

SOCIAL INNOVATION FOR COLLECTIVE IMPACT IN WORK INTEGRATION FIELD: "JUNTOS POR EL EMPLEO DE LOS MÁS VULNERABLES" AS A CASE STUDY

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Abstract

Collective impact has gained in importance during the last decade, especially since the start of economic crisis in 2007, as new approach to solve complex social problems. The purpose of this research consists on analyzing the Corporate Social Responsibility of Accenture Spain and their successful relationships of collaboration across sectors, as exemplified in "Juntos por el empleo de los más vulnerables (JEV)", designed as a collective impact initiative aiming to create a shared value ecosystem in work integration field for vulnerable people. Preliminary results demonstrate the potential of JEV to create a shared value ecosystem, that promotes work integration of the most vulnerable people. However, this collective impact initiative also entails some limitations, including heterogeneous degrees of alignment and the existence of tensions in relationships between actors.

Resumen

El impacto colectivo ha ganado en importancia durante la última década, especialmente desde el inicio de la crisis de 2007, como un nuevo enfoque para resolver complejos problemas sociales. El objetivo de esta investigación es analizar la Responsabilidad Social Corporativa de Accenture España y sus exitosas relaciones de colaboración entre sectores, ejemplificado en "Juntos por el empleo de los más vulnerables", una iniciativa de impacto colectivo, diseñada para crear un ecosistema de valor compartido en el campo de la inserción laboral para personas vulnerables. Los resultados preliminares demuestran el potencial de JEV para crear un ecosistema de valor compartido que promueva la inserción laboral de las personas más vulnerables. Sin embargo, esta iniciativa también conlleva algunas limitaciones, incluyendo grados heterogéneos de alineación y la existencia de tensiones en las relaciones entre actores.

1. Introduction

Accenture is a global company, which provides professional services about strategy, consulting, digital, technology, as well as operations services and solutions in more than 120 countries and across more than 40 different industries (Accenture, 2017). This large firm focuses on offering consulting services to improve the way the world works and lives - from closing employment gaps to advancing client sustainability to accelerating gender equality in the workforce-. Its digital experience, know-how, capabilities, and innovation contributes to develop solutions that address a wide range of societal issues. In collaboration with other people, partners and customers, Accenture tries to focus its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategy on creating economic growth, tackling social challenges and promoting environmental sustainability in communities. Furthermore, it is developing several projects and programs oriented to promote the United Nations' global goals and contribute to the new sustainable development agenda (Accenture Corporate Citizenship Report, 2016).

In the framework of its CSR strategy, Accenture focuses on five pillars or main challengers: ethics and governance, people, community impact, environment, and supply chain. At the same time, these pillars are divided into 11 big goals, which are materialized in specific objectives to contribute to the achievement of nine of the seventeen United Nations' global goals (Accenture Corporate Citizenship Report, 2016).

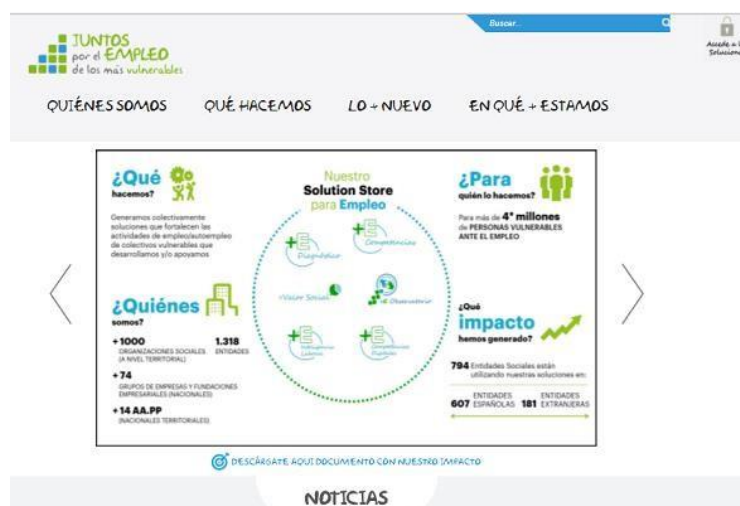
From 2014 onwards, Accenture pays especial attention in ethics and governance, in particular in two goals, awareness building, based on the employee awareness levels of their five global behavioral standards; and ethics training, that consists on providing to employees its ethics and compliance training. In 2016, Accenture developed two goals more: people, centered in talent development; and supply chain, mainly based on supplier sustainability, which consists on Accenture's teams include environmental, social and governance (ESG) performance of prospective suppliers as a weighted factor for purchasing decisions. In 2017, the CSR strategy of Accenture revolves around people, especially in inclusion and diversity, and talent development.

Actually, and until 2020, Accenture is working and concentrating their efforts in several goals, such as people, supply chain, environment and community impact. Regarding people, the objective is to increase the diversity in leadership by growing the percentage of women (inclusion and diversity); and with respect to supply chain, the main areas are supplier sustainability and supplier inclusion and diversity, through the Diverse Supplier Development Program (DSDP). On the other hand, environment has acquired relevance, through the two main objectives, running efficient operations, reducing the carbon emissions to an average of two metric tons per employee; and improving the energy efficiency; as well as measuring and reporting the impact result of the work with customers and suppliers in key areas of sustainability.

In addition, the CSR strategy of Accenture has been evolved towards collective impact strategies, focusing its actions on community impact.

Regarding the latter, it highlights three main goals: 1) demand-led skilling; 2) employment and entrepreneurship outcomes through the creation of skill programs to sustainable jobs and businesses, and the improvement of collective ability to measure and report these outcomes; and 3) collaboration for achieving a systemic change, aimed to solve the great global employment gaps through the creation of collective solutions. An example would be "Juntos por el empleo de los más vulnerables (JEV)" initiative, promoted by Accenture foundation (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Initial screen from the official website of JUNTOS POR EL EMPLEO DE LOS MÁS VULNERABLES.



Source: [<https://juntosporempleo.ccelearning.accenture.com/>], as available at 22/10/2017.

This foundation was created by Accenture Spain in 1995 to manage its CSR with the dual mission to contribute to the renovation and modernization of the nonprofit sector, and to channel the social concerns of Accenture professionals in Spain. Accenture foundation has 4 different lines of action: 1) Pro bono program, which consists on free professional consulting services for nonprofits, with more than 925,000 hours of consulting by 1,500 professionals in over 475 projects; 2) Volunteering program, based on professional volunteers sharing their knowledge with nonprofits during working time; 3) Donations, through employee and matching funds for social projects and emergency situations; and 4) “Skills to Succeed” project, launched by Accenture in 2009 to provide technology-based training to improve employment and entrepreneurship of the most vulnerable people (Accenture foundation, 2017).

2. Case development

The organizations do not operate in isolation. Each one exists and develops their activities in a specific ecosystem with societal and environmental needs, limitations from government policies and cultural norms, among others (Kramer and Pfitzer, 2016). These issues are out of control for any single actor. Therefore, for a better understanding of social problems and for achieving the most efficient solutions it is necessary to establish relationships - based on the mutual respect and trust- with other organizations from multiple sectors of society. For example among business and large firms, nonprofits organizations, government entities and the community (Bryson et al., 2006).

Because of the unsustainable situation of unemployment in Spain, in 2012 emerges JEV as an ambitious collective impact initiative for work integration of the most vulnerable groups, because of the collaboration among businesses, third sector and public administrations to search for alternative ways of promoting employment and self-employment of the disadvantaged people. This collective impact allows combining the resources and capabilities of the different organizations involved, creating an integrated model of work integration focused on training, learning, the improvement of employability, self-employment, evaluation of results, and funding (Sandford et al., 2016). From that moment onwards, Accenture foundation joined under the same collective impact initiative the efforts from different organizations from all sectors as a mean to foster a shared value ecosystem in the work integration field for vulnerable people.

In JEV initiative, the three initial promoting foundations (SERES, Compromiso and Transparencia foundation, and specially Accenture foundation as coordinator), as well as the main actors belonging to the Coordinating Committee Group, play a proactive role as leaders. They identify the social needs of vulnerable people in work integration field, and the profiles demanded by large firms and companies as designers of solutions, and so on. However, the rest of organizations involved in this collective impact initiative tend to play a more reactive role, contributing with their know-how and advices and using, in

the most of cases, the JEV solutions (see Table 1). The level of commitment, materialized through a more or less active role, is directly related to the degree of alignment between the individual interests and the common objectives. With more than 1.200 organizations from different sectors involved in this initiative, it seems reasonable that exist heterogeneous degrees of alignment regarding the common objectives and agenda.

Regarding internal relationships among actors within the JEV initiative, in general, each partner focuses on finding joint solutions to respond to social needs, leaving in the background their own organizational interests. Nevertheless, Accenture foundation plays a conciliator role of possible conflicts and tensions that may arise, especially between nonprofit and business organizations, for reasons such as speaking different languages (different vocabulary), competing among them for public (and private) resources or for capturing users of certain services.

This case study constitutes our attempt to achieve a better understanding about how collective impact strategies act as a means to achieve a shared value ecosystem that can address the challenge of work integration of the most vulnerable citizens. To do that, we analyze the CSR strategies of Accenture Spain and its evolution towards collective impact strategies, as exemplified by "Juntos por el empleo de los más vulnerables (JEV)" as an initiative, promoted by Accenture foundation, to create a shared value ecosystem in the work integration field for the most vulnerable people. It involves over 1.000 nonprofit organizations, 73 large business and corporate foundations, and 14 public administrations. In particular, we will try to respond the following question:

- » To which extent does JEV, led by Accenture Foundation, meet the five basic conditions of collective impact, proposed by Kania and Kramer (2011)?

Table 1. The collective solutions of JEV

Name of solutions	Description
6 Employment solutions	
+E Observatorio (+E Observatory)	Current labour market situation and identification of new opportunities for vulnerable groups
+E Diagnóstico (+E Diagnosis)	Assessment of employability of vulnerable people within the employment framework
+E Competencias (+E Competences)	Training material for the evaluation and development of transversal skills in employment
+E Reporting	Structured management information in the employment context
+E Guía Formación (+E Training Guide)	Best practices in training for employment
+E Guía Practicas (+E Practices Guide)	Solution for the definition of training practices in private sector
8 Self-employment solutions	
+A Diagnóstico (+A Diagnosis)	Assessment of employability of vulnerable people and their business ideas within the self-employment framework
+A Competencias (+A Competences)	Training material for the evaluation and development of transversal skills in self-employment
+A Capacitación (+A Training)	Training materials about technical knowledge in the self-employment context
+A Reporting	Structured management information in the self-employment context
+A Guía Formación (+A Training Guide)	Training methodology for entrepreneurs
+A Microcréditos (+A Microcredits)	Sustainable Microcredit Program aimed at profiles not served by traditional banking
+A en Red (+A Online)	Relationship Model of the YBS (Youth Business Spain) network
+A Mentoring	Mentoring Model of the YBS (Youth Business Spain) network
7 Transversal solutions	
+ GEPETO	Project management and Entities of Social Intervention
+ Aula formación (+ Training classroom)	Management training System
+ eLearning	E-learning platform
+ Iniciativa Profesional (+ Professional initiative)	Training in personal skills for activation of entrepreneurship
+ Alternativas (+ Alternatives)	Alternative models for financing employment and self-employment programs
+ Valor Social (+ Social Value)	Unit Measure Social Impact Value: Effectiveness, Efficiency and Financial Return and Quality, and value indicators for diagnosis and pre-employment training
+ Reporting JPE	Structured information of integrated management of Juntos por el empleo (Together for the employment) Program

Source: Adapted from bimonthly Newsletter No.7 of Juntos por el empleo de los más vulnerables (2016): <http://juntos-por-el-empleo-de-los-mas-vulnerables.newsletter.accenture.com/noticia/las-soluciones-de-juntos-por-el-empleo.aspx>

3. Questions for discussion

Question 1. To which extent does JEV meet the condition of “*common agenda*” for achieving a collective impact, proposed by Kania and Kramer (2011)?

A strategic alliance requires a common agenda, namely, a common understanding and vision about some social issue, a shared goal -although it is not possible to achieve an agreement on each one of the specific objectives-, and a joint solution to alleviate that problem. The actors involved in this type of alliance have different interests and individual objectives, but it is necessary that the primary common goal be priority over individual interests. In JEV initiative, the common goal is promote solutions that improve employment and self-employment opportunities of the most vulnerable groups.

Apart from this general goal, it has specific objectives for employment, self-employment, and transversal objectives. Regarding employment, training in the real needs of the job, creating a model for learning how to work and making labor intermediation more efficient. With respect to self-employment, optimizing and extending accompaniment programs, promoting the microfinance industry and contributing to develop the entrepreneurship. In addition, as transversal objectives JEV, prioritized to measure social impact and funding projects (Juntos por el empleo de los más vulnerables, 2017).

Question 2. To which extent does JEV meet the condition of “*shared measurement system*” for achieving a collective impact, proposed by Kania and Kramer (2011)?

The measurement of outcomes, as well as having a shared measurement system is essential for success of collective impact (Kania and Kramer, 2011). Although this issue is still ongoing, it has been part of the JEV agenda from the very beginning. The dominant approach consists of broadening outcome indicators to include not only job creation or work integration rates, but also improved employability, or the broader effect of partnership interventions at the early and intermediate stages of the work integration process.

Moreover, this strategic alliance has one specific solution to measure the social value (+Valor Social). This solution pretends to include the Social Return on Investment (SROI) methodology, that provides a framework for measuring, managing and accounting social value or social impact (Social Value UK, 2017); as well as developing a technological application in order to facilitate the value measurement process. But JEV not only try to measure their social impact, but also report updated and structured information about the different activities and programs carried out in the initiative, from a global perspective, through the solution +Reporting JPE.

Question 3. To which extent does JEV meet the condition of “*reinforcing activities*” for achieving a collective impact, proposed by Kania and Kramer (2011)?

Within JEV initiative, different groups or teams have been created to develop mutually reinforcing activities or to create solutions. The main activities carried out by JEV are knowledge generation, training in basic and transversal skills in employment and self-employment, diagnosis of the labor market in Spain, assessment of employability of vulnerable groups, reporting, promoting sustainable microcredits for disadvantaged people not served by traditional banking, among others (Sandford et al., 2016).

This collective initiative has created 21 solutions that support the promotion of employment and self-employment for vulnerable groups (see table 1). These solutions are tools or projects that support the activities related to foster employment (+E) or self-employment (+A) of vulnerable people, in order to get a job or improve their employability. Accenture foundation is the promoter and coordinator of these solutions, using the support (know-how, advise, organizational requirements, network capacities) of the rest of member organizations (from three sectors: public, business and third sector).

Question 4. To which extent does JEV meet the condition of “*continuous communication*” for achieving a collective impact, proposed by Kania and Kramer (2011)?

Trust is one of the key variables to achieve a successful relationship, together with commitment (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). For that, it is necessary to schedule regular meetings in order to coordinate the multiple efforts in the framework of the common agenda, as well as having a shared language and vocabulary for being in continuous communication. In JEV initiative, a climate of trust was generated over time. Proof of that are the organizations involved in the initiative generally working together with their main competitors, fighting by the same goal, the work integration of the most vulnerable people. In particular, in this case study, the role and reputation of Accenture foundation are key issues in the creation of trustworthy environment.

Moreover, in this strategic alliance several regular meetings are held between the main representatives (CSR directors, directors or general coordinators of foundations, and so on) of the organizations that participate in the government (Coordination Committee Group). For a better understanding in these meetings and the right development of collective solutions, was necessary to establish an agreement about the common language between social entities and public administration, on the one hand; and with respect to the companies, on the other. In order to support and reinforce the communication actions of the initiative, JEV has created a specific Communication Coordination Group, integrated by experts in communication and networks from two social organizations (Spanish Red Cross and Exit foundation), two large firms (Accenture and Meliá Hotels) and one corporate foundation (Accenture foundation).

Question 5. To which extent does JEV meet the condition of “centralized infrastructure with stable staff” for achieving a collective impact, proposed by Kania and Kramer (2011)?

Collective impact also requires a centralized infrastructure with dedicated staff in order to “manage and support the initiative through ongoing facilitation, technology and communications support, data collection, and reporting” (Kania and Kramer, 2011: 40). JEV does not exist as an independent entity, namely, it has not a legal structure due to the large dimension of the initiative. However, it has a Coordinating Committee Group (Grupo de Coordinación Colectiva), where business and third sector are represented and, to a lesser extent, the public sector as well (at local and national level). This committee has a periodic rotation. This initiative tries that all member organizations take part of this government committee (Sandford et al., 2016). Finally, although a new organization with specific staff was not created for this initiative, Accenture foundation serves as the backbone organization for JEV assuming the coordination role and leadership.

4. Conclusions

The efforts to solve the greatest social challenges must move from an individual or isolated to a collaborative level, so that “available resources are used more effectively, new resources are mobilized, the scale and scope of solutions broadens and systemic change is achieved” (Rey-García and Mato-Santiso, 2017: 9). In order to achieve a successful collective impact, five elements are needed: a common agenda, an appropriate measurement and reporting system, mutually reinforcing activities or solutions, a continuous and fluid communication, and a centralized infrastructure with dedicated staff.

The actors involved in JEV initiative have different interests and individual objectives. In addition, they participate in this collective impact with different degrees of implication and commitment. Namely, they contribute at different rates. This latter, in many cases, leads to the emergence of tensions among actors. In order to prevent or mitigate that this situation does not occur, it is necessary that the primary common goal (to improve employment and self-employment opportunities of the most vulnerable groups) be priority over individual interests of actors. And, on the other hand, it is necessary some formal control mechanism, generally introduced during early stages, and that plays a crucial role in developing trust across different organizations involved in the collective impact.

On the other hand, JEV has been developing its measurement system of social value, through of the creation of specific solutions (+Valor Social or +Reporting JEV), or through the utilization of SROI methodology, which allows to measure, manage and report the social impact of the different solutions. Despite this evolution, the true scope and social impact of the JEV initiative is still unknown at present.

Regarding internal communication in JEV, the role and reputation of Accenture foundation are key issues in the creation of trustworthy environment. Moreover, in these strategic alliances several regular meetings are held between the main representatives of the organizations that participate in the Coordination Committee Group -at least one formal annual meeting of this Committee-. Other relevant element to achieve an efficient communication would be to share a common language. In JEV initiative, an effort has been made to obtain a common understanding between the different organizations, trying to use the same vocabulary.

Finally, although a new organization with specific staff was not created for this alliance, Accenture foundation serves as the backbone organization for JEV, assuming the coordination role and leadership. It focuses the decision-making process, contributes with dedicated and high-qualified staff from Accenture and its foundation and marks the steps to follow in each moment. Results of this case study suggest that, on the one hand, a stronger culture of collaboration between business sector and organizations from the

public and nonprofit sector is still needed to achieve a systemic change in work integration field. On the other hand, this strategic alliance entails some limitations, including heterogeneous degrees of alignment with common objectives and efforts, and the existence of tensions between actors.

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