The strong survive and the weak likely will die. Themes of capitalism and natural selection permeate this society where one must be big and powerful to succeed in life. Such mantras are extremely widespread in the business world, where money talks and bigger is better. But, if these widespread beliefs are true then small businesses would fade away, simply because they are small and weak by these popular standards. However, this is not the case. Small businesses thrive around the world, influencing many individuals, markets, and communities that larger businesses cannot. Perhaps it is time to measure success for business, not by size or finances, but by the value that company brings to the world around it. The most needed outlet for this new measurement system is for the average start-up, where diminutive size has no effect on the limitless impact it can make.

### **Big Business Benefits**

The world of today is comprised of both a financial and litigious society where success can be tied directly to revenue streams. To make it in the world, to climb the corporate ladder, to arrive, and to achieve success are all ideas usually equated with the amount of money a person makes. The success of a business is equally measured by financial terms and rightly so. After all, stating that the purpose of business is to add value to internal and external shareholders, is a popularly held belief across the world's stage. Wilson and Karp (2015) wrote on the topic of shareholder value, as have many others, and noted it as the main purpose of a business. If a company adds value to its shareholders, then it is seen as successful. The failures of a business can often come in the form of lawsuits, bad publicity, and damage to brand image. With the rise of the millennials entering the workforce and the Generation Z right around the corner, new

beliefs for the ethics and requirements of companies have begun to emerge as well (Kaur et. al., 2018). Rises in beliefs for environmental considerations, equal opportunity hiring practices, Corporate Social Responsibility, and changes in lifestyles to accommodate work have led to higher standards for companies. Such high expectations have led to great successes but also large failures in the business realm. As the current time is also a digital age, failures and successes alike are widely broadcasted and publicized. With such wide reaches through social media and modern technology, these failures can substantially injure brand image, an ever-present concern for organizations worldwide.

### **Financial Impact**

While the threat of failures, especially publicized ones, can loom over the heads of businesses, some manage to act unbothered. In fact, many companies can be labeled “too big to fail” meaning that problems they encounter are dealt with so swiftly that they seem never to have emerged in the first place. The majority of these problems are solved with finances. Fulbright and Jaworski (2017) did several studies on the effect of litigation on business. Whether the company be large or small, legal battles can be very costly. The lawsuits found in the studies of Fulbright and Jaworski (2017) have historically led to the draining of corporate legal budgets, with the average being \$1.7 million dollars spent on disputes per ever \$1 billion in revenue (p.17). The \$1.7 million listed represents an increase from last year, a trend that continued in the litigation survey for both 2018 and 2019 by the same authors (Fulbright and Jaworski, 2019). The median companies polled in 2017 spent 17% of revenue on legal issues, yet another increase from the previous year’s spending in this area (Fulbright and Jaworski, p. 3, 2017). Such draining of budget is a concern for companies, but the problem substantially grows with the company itself. In the same data survey by Fulbright and Jaworski (2017), the authors polled

hundreds of companies to find that those making less than \$100 million in annual revenue had experienced an average of 1 lawsuit per year, with the middle bracket companies fighting 2-3 lawsuits annually, and companies in the highest bracket, with over \$1 billion in annual revenue, battled 25 lawsuits per year (p. 22). While these numbers are concerning, the majority of these companies do not fail. With statistics showing such commonality, litigation could be viewed as a necessary evil, even a side-effect of success. Therefore, a trip to the courthouse has not crippled many of the large corporations that dominate the global market. On the contrary, most companies settle outside of court with a sum of money, have the injured party sign away rights to sue or disclose information, and the organization continues onward mostly unscathed (Squire, 2012). There are some ethical issues raised by such behavior, but ethical or not, there are no laws against legally using money to the advantage of the company and this behavior is likely to continue. From past historic examples of settlements to the recent scenario involving the news channel CNN settling out of court with Nick Sandmann for alleged viscous character attacks, this pattern of using money to erase problems has existed (CNN Settles, 2020). As this methodology works quite well for companies with ample pocketbooks, it is highly unrealistic to expect it to disappear in the near future.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Financial assets are certainly helpful in the world of litigation, but some legal actions may raise ethical concerns. The impact of a company's ethics, or lack thereof, must be measured against the response from the public to see its importance in the marketplace. After all, there are cases of companies where money could not save their brand reputation from being tarnished. McDonalds is one such company. The fast food, hamburger restaurant that serves food globally was voted the most unethical company several years ago due to its poor treatment of supply

chain partners and employees (Gilbert, 2006). Such negative actions from a very public company led to immediate damage control that could not quite erase the loss of consumer confidence (Gilbert, 2006). However, this company is still standing as are many other companies that survived similar situations. They have loyal customers, steady revenue streams, and possess enough product, service, customer service, or some other aspect strong enough to prolong their useful life. With steady increases in bottom line and top line items on these companies' 10-k forms, data clearly shows that these companies have weathered rough years, taken the blows on the chin, and are continuing, often changing very little in the practical sense (SEC Website, 2019). While many large companies are seen as immoral or of questionable integrity, many customers still buy from them. Brunk (2012) wrote about perceived ethical actions of a company and noted the disparity between different definitions of morality. Such an absence of one single definition of ethical behavior could help explain the phenomenon of alleged unethical companies still travelling forward. Another explanation could be due to the extensive, sometimes global reach, of these companies, or because of the lack of an easily accessible replacement. In other cases, the morality of a company simply doesn't enter into the consideration of whether or not to purchase a good or service. Chouhun, Meneses, and Ribeiro (2018) wrote on the different reactions to ethical decisions, specifically between various demographics in Europe. One result of the data showed some consumers choosing not to change their buying habits based on their moral perception of companies, showing that ethics do not always lead to action in customers (Chouhun, Meneses, and Ribeiro, 2018). Whatever the reason that companies with rocky ethics do not fail, it is clear that an excess of finances cannot hurt the equation. Money covers lawsuits, settlements, recovery publicity, and marketing to replace existing customers. A large list of

assets and equity on financial statements gives a sense of security to investors and employees alike, as these line items possess enormous leveraging power in today's financial market.

### **Small Business Measurements**

However, a question must be raised concerning the importance of companies that do not own long lists of assets or equity. There are nearly 30 million companies in the United States alone that do not make enough to pay more than 500 employees per year (Nazar, 2013). With so many companies in this bracket, not only in America, but around the world, surely these organizations must make some sort of impact. From the family-run bakery, to the non-profit with volunteer-only employees, to the company run out of a garage, to the start-up being manned by a haggard college student, these immensely-different small businesses make up a large percentage of businesses around the globe. Small businesses in the United States employ over 50% of the working population and have created a majority of total new jobs since 1995 (Nazar, 2013). Unfortunately, one thing all these diverse organizations share is that the same problems that can be brushed aside by large companies, can destroy these small businesses in an instant. One source claimed that over 75% of small businesses will encounter a lawsuit or damage to brand image in their lifetime, and on average will spend 20% of income on litigation per year (Lawsuits in Small Business, 2019). Most simply do not have the finances to combat such obstacles and quietly fold under the pressure. One survey, conducted by LegalShield, found that 40% of small businesses opted not to pay for legal counsel when facing litigation because they simply could not afford the cost of a lawyer (Debt Collections, 2014). Some would question, with good reason, the impact of a small company in a world driven by money. After all, this is a financially driven and litigiously led society. Keeping in mind how rarely small businesses have large amounts of money or succeed in lawsuits, the question remains of how much impact can



these companies reasonably make in today's society. The answer comes in some surprising ways, beginning with a small bakery. One small business, Masterpiece Cakeshop was involved in a court case that went all the way up to the Supreme Court. The shop's owner, Jack Phillips, refused to make a cake for a same-sex couple that attended his shop in 2012, claiming that it would violate his personal religious beliefs. In a several year journey that had many ups and downs, Masterpiece Cakeshop won its fight on the grounds of religious liberty. The Supreme Court ruled that the religious freedom of Phillips had been severely infringed upon and they therefore couldn't uphold the previous rulings against the small business (Chemerinsky, 2018). In a shocking underdog victory, this little business did not bend to the societal pressure, financial obstacles notwithstanding, and overcame in spite of its lack of financial capital. A single small business was involved in one of the largest scale publicized lawsuit in this decade and yet did not fail. On the contrary, Masterpiece Cakeshop is still thriving today even after undergoing such a litigious combat. It was not money that helped Phillips win the court case, nor succeed afterwards. Instead, this one tiny cakeshop made headline news that had nothing to do with financial considerations, but rather revolved around ethical and moral issues. Perhaps this is the key to understanding and measuring the impact of small business, by veering away from the traditional financial measures of success. Small businesses in rural cities operate in an entirely different workspace than the multi-million-dollar organizations that fight for consumers in the skyscrapers of urban landscapes. Perhaps it would be slightly unreasonable to measure success by the same metrics.

### **Measurement Criteria**

The question still stands concerning the possibility for measures of success specific to small businesses and of what these measurements should consist. Even start-ups that develop

into million or even billion-dollar organizations were once small companies, jostling for customers and recognition. A small business must be impactful before incremental growth, and perhaps new measurements and implementation could even lead to such aforementioned growth. Masterpiece Cakeshop shows the folly of only measuring the success by financial considerations by providing a contrary example. However, breaking classical measurements demands careful theory, research, and analysis to come up with a reasonable replacement. The first basis of this hypothetical measure for success must start with historical data and attempt to explain it accurately. Several successful large businesses of today that started small were able to grow through specialization and filling specific gaps in the market by pioneering and leading the market. In the saturated world market of today, this is not as widespread, nor would it be reasonable to expect from any business. While specification examples that led to phenomenal accomplishments may not be completely replicable, this pioneering spirit is often found in small businesses that currently are successful. Nazar (2013) found that over 75% of all small businesses in the United States have only the founder as an employee. The gathered data means that the majority of small businesses leaders are so driven to succeed that the founder simply starts by themselves. With no extra help or employees, large amounts of business owners are turning their individual drive to succeed into a profitable business venture. Often, the reason these individual operations stay afloat is by filling a gap in the market that has been previously unattended. While this pioneering spirit and specialization in small business may not be enough of a driving force to measure success, it still must be included as part of the equation.

### **Generational Impact**

The rise of the Millennial and Gen Z individuals who add their voices into demands that effect the market give context for success. These people groups are characterized often by their

differences from the previous generations. Differences in lifestyle, gender stereotypes, workplace majorities, equal opportunities, concern for the environment, and heavy campaigning for rights in just about every field of existence are only a few of the plethora of ways that separate these generations from the two that came before. These differences are changing the world today, in the realms of politics, human rights, sustainability, and the business world to name a few. Kaur, Duggal, and Suri (2018) studied the effect of Generation Z specifically on businesses. They noted that Gen Z have an enormous effect on the environmental awareness that companies now possess and stated specifically that the purchases of Generation Z show demand for “greener” products and business operations (Kaur, Duggal, and Suri, 2018). Demand for environmental awareness and sensitivity is only one change required with the purchasing power of the rising generations, with many others gaining power daily.

### **Accountability Impact**

The changes these generations call for directly affect businesses across the global economy. Some of the most recent calls for reform involve accountability. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), an initiative with a recent spike in popularity that most competitive businesses have adopted, demands that organizations be held responsible for the impact they make on the society surrounding them. Corporate Social Responsibility is growing in popularity with the years, and Lee and Rim (2018) noted that the two newest generations are especially in tune with the ideals offered by this program. Equal Opportunity Initiatives, mandatory at all organizations, demand that companies be held accountable for who is hired and given an opportunity to succeed. These initiatives are vital for keeping the workforce fair and diverse, and Bisom-Rapp (2018) noted that the younger generations are especially important in continuing and expanding these principles. New accounting standards demand that companies fulfill the

checklist to reveal and continue transparency to the public in the realm of finances. These new standards have direct and deep effects on business giants such as Japan and Crypto Currency (Tsuji and Hiraiwa, 2018). Even the presence of online reviews demands that companies listen to the complaints of customers and be held accountable for satisfying consumers to the utmost degree. Park et. al. (2019) wrote on the topic of customer feedback as it relates to impact for the company and noted that companies that listened and adapted to customer feedback saw large increases in returns compared to those who did not. Clearly, the consumer's voice has a deep effect on the actions of a company. Each of these metrics measure the impact of a company not only to the internal and external shareholders on financial measures, but the accountability of a business to the general public. The rising generation of customers is no longer satisfied with financial responsibility to the company alone. These consumers are seeking, nay demanding accountability in other realms of the marketplace, especially through the lens of impact to society. Therein lies the starting point to this small business hypothesis: the success of a start-up, family-run, or otherwise small business can be measured by the impact that company makes on the society around it.

### **Societal Impact**

Impact on society is a very broad idea and must be narrowed down to reasonably define and measure. To begin with, society itself must be examined and defined so that impact to it can be accurately quantified. There is not one specific definition of Society to rely on completely. On the contrary, there are so many factors that make up society that it is hard for any one source to completely encompass all that pertains to society. Some aspects of society are obvious and easily defined. One such aspect is education. Education has direct effects on society as the future of the next generation is at the forefront of many people's minds. One case study on the connection

between Quality of Life and the education of children in a community shines insight on this aspect of society. One finding was that the safety of any given community rises at the same rate of increases in child education and successful welfare programs (Children and Society, 2018). Education is not only an integral part of society because of its effect on safety. The same case study also revealed that higher education led to less employee burnout (Children and Society, 2018). When the most vulnerable and youngest members of society are well taken care of, then the parents in the working class are able to put more effort into their individual work. Education is specific enough to be defined easily, but there are several other aspects of Society that are a bit more difficult. Things like religion, politics, values, and ethics often are used in the definition of Society but can encompass a broad range. With all of these in mind, Society will be defined here as being made up of individuals, community, structures, and intangibles.

Individuals are the starting point. Companies do cater to some degree to individuals. After all, every customer must decide for themselves what they will purchase, where they will spend their time, and who they will endorse with their finances. However, catering to individuals in society is extremely time-consuming and not always a reasonable expectation. Most companies instead market to categories of individuals, namely people that share certain traits and characteristics. Demographics, lifecycles, tastes, preferences, cultures, geographical locations, age, and gender are all such categories that can be catered to in a successful manner. Tierean et. al. (2015) wrote on the topic of marketing to specific demographics from the perspective of a college university and noted that marketing to groups is far more successful than marketing to each individual directly. Even though each incoming student is a unique person, the data showed that they responded more positively to marketing that appealed to them as a member of some group (Tierean et. al., 2015). Individuals often identify themselves as belonging to several

groups and can agree to make decisions inside such groups, even though they are still autonomous beings. Such groups can lead to the existence of community.

Community includes complex groups of people that dwell in the same area and must prioritize certain issues in order to prosper. Issues such as housing, education, quality of life, and safety must all be maintained for a community to prosper. The needs of such a group demand that companies that enter their community do nothing to jeopardize such priorities. The shift in new thinking also demands that companies not only cause no harm, but actually strive to do good while inside this community. Usually this is encapsulated by the idea of Corporate Social Responsibility but also has other aspects of accountability in it as well. Pret and Carter (2017) wrote on the topic of businesses following social norms of communities in order to make an impact. They noted that these businesses must create a positive reputation for themselves by doing good in the community, collaborating with others, and working extremely hard to not make a negative impact (Pret and Carter, 2017). The communal aspect of society clearly comes with high expectations, but it also gives businesses ample room to succeed.

The next part of society is structures, groups inside of the general community possessing their own set of needs, wants, and fears. Structures include entities such as companies, families, governing bodies, and judicial assemblies. These groups have various demands, with the problems of a family unit varying greatly from those of a police precinct. However, each and every one of these structures are vitally important to this carefully balanced ecosystem that is society. Schumacher (2015) wrote on the complexities of society and the worthiness of certain structures in the public eye. The author noted that people will only invest in what they believe has value for them and once that value has been proven, the community pours resources into that structure, sometimes to the point of excess (Schumacher, 2015). If a society values safety, then it

follows that it will pour money into law enforcement. If it favors the youth, school districts and recreational activities will be plentiful and of high quality. Even the political structure of a society can shape the actions made and the direction of resources. Linsenmaier (2018) wrote on this and noted that politics are often a very tangible way to express one's ideals and connect with a like-minded community. The structures of a society mimic the values held by the community and as such have significant amount of weight associated with each. All of these unique structures have something to offer and each demand something different in return. Each society of nations, countries, and even cities can vary based on these structures but must cater to them, nonetheless.

The final aspect of society, if it can truly be boiled down to such numerically few yet broad categories, is the intangible. These intangibles are affected by the personal flavor of the location that seep into society. Cultures play a large role in this category, as heritage, religious affiliation, moral values, and ethical considerations largely lead society in its decision making. The decisions that a society makes, the way its leans in politics, in religion, in education, and in other aspects that largely impact the current and future trajectory of a generation often stem from the cultural and intangible influences embedded in society. Gunkel et. al. (2013) created a case study that examined cultural influence on career paths for students in eight different countries. It was found that cultural influences consistently impacted choices that decided the future trajectories of students around the world (Gunkel et. al., 2013). Education is highly impacted by culture as is business. Kobernyuk et. al. (2014) wrote on the importance of understanding culture when making international joint ventures. The authors used Russian examples and noted cultural factors as the difference between success and failure (Kobernyuk et. al., 2014). It is to be expected that international business deals would require cultural sensitivity to make things work.

Such sensitivity and awareness are also required when considering mergers and acquisitions. Rozen-Bakher (2018) wrote on mergers and acquisitions overseas and outlined the positive impact understanding and integrating cultural influences can have on making a successful business deal. Cultural influences are clearly impactful portions of society and as such, businesses wishing to effect society must cater to these influences. If a company can successfully impact such aspects of society as the intangibles, as well as the individual, the community, and the structures, it is safe to say that company will have achieved some form of non-financial success in the realm of the business world.

### **Unclaimed Baggage as an Example**

An example would seem to be in order. After all, no hypothesis can move into the theory stage without several successful experiments to add weight to the words. Scientific laws, theories, and hypotheses are fraught with trial and error, as is the world of business. New ideas, companies, and processes are invented, attempted, and tweaked often enough to keep the pioneering spirit of entrepreneurship alive. With the percentage of small businesses that make up all businesses worldwide, there are clearly several case studies to choose from on which to practice this experiment. The business chosen must have its beginnings in either small business or family-run business, be accountable to its community, and make an impact on society that has more implications than finances. The business would also preferably be somewhat recent, to accurately account for the market and demands of today. The realm of recent should be within the last 50-60 years at the latest. Such a timeline will allow for proper time of growth and impact to be determined while still being a well-established business that has proven its propensity to prosper and survive. A business with not too many offshoots would also be ideal, as only one society, community, and geographical area will need to be examined and scanned to search for



impactful behavior. Since society is a complex organism that is easily changing on many more factors than previously mentioned, only having to examine one would scale this experiment down to a reasonable degree while still producing insightful data. With this numerous criteria, one business has been selected to showcase its non-financial effects on society. The chosen company, Unclaimed Baggage, which resides in Alabama, has been able to impactfully add value to its surrounding society and community and success to itself as a byproduct, by means that are not confined to finances alone.

### **Brief History of Unclaimed Baggage**

Unclaimed Baggage began in 1970 from the back of a pickup truck. The founder, Doyle Owens, began traveling in a borrowed pickup truck to buy and sell unclaimed baggage from airlines (Unclaimed Baggage Website, 2019). The company soon had a brick and mortar store and began to attract media attention. Strange and unique items began pouring into the store in Scottsboro, Alabama and people began to follow the items. Foot traffic and tourism for the little town grew exponentially as the business began to take off. Today, the small town of Scottsboro, Alabama is one of the largest tourists stops in the whole state, all due to one store. One small business was able to greatly affect the community around it in a few non-financial ways.

Unclaimed Baggage improved the community of Scottsboro, Alabama by increasing the tourism revenue, creating an incredible CSR outreach program, and raising overall quality of life

### **Tourism Revenue**

To begin with, Unclaimed Baggage adds value to the community around it by increasing the tourism revenue. Scottsboro, Alabama was a postage stamp of a city before the business began. There was nothing inherently wrong with the city, it simply didn't attract many tourists or customers outside of itself for any reason. While it is important for a city's business to appeal to

those within its limits, at some point there will be no new customers to attract. If, however, an organization can bring consumers from outside the community consistently, it will never run out of new customers. Such action helps not only the business itself, but also the neighboring businesses which may see more foot traffic and therefore more customers than usual. It also helps the town itself, as more people means more purchases, more foot traffic, and ultimately more tourist revenue. Tourist revenue is money gained from the influx of travelers and sightseers that visit a geographic area. Drakulevski and Janeska-Iliev (2017) discussed the topic of small businesses in the context of tourism and noted that tourism is one factor that directly ties into the growth of corporations. This means that when there are more tourists, there will be more revenue and opportunities for growth in the business sector. Such growth does not affect only one business. On the contrary, increases in tourism allow for more people in a confined space and more potential customers for every business within that space of a city. Everyone who owns and operates a business wins when tourists regularly flock to a town. However, before Unclaimed Baggage began to thrive, the town it operated in had little to no tourists and consequently no extra tourist revenue. It was a town that had little of note in its history, with the exception of a civil rights atrocity hearing and sentencing that took years to rectify which is hardly a high-traffic tourist attraction. On the contrary, just like bad publicity needs to be balanced by an enormous amount of good publicity, poor history repels tourism and must have an attraction of serious substance to correct this imbalance in attractions. Since Unclaimed Baggage has gained traction in the public eye, this little town has been put on the map of publicity.

### **External Impact on Community**

From a past with virtually no tourism, Scottsboro has developed into a tourist haven that attracts over a million of tourists yearly, according to the city of Scottsboro's official website

(City of Scottsboro Website, 2019). The attraction of the store is in its novelty, as it is the only store like it in the entire United States. Many people can relate to losing luggage, as around 1% of all travelers lose their luggage in some way (Unclaimed Baggage Website, 2019). While this may seem like a small number, it is enough of a percentage to give Unclaimed Baggage inventory that has kept them running for nearly 50 years. The items in the store are very diverse, from full suits of armor, to designer clothing, and even to wedding rings and ostentatious jewelry. There is also a large clothing and shoe section, ranging from youth styles all the way up to elderly clothing designs (Unclaimed Baggage Website, 2019). There is something for everyone in this store, and new items come in daily which guarantees that no two visits will be the same. Such diversity and novelty keep the stream of tourists quite steady. These tourists come from all over the world, with visitors from every state and over 40 different countries (Unclaimed Baggage Website, 2019). For a city with a population of only 15,000 people, bringing in this large number of tourists yearly is no small feat. On the contrary, the revenue brought in from these tourists directly effects the town. In 2016, several businesses were honored by the state of Alabama for their retail and tourist contributions for the state. Unclaimed Baggage was at the top of its category and awarded the highest honor for its revenue bracket of five to twenty-million-dollar annual revenue and was applauded for its contribution to its city and state (Godwin, 2016). If an achievement is recognized not only by the city housing the company, but also by the entire state, then it is safe to say that the business itself has made a clear, large, and positive impact. Cole (2018) wrote about the impact of small businesses on the community and mentioned just how much a start-up can contribute to the town around it. Unclaimed Baggage has highly impacted the community surrounding it of Scottsboro, Alabama by bringing in more tourists than the town has ever had before.

### **Internal Impact on Stakeholders**

Bringing in steady streams of tourists yearly is impactful to the community surrounding Unclaimed Baggage but is also key to the success of the company itself. Adding value to the community by creating, stimulating, and increasing tourism streams gives confidence to both internal and external stakeholders surrounding the longevity of the company's lifespan. Employees, who represent perhaps the largest group of internal stakeholders for a small business, experience strong confidence at the prospect of continuous tourism translating to constant customers. For these internal stakeholders, knowing that the product or service of a company is satisfying customers to such a degree that they flock from far away geographical locations to experience it gives a high degree of job confidence. Employee confidence in a company is made up of retention, job satisfaction, and turnover rates. Retention is incredibly important to any organization that cares about quality and constant improvement. Shibiti (2019) wrote about the vitality of retention and how high rates can provide confidence to customers about the product or service provided by the company. If an employee is confident in the company, they will be likely to stay, and this imbues confidence in consumers who frequent the business. While Unclaimed Baggage is a private company and does not release exact information about retention, they do note on their website that many of their original management has stayed on in the company for most of the organization's lifetime (Unclaimed Baggage Website, 2019). Such an example of employee confidence indicates that the value of Unclaimed Baggage both internally and externally is being recognized and acted upon by stakeholders. One high level Employee, Brenda Cantrell, in an interview noted her personal satisfaction as an employee (2019). The mission and vision of the company was listed as one large reason for her continued presence with the company but also mentioned that no one in the company had any idea how big this business

would grow (2019). Such a sentiment about the growth and success of the company is not isolated to Cantrell alone. The presence of senior management dating back to the conception of the company is further proof of the employee confidence inside Unclaimed Baggage. When internal stakeholders see the value that a company gives to those around it, external stakeholders begin to take notice as well. The confidence that employees have on a company directly effects the consumer confidence placed in such an organization. If turnover rates are high, both customers and stakeholders will begin to have serious doubts about the future of the business. If retention is low, the same doubts about the company's future will arise. The consistency of customers and interest surrounding Unclaimed Baggage provides confidence towards and insight into the future of this small business for all stakeholders involved. When a company can prove the value of its communal impact to both its internal and external stakeholders, that company is well on its way to showcasing success through non-financial means.

### **CSR Adds Value**

Another way that Unclaimed Baggage adds value to the surrounding community is through its Corporate Social Responsibility program. Every company that wants to stay relevant in today's market needs to have some form of CSR embedded into the business. The importance of such programs cannot be overstated, simply because customers demand it. Though CSR found its beginning in the 1980's, the idea has recently experienced a large spike in popularity and wide-spread implementation. Lee and Rim (2018) wrote on this and noted that the impact of CSR has grown with its acceptance over the past two decades. In recent years, a push has been made for awareness of businesses on the effect they have on the environment, society, and community around them. Instead of businesses only focusing on themselves, consumers are demanding that businesses be responsible for the effect they have by their very presence in a

town, state, or nation. The particular shift in demand indicated here is mainly heralded by the two rising generations of Millennials and Generation Z. Kaur et. al. (2018) wrote about the effect of these two generations on current business practice and consistently underlined how important accountability is to these people groups. These consumer groups will hold companies accountable for the positive and negative effects made by them. For modern companies, this demands intentionality. Some approaches for CSR, especially from rather wealthy companies, are made up entirely of throwing money into some program. While money is important, simply donating profits without any intentionality does not satisfy customers. One definition of Corporate Social Responsibility comes from Kang, Germann, and Grewal (2016). They stated that CSR is best defined as corporate actions that advance social good more than what is demanded legally (Kang, Germann, and Grewal, 2016). Such a definition shows the intolerance towards doing simply the legal bare minimum. Consumers are now demanding CSR components that actually effect the community, especially those worse off than the business, and these consumers expect the CSR to connect somehow to the business. For many customers, the CSR is a truer picture of a company's values than the vision or mission statement. After all, what people value is where they will put their money. It stands to reason, then, that a company should choose a Corporate Social Responsibility program that matches their values, vision, mission, and goals. Unclaimed Baggage has perfected this for their business model in several ways.

### **Unclaimed Baggage CSR**

Firstly, Unclaimed Baggage matches its CSR initiatives to its vision, mission, and goals through the company's donations. There are many companies who take the easy road and donate money, demonstrating to the public that financial contributions are as far as they are willing to go. That is not the case with Unclaimed Baggage. On the contrary, most of the donations made

by this Alabama business are made up of the contents from the luggage collected. Unclaimed Baggage partners with over a dozen charities around the world including giving eyeglasses to those who cannot see, donating clothing to the homeless population local and foreign, sending medical supplies to developing countries, and giving finances to several pregnancy crisis centers worldwide (Unclaimed Baggage Website, 2019). Having so many outreach programs appeals to more than one demographic of customers, resulting in a charity branch that touches nearly every nation and need. Clearly demonstrated here are the values that this company holds, values that extend well past simply making a profit. Unclaimed Baggage values those not as well-off and they value them enough to act on their values. One author talks about the importance of charity work and notes how much impact a small business can have. In fact, according to surveys done by the National Federation of Independent Businesses, the majority of owners of small businesses are not only invested in their communities but also give money, resources, and time to local charities that directly affect the people around them (Locally O.M., 2017). Such investment is indicative of Unclaimed Baggage as a small business. Instead of just seeing the pain surrounding them, in their town with homelessness or Salvation army, in the nation with pregnancy centers and foster care problems, and abroad with medical supplies, reading materials, and outreach materials for pastors, the company set out to make a difference. They ended up partnering with Liberty University this year to make a difference in the lives of those in foster care in the Lynchburg area, which surrounds Liberty. Unclaimed Baggage and Liberty partnered to give a hand-painted suitcase full of toys and necessities to every foster child in Lynchburg, which falls under a part of the store's CSR, known as Love Luggage. The Love Luggage initiative gives suitcases full of needs and wants to foster children to help give them a sense of identity. In an interview with Liberty's campus pastor, Brenda Cantrell who is the brand

ambassador for Unclaimed Baggage, noted that foster kids move often and more times than not they have no suitcase or duffel bag to pack their belongings in. Instead, foster children often carry everything they own in a trash bag, and Cantrell (2019) noted that when everything you have is packed like trash, it is easy for the child to believe that they themselves are garbage. To help combat this mindset and to give foster children some anchor in their sea of uncertainty, Unclaimed Baggage started their Love Luggage initiative. Partnering with Liberty University to reach the 308 foster children of Lynchburg is only one partnership of many that Unclaimed frequently uses to widen their reach and increase their impact. The many Corporate Social Responsibility programs of Unclaimed Baggage were not made to satisfy customer demand for them, but rather to follow the values of the company itself, values for people in need around the world. Even without ulterior motives in creating their CSR programs, Unclaimed Baggage has been able to fulfill the demand of its customers and satisfy the needs of its community in regard to said programs. When a company is able to align its Corporate Social Responsibility with beliefs and values held by the business, that company will be able to succeed in the public's eye and remain in the good graces of its customer base.

### **Internal Value of CSR**

However, CSR initiatives do not simply add value to the community. On the contrary, correct usage of Corporate Social Responsibility makes the company stronger from the inside out. With smaller amounts of employees, it is increasingly important for businesses to have a strong and well-developed core. If Corporate Social Responsibility convinces the public of the value a company can bring but is unable to convince those inside the company of the same value, then the CSR is not being used to its full potential. CSR initiatives at their very core are supposed to be external outflows of the internal values a firm holds. If CSR does not begin



internally and begin implementation through the preexisting values and culture inherent to the company, then it will not be of any value to internal stakeholders such as employees. The pattern must begin with top management because if those in authority are not excited to implement CSR initiatives, then no other team members will be either. Chatjuthamard, Jiraporn, Tong, and Singh (2016) wrote on this topic and noted that talented managers not only see the importance of Corporate Social Responsibility but are also anxious and willing to lead the charge of implementation. The point is to lead by example, allowing every single person in the organization to both be in agreement with the values and mission of the company and be personally willing to make such visions into realities. Unclaimed Baggage is able to do this throughout its company. Many employees share their personal connection to the company, stating how the many branches of outreach were what drew them to work for the luggage resale company (Unclaimed Baggage Website, 2019). People like to help others, and many employees of today's workforce have a desire to work for a company that makes an impact on the world. Mahrinasari (2019) wrote on the topic of CSR and noted that many modern consumers and employees desire CSR that targets philanthropic ideals instead of only economic factors. That is yet another demand shifter that Unclaimed Baggage is able to tap into with its Corporate Social Responsibility. Instead of only focusing on impacting through financial or economic means, this resale company targets mostly philanthropic uses of its donations. These include the wheelchairs, eyeglasses, clothing, shoes, medicinal supplies, and foster children care packages detailed earlier. These connect directly with the employees associated with Unclaimed Baggage and is one of the reasons that the company has retained employees and board members since early on in its life. Cantrell (2019), further in the interview, noted her personal connection with the outreach of Unclaimed Baggage. As a former foster child, she was enthralled by the idea of reaching out to

help these children in a very real and tangible way. In fact, Cantrell (2019) referenced her personal connection to the mission and vision of the company as one of the reasons she believes so strongly in Unclaimed Baggage. Indeed, this is only one example of many employees that have seen the value this company can offer through its Corporate Social Responsibility. Showcasing the value to be found through CSR to community, customers, and stakeholders is yet another way that small businesses can find and nurture success.

### **Quality of Life Measures**

One last way that Unclaimed Baggage is able to add value to the community around it is by raising the overall quality of life for Scottsboro, Alabama. Quality of life, which can be denoted as QOL, has been defined in several ways. It all depends on who is asked. While there is not one specific list of quality of life factors, one list of such factors can be compiled. The list includes factors such as education, cost of living, crime rate, environmental factors, and overall development of the community. Aivazian (2016), who wrote extensively on the subject of quality of life, noted that both the environment and the perception of the environment is important for this measurement. The same author also noted that quality of life can measure both on a personal or community-wide level, which can also determine which factors make the list (Aivazian, 2016). It should come as no surprise that the quality of life for one person may fall short of the measurement for another individual. There are many different measurements of personal qualities of goodness when it comes to individual human experiences. There are even more standards when deciding the correct measurements of qualities for an entire community, township, or city. Clearly, many considerations go into the multi-faceted topic of quality of life as its reach is far and extensive. Cities around the globe market themselves for their high quality of life as a way to attract tourists and residents. Hageman (2014) wrote on this topic, noting that

quality of life is a top-three factor for individuals looking to move cities or jobs. It is not only a high determinant for potential employees but to future employers as well as a high quality of life creates a valid attraction for businesses to set up shop. It can bring in revenue, give confidence for schools to expand, and convince families to settle down and stay in the area. Quality of life is no small feat for a community to achieve, and even harder to maintain once it has been gained. After all, so many things go into the formula for quality of life and if even one is lacking, the quality is not achieved enough to be perceived as valuable.

### **Small Business Impact on Quality of Life**

Scottsboro has had various measurements of quality of life in the past and has had fluctuations as well. One source talked about the historical education levels of Scottsboro, and how it has dealt with having very little funding for its education (2019). However, in recent years, the funding for Scottsboro's schools has skyrocketed as the budget has grown (2019). One of the reasons that the budget has grown is due to the excess in city revenue brought in by the tourism influx. Having adequate funding for education has always been important for communities around the world. After all, educating the next generation properly can help insure the prosperity of the future. One source concerning the value of education mentioned the impact schooling has on shaping the future, including personal habits, morality, cultural appreciation, and value systems (Importance of Education, 2019). The care given to the next generation directly affects the future to come, a consideration always noted when educational funding issues arise. Having the extra money from tourism has helped the community of Scottsboro improve their education and therefore one aspect of their quality of life. Another aspect of quality of life that has been improved is the condition of the town itself. With the increases in traffic, both pedestrian and vehicular, the town has taken steps to reinvent itself. Through programs including

beautification, improving road conditions, and increasing safety measures, the town of Scottsboro has continued to improve itself to attract more tourists (Scottsboro Tourism, 2019). Each of these programs has improved the quality of life in this Alabama town in one way or another. Whether it be the increase of beauty to the senses, decreasing damage to vehicles with road remodels, or lowering of accidents to people and vehicles by new safety measures, the quality of life is clearly being raised. Not all of this can be attributed to Unclaimed Baggage, but the tourists the company attracts to the town are the majority of the driving force behind these decisions. Lee (2016), an author on several works surrounding entrepreneurship and economics, wrote extensively on the effect one single start-up can have on the community around it. One point made in this work was that the longer the company exists in the city, the larger the impact that can be made (Lee, 2016). Discussion of longevity translates well for Unclaimed Baggage, which is nearing its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in the Alabama city. The prolonged presence of this company has brought an onset of constant tourists which comprise the main purpose of this continuous improvement. Bloom (2017), another author on the topic of the effects of small business in quality of life, noted that it is important to make a difference in the community that is obvious to all if that company wishes to stay relevant. Bloom (2017) continued along this thread to write about how helping the community better itself will result in the company bettering itself as well, whether through increase in customers, better understanding of the values of consumers, or even simply cementing the values the company desires to have. The point is clear, improving the well-being and quality of life in the community affects everyone involved positively. It is just that simple. Unclaimed Baggage understands this concept and has been able to create value for the town of Scottsboro by improving the overall quality of life.

### **Unclaimed Baggage Conclusion**

Companies wish to leave a positive impression of those it comes in contact with. Whether that be customer service, sales, or in-store interactions, companies desire to create positive report with those it impacts. When that fails, many companies simply throw money at the problem to make it go away. However, if a company is small or family-owned and lacks large amounts of money, it is still possible to make a positive impact on the community surrounding it. Such a powerful idea is personified in the Scottsboro, Alabama business of Unclaimed Baggage. By raising the town's tourism revenue, creating impactful Corporate Social Responsibility programs, and improving overall quality of life, Unclaimed Baggage has been able to add significant value to the community that houses it. One business, small and family-owned that it may be, has been able to leave such an impact on its community that the town before Unclaimed Baggage is nearly unrecognizable. Clearly, the impact of a business is not inhibited by finances alone but rather hinges on the intentionality, hard work, and values held by the company itself. Unclaimed Baggage has leveraged these assets and has made an impact on its community that will carry the business into success for years to come.

### **Another Small Business Example**

The impact of community immediately surrounding a company has been well fleshed out through the example of Unclaimed Baggage in relation to Scottsboro, Alabama. However, a discussion still exists for the societal impact of a start-up in a larger context. One small business, Ten Thousand Villages does affect its direct geographic community, which will be discussed later, but finds its most drastic affects are actually abroad. The small business was started in 1946 by Edna Ruth Byler after a trip to Puerto Rico opened her eyes to the international plight of poverty (Ten Thousand Villages Website, 2020). Byler, as a survivor of the Great Depression

wanted to bring human dignity and economic stability to the people she had met internationally (2020). That move launched a business that today spans hundreds of countries and peoples, impacts communities around the world, and sets a precedence for other small businesses. The business itself partners with artisans, creators, and craftsmen in less fortunate countries and nations, allowing these individuals to create and sustain a means of support for themselves and their families. One goal of this company, noted by Macdonald (2020), is to lend aid in a way that allows for human dignity, to people who cannot market well enough to support themselves on their own. That is a worthy goal for any business, but it is made more dramatic by the small size of the original company. Ten Thousand Villages has grown since its modest beginnings, with several individual locations across the United States and Canada. These locations are individually run by store managers and occasionally owners, but still partner with the global artisans (Ten Thousand Villages Website, 2020). Such growth is indicative of the affect Ten Thousand Villages has made. When a business is able to not only create a good product or service but also appeal to the wants and needs of its customers at a level previously unreached, there is no limit to the growth that will be seen.

### **Fair Trade Practices**

With all this growth and impact being shown, it would be wise to research and shine some light on the source of this success. The biggest source for Ten Thousand Villages is its Fair-Trade practices as this sets the company apart. Beji-Becheur, Diaz Pedregal, and Ozcaglar-Toulouse (2008) found the definition of Fair Trade to be trade between developed countries, usually noted as the North, and developing countries, usually found to be in the South. The exchange seeks to make the best of an unequal situation, where countries with less economic stability can still have a fair impact on the market. The point of this endeavor is not to dish out

pointless charity, but to have a level, even fair, playing field where countries with less economic sway can still function and trade with human dignity. Fair Trade practices have gained traction in recent years and more and more businesses have adopted them or partnered with organizations that support such endeavors. Smith (2013) talked about such adoption of the idea by companies and noted that while there are still concerns to be addressed, ultimately fair trade is good for everyone involved. The practice of Fair Trade itself has developed since it began in the 1990s, with several adaptations and far more partners being added. As it has gained traction, Smith (2013) noted that companies partnering with Fair Trade often are viewed very positively by the public eye. Not only does partnering with these practices lead to a moral satisfaction, the good Public Relations, marketing angle, and appealing to customer wants are reasons for a company to desire to align itself with Fair Trade. However, while there are clear benefits to being Fair Trade certified or partnering with other who are, there are also significant costs. Getting certified is not a simple process and can often be both lengthy and costly. Smith (2013) wrote that the process involves a grading scale, deadlines that must be met, consistent actions by the company, and passing inspection at every checkpoint along the way. These costs and regulations may be a deterrent to some companies. After all, cost benefit analysis is an important consideration in business, and cost is no small factor to a young, small, or family-owned business. However, the cost did not outweigh the benefits for Ten Thousand Villages. On the contrary, Macdonald (2020) writes that the business is the “first Fair-Trade operation importing from small-scale farmers in developing countries” and further noted that its relationships with supporting partnerships are equally impacted (p. 1). Leading the charge in this area is an instrumental and historical impact, not only for the company but also for the Fair-Trade movement as a whole.

**Impact Abroad**

The Fair-Trade practices of Ten Thousand Villages reach vast amounts of people around the world every day, interacting with vendors and artisans, and providing a means of support for individuals, families, and communities. However, that only scratches the surface. The company has a big impact to make, and it seeks to influence its customers and global partners in a plethora of ways. To begin with, Ten Thousand Villages is dedicated to reliability. While some companies may be tempted to partner with Fair Trade, or any of the organizations surrounding the idea, purely for the good PR, Ten Thousand Villages has a deeper purpose. The official website of the company mentions the importance of sustainable and long-term relationships (2020). That should come as no surprise, as continued relations with vendors and partners fuels the very nature of this business. If the artisans and craftsmen that Ten Thousand Villages partners with were to break the agreement, much of the valuable, personal, and unique inventory the company holds would be lost. Without inventory, the small business would be out of a job and out of luck. However, its prolonged life since the 1940s simply shine a light of transparency on the successful endeavor of long-term relationships with suppliers overseas. Another indicator of the deep ties of the company to its mission comes in the form of its goals. One large goal of the company, as stated on the website, is create opportunities for those in need (2020). Perhaps, this may seem obvious, but goals, visions, and missions of any company should be straightforward and attainable. Those in need represent a rather large category and can be broken down as follows: those in economic distress, those suffering from gender inequality, those with disabilities, and those seeking to be able to get children out of unsafe working environments (Ten Thousand Villages Website, 2020). These are only a few broad categories that represent multiple people groups, geographical regions, and communities. The company also strive to help with



environmental issues to create a better future for posterity, according to Ten Thousand Villages' website (2020). The importance of environmental conservation in the realm of business has been discussed previously, but it is still worth noting that larger companies are often seen in a negative light due to heavily publicized environmental failures. If small businesses are able to stay abreast of what makes the general public happy while still maintaining and staying true to company values, those businesses will be ahead of the curve in business. Ten Thousand Villages also partners with several organizations to stop human trafficking and end child labor. These harmful practices not only hurt the individuals involved, but they stunt the growth of community and hurt every person involved in trade. Practices that harm others have limitless negative impact and cannot be ignored. That is one reason why such initiatives as fair trade are so important; they provide an alternative to simply buying something made with questionable morality and legality by offering a better solution. Each of these aspects of Ten Thousand Villages showcases the impact this small business has on the world around it. The company combined its morals and mission with a Fair-Trade practice to allow itself a larger reach and thereby increased its impact by extension.

### **Impact at Home**

While this small business has been shown to impact the world abroad with its Fair Trade practices, especially targeting those in economically weak countries, those with disabilities, those in non-gender-equal countries, and those in need, the company also has an impact on the immediate community it is located in. No discussion on the impact of small businesses can be considered complete without addressing the geographical location of the company itself. Global impact is a large portion of what Ten Thousand Villages does but it is not the only item on the list. On the contrary, impact both home and abroad are important aspects of the company's

mission according to its website (2020). If impact overseas has been well threshed out for this small business, then impact at home still needs to be addressed. The impact that Unclaimed Baggage has on its community was shown through CSR, tourism revenue, and quality of life. CSR is especially poignant for Ten Thousand Villages, as its activities with Fair Trade more than qualify as Socially Responsible activities. However, as this point has already been addressed several times, to avoid repetition or redundancy, other factors for community impact must be shown here. One of the biggest factors showing community impact for this company is its internship program. Internships are widely used across America to give students and young people access to jobs that will increase their experiences, better their resumes, and hone their business skills. Whether or not the internship is paid has been a cause for some debate in academia, but this paper will not seek to answer such questions. Instead, the impact of internships on community is the question posed here. Internships are good for the community in several ways especially as concerns today's youth and the next rising class of workers. Jeffers (2013), one author among many to write about the significance of internships, noted that internships are mutually beneficial to the interns and companies alike. Some business arrangements favor one party over the other, such a hostile takeover or a mortgage. These business deals exist but can leave a negative impact as one party may be unsatisfied. However, the best business arrangements occur when both parties benefit from the exchange and are satisfied. Internships represent such an exchange. Ten Thousand Villages is one of many small businesses to offer an internship program, each with a unique take and each with the ability to make a large impact. For Ten Thousand Villages particularly, the impact has been quite large indeed. Exxon Mobile and Volunteer Houston partnered together in 2009 and several years following to provide internship opportunities and reward worthy companies already containing

interning programs (2009). Ten Thousand Villages was on this list, beating out a long list of other companies in the area, which further shows the impact of this company on its community. That specific year represented a milestone with a few notable highlights, including increased pay for interns, higher chances of being hired after finishing the program, and training that would benefit both companies and interns (2009). Ten Thousand Villages has been lauded for its internship program, by Exxon Mobile and Volunteer Houston among others, for making an actual impact on the interns it worked with (2009). The tie between education and community growth has already been noted with the example of Unclaimed Baggage, but it is worth remembering at least one detail that applies here as well. When children and dependents are well taken care of, the community, especially working parents, experience less burnout and more growth (2018). In this case, many interns are still dependents, whether they are individuals in high school or college. Being able to not only positively affect the interns in their career goals but also their parents and the community by extension is no small feat. Ten Thousand Villages makes such an impact on its direct community in this respect that it has been recognized by the city it resides in and a large brand-name company such as Exxon Mobile. While its abroad impact is vastly important and well-maintained, it is also clear that Ten Thousand Villages impacts its community at home as well.

### **COL1972 As an Example**

So far, small business impact has been looked at through the lens of direct community impact and global impact. The two companies used so far are quite good examples and represent factors that apply to many more small businesses around the world. However, there is one more impact region to highlight to wrap up this hypothesis. While factors such as environment, education, quality of life, tourism, CSR, human dignity, internships, and beautification have been

listed, there is one quite unique factor that is worth noting in this context. That factor is politics. As mentioned previously, politics deeply impact society and culture at various levels. Any company that can successfully navigate these historically turbulent waters will easily be able to show impact. However, in the modern world of business, politics are often an extremely taboo subject as they can bring bad publicity, damage brand image, and anger customers instead of satisfying them. Choosing to affiliate a non-political company with politics is not always wise nor popular. An article written before the first World War talks about the taboo nature of entering politics as a businessman and urges businesses to steer clear of such practices (1908). Runo (1960) also wrote about this topic well before the turn of the century, and noted that while entering politics can be beneficial, it is a decision that should be weighed carefully. Viewpoints from so far in the past do not always possess great usefulness today, but both author's work show just how long this thinking has existed. More modern authors also have much to say on the topic. Essian et. al. (2019) wrote extensively on personal politics and their effects on organizational culture. These authors found that while there were some positive aspects, the optimistic results required careful planning, management, and company commitment to bring about success (Essian et. al., 2019). With all of this information in mind, it may seem that politics cannot or rather should not be addressed by businesses because they carry such risk with them. However, with potential risk comes potential reward. The negative view of politics in the workplace calls for caution, discernment, and wisdom. If these criteria are met, there is indeed great potential for reward and organizational success. There are several good examples that could be pulled from the large amounts of small businesses across the United States, but one especial company will be addressed here. That company is known as COL1972.

### **Political Aspect of Pro-choice and Pro-life**

COL1972 is a relatively young company. It began in January of 2019 with a simple mission in mind. The company wanted to celebrate life from conception to the very last breath. The name itself stands for Culture of Life and the 1972 stands for the year before the infamous Roe vs. Wade decision of 1973 (COL1972 Website, 2020). According to the official website, it is also currently the only business to support pro-life organizations with every sale (2020). Started by a mother and three daughters of the D'Addesi family, it is the definition of a small family start-up. However, the company has achieved incredible growth in the short time it has been open and has gained significant traction in the market it operates in. The growth it has garnered could be viewed as surprising due to the political nature of the support this company sends to pro-life organizations. The pro-life vs. pro-choice movement is as tense as ever and is mostly viewed as a political issue rather than an ethical one. In fact, it is not uncommon for individuals voting on this issue to be viewed as belonging to one specific party. Greaux (2017), in an article about abortion issues, referred to all pro-life individuals as belonging to the right and all pro-choice individuals as belonging to the left. Greaux is not the only author to write in such a way, as a simple dive into social media will reveal the same trends. Another source, a data survey about the voting habits and demographics of individuals involving the issue of abortion found that 74% of those polled who were pro-life self-identified as Republicans while 71% of those polled who were pro-choice self-identified as Democrats (Pro-choice, 2019). Such trends further cement the status of this issue as being political. In the face of negative aspects listed since the early 1900's and the current turbulence of this modern issue, it may seem unwise to even attempt political affiliations. The growth and success of COL1972 would present a counter to this argument and a good analysis of the ability of small businesses to overcome even in the

midst of great opposition. The company does not succeed simply because it waded into a political battleground. That would be irrational and authors on this subject clearly outlined the need for wisdom going forward. Ultimately Col1972 has been able to garner its current success from a variety of factors including filling a gap in the market, appealing to customers, and using a bit of ingenuity.

### **Filling Gaps in the Market**

One way that COL1972 has been able to succeed is by filling a gap in the market previously unattended. The example of Unclaimed Baggage showed the importance of filling gaps in the market, while the Fair-Trade practices of Ten Thousand villages demonstrated the success of offering a better and more ethical substitute product. COL1972 is able to combine both of these aspects into its business model. The gap in the market is straightforward: no other business was giving money to pro-life groups while a plethora of companies donated to pro-choice organizations (COL1972 Website, 2020). Perhaps this may seem like a small gap to fill. Indeed, smaller gaps have led to success in business, such as the gap filled when driving services such as Uber or Lyft began. These companies both have made millions since their start, with Uber raking in around \$997 million dollars in net income in 2018 according to the SEC website (2020). These companies existed to fill one small gap in the market, the niche of driving services when taxis failed, and these companies are thriving as an accepted staple of society. Therefore, it is clear that the size of the gap to fill in a market is not necessarily a deterrent. However, there is reason to believe that this gap in the market is not in fact that small. Planned Parenthood, the biggest pro-choice organization in the United States, gets much of its revenue from contributions, specifically contributions from businesses. In 2019 alone, according to the company's annual report \$591 million dollars of the \$1638 revenue came from company

contributions (2019). In short, this means that roughly one-third of the revenue keeping a pro-choice organization operating comes from businesses. Family Council put together a list of companies that support Planned Parenthood, with 58 supporting directly and 238 supporting indirectly through third parties (2020). These nearly 300 companies all contribute to that one-third of annual revenue. Such a trend holds steady throughout years of the company's history and shows the impact of business contributions. The importance of CSR has been well established thus far and indicates the impact that company time and money can have on the community around it. The issue of abortion is no exception; businesses are making statements with their contributions and it is having affects. However, COL1972 is seeking to make an impact for the pro-life movement, instead of towards pro-choice. One seemingly large problem would be the roughly 300 companies supporting the most prominent pro-choice company as opposed to this one small business. In the face of such odds, COL1972 has still been able to successfully fill the gap of being the one company to make pro-life contributions. One to three hundred may not seem like great odds, but instead of snuffing out this little company the stark difference in numbers has allowed COL1972 to shine out all the brighter. Filling a gap in the market is only one aspect of the impact this small business makes on its community, but it is nevertheless an important one.

### **Wants and Needs of Customers**

The world of business is full of exchanges. Good and services are exchanged for currency every day. As mentioned earlier, the best kind of exchanges are when both parties win and are satisfied. It stands to reason that every business exchange should seek to create exchanges that satisfy customers. After all, unsatisfied customers do not return and make more purchases. Purchases drive revenue and if customers are not satisfied, a company may soon find itself out of

business. Discovering the wants and needs of customers to best understand the ways to satisfy them is a large part of any successful business. Filling a gap in the market is often a good place to start when understanding customer desires. If this company markets itself as the one company contributing to pro-life, then it presupposes that people are interested in that endeavor. Data shows that customers do indeed care. While this company is privately-held and therefore does not release its financial statements, the official website does note that it has expanded operations, has more customer demand, and has had to hire more employees to handle the inflow of orders (2020). Such growth is not only good for COL1972 but also indicates that the company is on the right track. The business has also begun satisfying customer demand in a unique way involving public speaking. Carla D'Adessi and her daughters have been in demand as inspirational speakers across the nation, including pro-life events and at colleges. Recently, COL1972's founders were invited to be keynote speakers at Liberty University and hosted a pro-life event while on campus. Phillips (2020) wrote about this event and noted that the company has gained more interest as it has grown and mentioned the standing-room only status of this particular event. While the business is still young, it has managed to spark interest and grab attention from customers across the country. The desire to hear more about the company through public speaking is both an indication of growth and an example of the growing impact of the small business itself.

Another aspect of customer wants and needs has to do with the idea of an alternative product. If a company is only good because it is involved in a political issue and does not deliver the quality product it has advertised, then customers will become dissatisfied, which usually leads to the inevitable end of said company. However, COL1972 somehow manages to walk the line successfully. While it does indeed contribute to pro-life organizations, it needs income to do



so and the company sells enough of its clothing, accessory, and jewelry lines to consistently make the contributions that set it apart. One of the first items listed by the company came after a celebrity wore a necklace referencing the Roe vs. Wade court case. Phillips (2020) writes that COL1972 released a gold necklace that bore the date “1972” as a response which gained a substantial amount of interest. Such piqued interest was only the beginning, but the response the company got from its first product was overwhelming. Today, the company sells several lines of apparel, bags, purses, jewelry, and other accessories (COL1972 Website, 2020). It also has gained a partnership with Under Armour, a heavyweight in the athletic apparel industry, further showing the growth of the company (COL1972 Website, 2020). All of this growth and interest is indicative of appealing to customer wants and needs. When customers are happy and satisfied, they return to spend more money. Customers of COL1972 have a very personal experience when they make a purchase. The first purchase of any item brings with it a personal email from the company that thanks the consumer for joining the “life tribe” of the company (COL1972 Website, 2020). Instead of an impersonal interaction which can be indicative of online shopping, the customers of COL1972 are treated like valued guests with very personal touches. The founder in an interview with Phillips (2020) noted that the vision for the company was to make pro-life shopping a fun, exciting, and “winsome” experience for all involved. The issue at hand is very heavy, weighted, and somber for many who fall on the side of pro-life. While still respecting the stakes of the issue at hand, COL1972 represents a celebration of life in all its stages. The company website lives up to the vision of the founder, with joy, excitement, and celebration written into every aspect of the company (COL1972 Website, 2020). In the midst of a very tumultuous issue, the joy and value of life present in this unprecedented company is refreshing and is yet another reason to keep customers coming back for more.

### **Ingenuity and Impact**

The final aspect of the successful impact of this small business comes in the form of ingenuity. Small businesses thrive on the entrepreneurial spirit which thrives on creativity which sprouts from just one good idea. The good idea of filling a gap in the market was obvious to the founders. The entrepreneurial spirit was obvious in the founders. All that was lacking was that spark of creativity which came in a rather unlikely way. A former employee at Planned Parenthood, a high-ranking clinic director of the largest pro-choice organization in America provided the biggest voice to boost COL1972 to success. Abby Johnson is well-known in the pro-life versus pro-choice arena. Her employment with Planned Parenthood lasted eight years and led her to a position in management. However, Johnson ended up resigning from the organization after witnessing an abortion firsthand and today is one of the most active voices for the pro-life movement (North, 2019). She also is the brand ambassador for COL1972. Her activist status, presence in the community, and reputation surrounding this issue has been of monumental help to this small business. There are many pro-life organizations around the country, including ARIN and National Right to Life, with strong speakers who have incredible drive for this issue. Johnson represents a unique angle and viewpoint as she has worked inside what many view as the catalyst of pro-choice. In fact, the journey of Johnson was recently made into a movie that influenced many people. The movie, *Unplanned*, was released in 2019, reached a massive audience, and exceeded box office expectations according to North (2019). While there are several influential persons involved in the pro-life movement, a former pro-choice advocate who worked for Planned Parenthood in a prestigious position and is currently making a huge media influence such as Abby Johnson is indeed a powerful ally to have. Teaming up with such a unique and loud voice on the issue of abortion was exactly the kind of creativity needed to

set COL1972 apart. Indeed, such ingenuity added enormous amounts of value to customers by not only presenting a product good enough to stand on its own, but also enlisted the help of a voice that currently calls others to action. The impact on the pro-life community by associating with a known and respected member and arguably leader of said community shows the impact of this small family-run company is not limited to the size of the business itself. Rather, impact is only limited by the amount of time and effort put in. COL1972 impacts its community in a political realm usually denoted by fear and a taboo status. The impact of this small business reaches the multitudes of individuals in the pro-life movement and maintains its vision of being a wholesome company with a true celebration of life.

### **Analysis**

After careful research into the feasibility of measuring a small business' success by non-financial means, theorizing what elements would go into this standard, and then holding several small businesses up to see what results it would bring to light, the evidence for this theory is strong. It would seem that small businesses can make a substantial impact on their respective communities, customers, and shareholders without ever breaking into the publicly traded million-dollar club of the global economy. With this question seeming to be put to rest, one query still remains. It asks what should current small businesses, family companies, and tiny start-ups do to make an impact in a financial and litigiously led society. Clearly an impact can be made, but the question now is how. There are steps that must be taken that will help the millions of small businesses in America and many more around the world achieve the success of companies such as Unclaimed Baggage, Ten Thousand Villages, and COL1972. In short, these queries ask what morals can be gleaned from this theory and case studies that could impact the small business community around the world. The answers to these analysis questions are

straightforward but take ample implementation. They are as follows: success is measured by proving value, value is proven by highlighting impact, and impact must be made on the levels of customers, community, and shareholder.

### **Proving Value**

For small businesses, success cannot be measured by financial means alone, a topic that has been thoroughly addressed previously. Due to this, small organizations must prove their worth to the world in other ways. Proving value to one's customers is key to staying successful in the business world. For start-ups, small businesses, and family-run organizations, this must be done outside of the balance sheet and income statement line items. Such separation is due to the fact that in the monetary realm, bigger and wealthier companies will win by default. The key is for smaller companies to learn how to add value to the world around them through other means. Aristotle said that "the greatest virtues are those which are most useful to other persons" (Aristotle Quotes, 2020). Such wisdom is especially true for small businesses, which can add value to its customers in ways that larger companies may not be able to. Some of these highlighted thus far are bringing in tourism, Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives, and raising the quality of life. Of this list, tourism may be the hardest to achieve as it requires a unique enough product or service that will attract national or even international attention. Many small businesses struggle to attract the locals and may never achieve this standard. The other two previously noted, however, are reasonable goals for any company, regardless of size or reach. The importance of CSR has been previously stated, and as such an important factor in consumers' minds, it is imperative that businesses implement such programs. Most small businesses interact on a personal level with their customers, to a degree that many larger companies cannot replicate. The personal touch is a good place to start for ideas regarding CSR.

After all, CSR is demanded by the people and is catered to satisfy their needs. It stands to reason that people should be the starting point for creating Corporate Social Responsibility programs. Small businesses in the food industry may wish to look at alleviating hunger in their region, perhaps using their pantry excess as the basis of this outreach program. Family businesses in the clothing market could consider looking to clothing the homeless domestically or aiding refugees abroad. The items could come directly from excess inventory or a donation system. These are only a few applications for CSR that could be easily implemented yet carry large potential for showing value of a company. Raising the Quality of Life ties directly into adding value to a community and heralding success for a company. Whether a business touches economic, education, environmental, or crime rate factors, improving quality of life is an incredibly viable way to contribute to society. Baptista and Leitao (2015) wrote on the effect of general welfare provided by small businesses. They noted that small businesses think outside the box to “add value and not just appropriate existing value” (2015, p. 1). One such creative way that any small business can play ball here would be through economic factors, namely the job market. Wit and Kok (2013) wrote on the effect that small businesses can have on job creation and they argued contrary to earlier works, noting that these companies do indeed have profound positive effects on job creation. Creating new jobs is a prevalent demand in today’s market and when a company is able to achieve this mark, it garners positive public opinion and is able to add value to its community. However, there are some small businesses that simply lack the financial means to hire new employees and thereby create new jobs. These companies are not automatically disqualified from effecting quality of life. On the contrary, a more creative solution must simply be found instead. One solution popular across businesses is an internship program. Internships cater to young high school or college students mostly and allow them to both gain work

experience and contribute to a company. Many of these positions are unpaid or at a fraction of the rate of full-time employees. Again, financial impacts are not the only value that small companies can bring. Often, connection to customer values, direct impact to the community, and a touch of entrepreneurial ingenuity are some of the best ways to demonstrate value to a world that longs for just such innovative solutions.

### **Impactful Decisions**

Once the inherent value of a start-up has been proven, its impact must be made on the levels of customers, community, and stakeholders. Only then will a company experience growth and be measured as successful. Whether a small business is housed by a bustling urban landscape or a peaceful rural township, the impact made can be profound. However, each small business will have a slightly different impact based on a variety of factors. Gomez, Isakov, and Semansky (2000) wrote on this very topic, listing company size, years of operation, location density, diversity in product offerings, and target markets as just a few such factors. These authors continued to write about the effects start-ups can have on rural, urban, and suburban areas around the world, noting that positive effects are not limited to one geographical location (Gomez, Isakov, and Semansky, 2000). Impact of small business is not limited to one industry either, such as the retail or restaurant examples that have been the majority used previously. On the contrary, good examples of positive impact from start-ups can come from every corner of the business world. Mottaleb, Rahut, and Erenstein (2019) wrote a case study on fertilizer traders in Bangladesh and the effect these entrepreneurs make. Some of the findings from the study showed that these start-ups that fill gaps in the market are so impactful that they influence rice production rates, government contracts, and farming agendas for years into the future (Mottaleb, Rahut, and Erenstein, 2019). These tradesmen in a niche market are able to use their

businesses to positively affect the farming community in Bangladesh, showing how impact size is not determined by business size. While every small business is unique and by that definition will not be perfectly like another, the point is that a positive impact can be made. Furthermore, small businesses should strive to make the highest positive impact in their power, touching both internal and external stakeholders, if success is something they seek. Impact leads to success and success leads to growth. When small businesses are able to prove their value by impacting customers, community, and stakeholders on every level, they will allow themselves not only success now, but both growth and success well into the future.

### **Conclusion**

The business world today is made up of companies, large and small, that survive and thrive through the imprint they leave on the global market. Bigger companies often have larger reaches than small endeavors, and the majority of their impact and weight come from financial means. Small businesses, however, are no less valuable to the market due to their size and lesser bank accounts. Success for small businesses must be measured by non-financial means, which includes several variables that can be condensed down to one idea: impact on society. Small businesses that can show their positive impact on society will be successful, as is seen in the thriving businesses of Unclaimed Baggage, Ten Thousand Villages, and COL1972. Each of these start-ups have grown, one blooming into a tourist attraction of national and even global proportions. The success of one company is mostly due to the impact it made on its community in Alabama through its CSR initiatives and positive impact on the quality of life. Success for the others hinged on global impact and political influence. Triumph for these companies did not start out as financial, but rather on making a difference in its community. Small businesses, family businesses, and start-ups alike can learn from this example and orient themselves in such ways as

to replicate this outcome. If a company, small though it may be, can irrevocably prove to its customers, community, and stakeholders that it provides positive impact and value to them, then that business will experience long-lasting success even if it currently lacks financial power or market share.



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