Case Analysis on Corporate Social Responsibility

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A business cannot adequately succeed for the long run if they cannot simply meet the needs of their clients. Just as an apartment complex could fall apart as they neglect to have their grounds taken care for and have no intent to improve the occupants' quality of life, a business can take on the same course. Equifax has become a business that consistently makes money off people's personal information, as they neglect the protection of their customers. They have such a heavy influence on many people’s lives and because they are one of the companies that determine their credit scores, they should strive to meet the needs of providing the best overall quality customer service and protection. Unfortunately, Equifax fails to make the lives of the people they make money from easier and, like how Ron Lieber says, "treats us with disdain and answers to no one." In this case analysis, I will argue that the ethics of care shows us that the Equifax breach has harmed credit holders by refusing to provide the proper protection measures to their customer’s personal information and the upkeep of quality customer experience.

A company that makes money off people should hypothetically care for those people. Milton Friedman mentions in “The Social Responsibility of Business”, that if a business "acts to reduce the returns of his 'social responsibility,' he is spending his own money, not someone else's." The issue with this concept is that the money that a business makes, a company like Equifax, is that they make money from people's personal information. A school does not allow strangers to walk out with someone's child without proper authorization because that can cause opportunities for harm. Fortunately, you can choose the school your child can attend, but a company like Equifax does not require any consent from an individual to collect their data. This data impacts a person's life since credit information is vital to make essential decisions in the United States and has connections to your social security number.

Countless businesses have crucial roles to society that must take responsibility when they fail to uphold their part. Friedman talks about how a business is not a person and does not have actual responsibilities and that those responsibilities are only applied to people. That is incorrect, because a hospital is a business, does that mean they should not be responsible for social duties? Should a person be kicked out of their facility if they are incapacitated on the verge of death without any money in their bank account? The answer to this is no, because the ethics of care shows us that money does correlate to the value and obligations of human life. We tend to forget our privileges when there is greed to blind us from caring for those in different circumstances and that not all businesses have a responsibility to forget its role in society they are allowed to operate.

Melvin Anshen brought up an interesting concept about social contracts in “Changing the Social Contract: A Role for Business,” the old ideology wanted to protect private businesses if they followed laws and were not held responsible for environmental contamination. Any company's effects on a person or group were viewed as personal issues that could either be aided by private charity or nothing at all. The best solution for positive changes in these social contracts is not to eliminate them but to reform them to create a better interdependent relationship with society. They should start by addressing the issues that they can help prevent or support those that have relations to their enterprise.

Reform is always considered an option for a business, especially when a large population is demanding change. For example, racial discrimination was a socially acceptable ideology in many business practices until an overwhelming acceptance began to occur that pushed other companies to conform. These practices were viewed under the ethics of care and would see how absurd they were because instead of viewing victims of racial discrimination as people, they considered them to be those that served the cause for profit. If the costs of a business are less for them to change than the costs of external factors if they do not, change should not be considered the worst-case scenario. Businesses should be interested in setting a better relationship with the society since having that relationship can be beneficial to the people and the economy as well.

Equifax and Milton Friedman both failed to care for the mutual interdependence of society. Businesses need the people more than the people need them. A new company can always appear out of nowhere, with better quality of services and simply replace the services provided by the unethical businesses who operate because they are more in it for money, than those who are responsible for the money they made. Equifax has a tremendous influence on the services they offer and can be detrimental to the mutual flourishment of society if they do not provide the essential services for sufficient functionality. Just like a concept that Melvin Anshen states, businesses have influences on society and the economy and should be more proactive about the issues within their communities.

Companies can find more success with the mutual flourishment of their customers and environment. Enterprises should respect the interdependence between them and those with whom they make their profits. Viewing profit as the only means for business can possibly cause more harm than good as there will always be many flaws within any system of operation. Still, these issues are necessary for improving the organization's ability to overcome obstacles that they may come across to enhance their services further. Equifax hopefully will reform and fix the many issues that their poor services can cause and take approaches in the ethics of care that can give the problems the amount of attention they deserve.