

Corus and Diversity

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Organizational Background Summary

Hou and Reber (2011) define corporate social responsibility (CSR) as the “voluntary corporate commitment to exceed the explicit and implicit obligations imposed on a company by society’s expectations of conventional corporate behaviour” (para. 3). Diversity is one of the most common CSR practices undertaken by companies and organizations in the media and entertainment industry (Hou & Reber, 2011). Hou and Reber (2011) explain that “creating a diversified workforce, producing diverse content, and cooperating with schools and organizations to support diversity within the media industry” are some tactics used to promote diversity within an organization (para. 14).

Corus Entertainment is a Canadian media company, established in 1999, that focuses on producing high-quality entertainment, lifestyle, news, and kids’ media content (Corus Entertainment, n.d-d). Corus owns over 40 major television networks in Canada, including Global, Global News, HGTV, ET, Food Network, and Disney (Corus Entertainment, n.d-a). Corus owns 39 radio stations throughout Canada and reaches up to 3.7 million listeners, with Q107, CFOX, Country 105, and CISN 103.9 being their most well-known (Corus Entertainment, n.d-b). In the current social climate, diversity, both on and off-air, are important issues that companies must address in their corporate social responsibility efforts.

SWOT Matrix

<p>Strengths:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Hiring DiversiPro2. Commitment to following diversity, equity, and inclusion plan3. Strong charitable and community involvement	<p>Weaknesses:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Lack of diverse leadership2. Lack of diverse content3. Corporate acceptance
<p>Opportunities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. A gap in the industry when it comes to diverse content2. Opportunity to be leaders in the industry3. Opportunity to collaborate with more diverse organizations	<p>Threats:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Past employees' claims may damage reputation2. Negative perception of company on social media3. Multiple professional associations have publicly denounced Corus

Strengths

In the summer of 2020, after past employees spoke out against a workplace culture of racism at Corus Entertainment. The company decided to listen and learn how they could better their equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) efforts. In a statement posted on their website, Corus claimed, “we are committed to taking the necessary actions to rid our organization of racism and systemic barriers as we strive to create a fully inclusive culture – one in which equity and diversity can thrive” (Corus Entertainment, n.d.-f ,para. 2). Putting action behind their statement, Corus hired DiversiPro, “third-party diversity and inclusion professionals with expertise in anti-Black racism, to help us bring about systemic change at Corus” (Corus Entertainment, n.d.-f, para. 3). DiversiPro interviewed current and past employees and spent four months reviewing the workplace before making their recommendations on how to improve Corus' EDI (Corus Entertainment, n.d.-f). These

recommendations were put into Corus' new EDI plan, which they made public in 2020, and have committed to giving updates on every four months.

Corus Entertainment have implemented many changes to their EDI plan, adding an inclusivity index in their quarterly survey to gauge and measure their inclusivity efforts (Corus Entertainment, n.d.-e). Their strategy focuses on key areas of the business, including workplace culture, leadership, representation, and internal operations, all of which must be addressed to successfully tackle the lack of diversity within the company (Corus Entertainment, n.d.-e). This is a step in the right direction for Corus; they have admitted to their wrongdoings and are committed to doing what they can to create a better, more inclusive and diverse workplace.

Corus is also heavily involved in charity and non-profit work; they support HireBIOPC, Women In Film & Television Toronto, Canadian Association of Black Journalists, and Indspire both monetarily and through mentorship programs (Corus Entertainment, n.d.-g). They also have the Global News Scholars program, which supports Black students attending post-secondary for journalism. Through Corus' support for these organizations and the scholarships they provide, they are actively helping to make the future of the media industry more inclusive and diverse.

Weaknesses

Although Corus has pledged to improve its corporate social responsibility efforts, specifically focusing on EDI, its leadership does not reflect this. Corus has made both their executive leadership team and their board of directors public on their website, including headshots. The executive leadership team is composed of eight members, with only two of those being women and only one person who is a visible minority. In comparison, the board of directors comprises ten members, with only three members being women and one person

who is a visible minority. There is a glaring lack of diversity in the upper leadership teams at Corus, which affects the operations of the rest of the company.

In a board diversity policy statement from Corus in October 2020, they write, “the composition of the Board should also take into account the Company's commitment to diversity, ... knowledge, education, gender, age, ethnicity, geographical background and persons from 'designated groups'... in general terms, women, visible minorities, Aboriginal peoples and persons with disabilities” (Corus Entertainment, n.d.-c, para. 2). While they may be working on diversifying their board, currently, it remains predominantly white and male.

Tracey Deer, an Indigenous filmmaker and Board member of Women In View, explains that “there are 'gatekeepers' at the very top of Canadian media who are not representative of the diverse Canadian population” (Collie, 2011, para. 18), and Corus is, unfortunately, an example of this. This sentiment is elaborated upon by Hubert Davis, a documentary filmmaker who claims, “the main problem is people who are decision-makers who can greenlight [projects] literally don't understand systemic racism or how it works, and their view on the world is within certain margins” (Lopez, 2020, para. 19). Of all the film and television content Corus features, only 17.8 per cent is work created by a woman, coming in third when compared to other Canadian media companies (Collie, 2011). The lack of representation of women and people of colour in this upper management setting directly affects who is represented on screen, leading to homogenous and non-inclusive content.

Opportunities

Although Corus has had missteps in the past, there is an opportunity to improve on their diversity, equity, and inclusion practices. There is an opportunity for Corus to begin creating more diverse content, as there is a gap in the Canadian entertainment industry. Lopez (2020) writes that “census data from 2016 states that 52.5 per cent of Toronto's population is made of people of colour and according to Catalyst research, 22.3 per cent of Canada's total

population, but this representation is not nearly reflected enough on-screen” (para. 13).

Canadians want diverse content, Valerie Creighton CEO of the Canadian Media Fund believes that “an expanding streaming space has shown TV audiences want fresh voices from diverse creators” (Vlessing, 2021, para. 17). If Corus can begin creating more diverse content, they can be marketing to a much larger demographic of people.

Corus also has the opportunity to become a leader in the media industry when it comes to diversity, equity, and inclusion. In a statement, Hamlin Grange, principal at DiversiPro, wrote that “no other media organization in Canada has had a third-party take such a deep look into the issues of equity, diversity and inclusion ... In fact, Corus has the overall opportunity to lead the media sector in inclusion and diversity” (Corus Entertainment, n.d.-f, para. 9). This could lead to significant positive publicity for Corus and potentially attract more stakeholders or organizations to work with.

Threats

In 2020, some former employees from Corus came forward with allegations of racism and microaggressions that they experienced while working for the company (Theissen, 2020). Joshua Grant, a former social media strategist for Global TV, a subsidiary of Corus, spoke out about his treatment by management at the company on social media. Grant claims that “he was asked to create a meme for Big Brother Canada based on civil rights activist Colin Kaepernick's ‘Dream Crazy’ NIKE ad. Grant alleges he was threatened with firing when he suggested it was inappropriate” (Theissen, 2020, para. 3). After Grant and others' stories picked up traction, Ika Wong, a former Big Brother Canada contestant and Entertainment Tonight correspondent, revealed in a tweet that she would no longer be working with ET Canada because of their mistreatment of people of colour (Theissen, 2020).

These allegations of a workplace culture of racism can result in negative publicity for Corus Entertainment and can be damaging to both the company's image and reputation. This

publicity can also lead to stakeholders no longer wanting to be involved with the company, such as Ika Wong, a contributor on ET Canada, deciding to cease working with ET Canada.

Recommendations

Corus Entertainment is currently being very open and communicative about the steps they are taking to enhance their diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. I recommend that they continue to do this, some internal and external support for the company has clearly been lost, and their transparency with their publics should help to regain trust and support. I also recommend that Corus begin to focus their efforts on diversifying their board and executive leadership team, as attitudes on diversity, inclusion, and equity come from the top of the company. This will also lead to an increase of diverse content, which can reach more audiences who have previously not felt represented on screen.

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Appendix I: Social Media Tracking

First Scrape - Completed by [student name here] (October 20)

Twitter: @CorusPR

Followers: 7,604 Following: 768 Tweets: 1,746

Second Scrape - Completed by [student name here] (October 21)

Twitter: @CorusPR

Followers: 7,607 Following: 768 Tweets: 1,746

Third Scrape - Completed by [student name here] (October 23)

Twitter: @CorusPR

Followers: 7,608 Following: 768 Tweets: 1,747

Fourth Scrape - Completed by [student name here] (October 24)

Twitter: @CorusPR

Followers: 7,608 Following: 768 Tweets: 1,748

Fifth Scrape - Completed by [student name here] (October 25)

Twitter: @CorusPR

Followers: 7,608 Following: 768 Tweets: 1,748

Sixth Scrape - Completed by [student name here] (October 26)

Twitter: @CorusPR

Followers: 7,614 Following: 768 Tweets: 1,748

Seventh Scrape - Completed by [student name here] (October 27)

Twitter: @CorusPR

Followers: 7,615 Following: 767 Tweets: 1,748

Eighth Scrape - Completed by [student name here] (November 16)

Twitter: @CorusPR

Followers: 7,645 Following: 766 Tweets: 1,757

Ninth Scrape - Completed by [student name here] (November 17)

Twitter: @CorusPR

Followers: 7,643 Following: 766 Tweets: 1,757

Ninth Scrape - Completed by [student name here] (November 18)

Twitter: @CorusPR

Followers: 7,643 Following: 766 Tweets: 1,758

Tenth Scrape - Completed by [student name here] (November 19)

Twitter: @CorusPR

Followers: 7,644 Following: 766 Tweets:1,758

Eleventh Scrape - Completed by [student name here] (November 20)

Twitter: @CorusPR

Followers: 7,643 Following: 766 Tweets:1,759

Twelfth Scrape - Completed by [student name here] (November 21)

Twitter: @CorusPR

Followers: 7,642 Following: 766 Tweets:1,759

Twelfth Scrape - Completed by [student name here] (November 22)

Twitter: @CorusPR

Followers: 7,642 Following: 766 Tweets:1,759

Appendix II:Suggested Social Media Plan

Corus Entertainment, the company itself, does not have a strong social media presence, although each of the networks and radio stations it owns have their separate social media accounts. I would recommend that Corus begins to increase the usage of Twitter to communicate more effectively with their publics. As well as create a company Instagram to reach a larger audience of people.

Twitter:

Corus should become more active on Twitter. Their tweets often do not get much interaction. The more frequently they post, the more engagement they will see. They could focus on posting more about their charity work, positive employee stories based on diversity and inclusion, and industry news that they are involved in.

Instagram:

Corus currently does not have a company Instagram. By creating one, they could reach more people, especially a younger demographic. Posts could include reposts from popular networks they own, highlighting the diverse content they produce and posts that showcase the diverse staff, their backgrounds, and what their jobs are at Corus.

Key Messages:

- Corus cares about diversity, equality, and inclusion
- Corus is involved in making the media industry a place where diversity and inclusion is celebrated
- Corus wants to hear feedback from their stakeholders.