CAPSTONE SUMMARY

“Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in Sports Industry: What motivates sports teams to adopt sustainable practices?”

Summary:

For my Capstone project, I worked at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 10 and assisted the Pacific Northwest Pollution Prevention Resource Center (PPRC) in expanding the Greening Sports Directory (GSD), a nationwide online resource directory for sports teams. I researched different federal, state, and city level assistance programs available for sports teams in the following three new municipalities: Boston, Minneapolis, and Phoenix. Moreover, after conducting scholarly research on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the sports industry and what motivates sports teams to pursue sustainable decisions, I was able to answer my research question and gain insight on the industry.

Why I did it:

The sports industry is one of the most lucrative sectors in the U.S. economy, maintaining steady growth for the past several decades. The average franchise valuation of a sports team has also increased steadily with NFL increasing nearly three-fold in the past two decades. The top four major professional sports leagues – NFL, MLB, NBA, and NHL – attract nearly 200 million fans each year in total. According to a survey, 61% of Americans have identified themselves as sports fans while only 13% have responded that they actively follow the scientific community. An incredible amount of resources are utilized in sports operations and the industry is under constant scrutiny by the media. Therefore, sports and the sports industry serve as a powerful social and cultural force. GSD is tantamount to both promoting sustainability to millions of fans and positively influencing the society to adopt sustainability as a norm.

How I did it:

The GSD database already included over twenty cities and the goal was to expand to reach new users in new regions. (continues on next page)
Thus, we compiled information through online researching for the following three new cities: Boston, Minneapolis, and Phoenix. We identified different levels of available programs in each city. For instance, the directory included federal tax assistance programs, state-funded solar energy rebates, and city-funded free technical auditing programs. Then, we filtered the programs with qualifications that were not applicable to sports facilities. The final information was audited and compiled into separate excel spreadsheets. The initial plans included interviewing with a number of sports facilities managers to construct user experience data on the directory for improvements though we were not able to conduct interviews. Subsequently, I conducted literature research instead to answer my questions and the internship provided foundational knowledge of the sports industry.

What I discovered:

Through scholarly research, I concluded the strongest motivator for sports teams to adopt sustainable practices is legal responsibilities; regulations and laws dictate the decision-making processes. In addition, sports teams' online platform analysis has revealed that sports teams are actively discussing social issues while environmental issues were not receiving the same coverage. Teams have expressed concerns about overemphasizing issues that are not directly related to sports and losing support from stakeholders. My main deliverable products included two excel spreadsheets of newly compiled cities – Minneapolis and Phoenix – and three other spreadsheets that I updated – Seattle, San Francisco, and Chicago. The city of Minneapolis had significantly more resources available, reaching over fifty entries in the database while Phoenix included about twenty resources. Different regions displayed contrasting results depending on the availability of local resources and government initiatives as well as general sustainability awareness.

What I learned:

• To develop project objectives and deliver deliverables and final products
• To work in a professional environment and cultivate communication skills
• To build network with co-workers and other business partners
• To research both online information and scholarly articles
• To take initiatives in the project and make necessary provisions