**Business Anthropology**

**Keywords**: Development, Corporate Social Responsibility, Anthropology in corporate culture study

**Definition**

Business anthropology is a subfield of anthropology. It deals with applying anthropological theories and practices to the needs of private sector organizations, especially industrial firms. Current research initiatives in the field tend to concentrate on: (1) marketing and consumer behaviour, (2) organizational theory and culture, and (3) international business, especially international marketing, intercultural management, and intercultural communication. In short, business anthropology is a practice-oriented scholastic field in which anthropologists apply anthropological theories and methods to identify and solve real business problems in everyday life.

The term business anthropology became more popular and widely used in 1980s, when anthropologists were hired as full-time, non-academic practitioners in the areas related to consumer behavior and marketing. Earlier, the terms industrial anthropology, anthropology of work or applied anthropology in industry were frequently used to denote the areas of research and practice focused on business related phenomena.

**Scope**

Business anthropologists are able to play key roles in the business world, such as to help corporations to develop culturally appropriate ways of doing business with suppliers, business partners, or customers, and to promote smooth working relationships among employees who are more and more likely to represent different age groups, ethnic groups, and sexes.

According to [*Business Insider*](http://www.businessinsider.com/), currently major companies are increasingly seeking business anthropologists. For example, Google has hired anthropologists to study the meaning of mobile. Intel has hired cultural anthropologists to find out how people living outside the US live their lives. According to the *New York Times*, Genevieve Bell, as a cultural anthropologist at Intel Labs, runs a team of about 100 researchers. The team studies how consumers interact with electronics and develops new technology experiences for them. Speaking about the value of an anthropological approach, Diane Bryant, General Manager of Intel’s data center group had this to say about its relevance to the company and its future:

*What Genevieve and her organization have done is to shift our mind-set. It takes a very different skill set, a unique domain experience, to sense the market and identify the emerging signals and what is going to matter to the end user.*

Anthropologists are in the people business. Any occupation that requires understanding people, such as studying human behavior, assessing people’s opinions, beliefs, or needs, etc., can use anthropology graduates/post-graduates. The American Anthropological Association finds that anthropology graduates are well-qualified for modern government work and are increasingly recognized as valuable in the fields of management and international business. For a long time, anthropological skills have been sought in the health and social services fields. Anthropology provides the tools for understanding the multicultural, international, and global issues that are basic to our continued existence

Most of the professional anthropological organizations have career guides on the web that describe how to become a professional anthropologist. They often include information about how to combine anthropology with other fields to improve strengths in the job market.  The section of Careers in Anthropology in the website of the American Anthropological Association is a good general guide (see AAA website [http://www.aaanet.org/profdev/ careers/index.cfm](http://www.aaanet.org/profdev/%20careers/index.cfm) for detailed information). Anthropologists at Work, prepared by the National Association for the Practice of Anthropology in US, answers the questions about how to use anthropology in the workplace (see NAPA website http://anthro.fullerton.edu/napa.pdf for detailed information).

**Role of Anthropologists**

Possible roles for anthropologists in the non-academic fields include administrators, managers, consultants, project directors, community service coordinators, and program planners among others. Willis Sibley notes that approximately 50% of anthropologists with their Ph.D. degree find employment outside of academia.   Some may become involved with private sector consulting (some ceasing to identify themselves as anthropologists, preferring new titles such as “management consultant”).

Ferraro stresses that anthropology graduates are better equipped in certain areas than those graduating with other liberal arts degrees. First, anthropology graduates are well acquainted with cross-cultural differences and similarities, an area of expertise of particular importance in multicultural societies. This means that anthropology graduates have the ability to “size up” unfamiliar social and professional situations, appreciate the wide range of cultural behavior in the world, and learn how to behave toward people from other cultures with sensitivity, flexibility, and understanding. Second, training in anthropology provides interviewing skills, experience with survey research, observational sharpness, and a holistic perspective. Third, anthropology graduates should have other skills and assets that can be useful to potential employers, such as experience with statistical methods, computer skills, foreign language fluency, and communication abilities.

Once students have a clear understanding of their skills, they are in a good position to tailor their resumes as particular job announcements are found, as all job seekers need to gain information about the organization offering the job as well as a clear appreciation of what why their skills are appropriate. The most prominent roles of qualified anthropologists may be as follows:

1. **Senior Market Research Associates**

The SMRA will design and manage agency and client research projects. Have knowledge of commonly used concepts as well as ability to keep abreast of new technologies and methodologies. They will gather and analyze primary and secondary data pertaining to current and potential clients and their business categories. They must be versed in qualitative and quantitative methodologies. It's pretty generic, but should help. One of the most important aspects is going to know the African American market (this person does not need to be African American - EOO).

**2. User Experience Strategist**

The User Experience group within Product Management department of a corporate body is responsible for promoting a clear understanding of the customers and for identifying experiences that meet or exceed customer needs. They work closely with Product Management to help define the next generation of products and services that will appear on business house.

The User Experience-Strategy team within User Experience is at the forefront of these efforts, developing a deep understanding of our customers through research and communicating it to product managers, user experience designers, and the product development team.

A User Experience Strategist conducts user research, analyses primary and secondary research, and communicates findings and recommendations to the organization. Personas, scenarios, documents, presentations and one-on-one conversations are used to communicate the value of customer needs throughout the organization. Competitive analyses and best practices are also used to communicate the current environment.
The major responsibilities of the User Experience Strategist are:

(i). Designs and conducts user research studies.

(ii). Collaboratively analyzes the results of those studies to identify customer needs and business opportunities.

(iii). Works closely with our Product Management team to identify new product opportunities and influence the future direction of existing products.

(iv). Ensures that the voice of the customer is represented at all phases of product development.

(v). Creates and maintains customer personas, scenarios and mental models.

(vi). Researches and documents both competitive assessments and best practices
(vii). Clearly documents all research findings, customer profiles, and recommendations
(viii). Communicates the value of customer needs to the organization.

**An ideal UES is expected to have the following qualities**:

(i). Has knowledge and experience with current user research methodologies.
(ii). Has thorough knowledge of best practices for information architecture, interaction design, usability, and web design (both e-commerce and informational).

(iii). Has knowledge and hands-on experience with user interface evaluation technique.
(iv). Has expertise in gathering, analyzing and synthesizing primary and secondary research.
(v). Is well-versed in user centered design principles and processes.
(vi). Has experience in aligning customer needs with business objectives.
(vii). Has excellent oral, written, and presentation communication skills.
(viii). Can work collaboratively with cross-functional teams

**3.Ethnographer**

An ethnographer will have a real passion for fieldwork, the ability to identify and clearly communicate customer insights to internal teams and clients, and the nimbleness required to juggle academic theory, various research methods, and creative design thinking with business needs.

Responsibilities:

* Designing, conducting & reporting on qualitative field studies
* Translating field insights into future products, services & experiences
* Participating in & contributing to internal & client ideation sessions
* Collaborating with designers, strategists, technologists & others
* Traveling the globe on a frequent basis

Importance of ethnography in Business anthropology

1. Strictly speaking, ethnography is a qualitative research method used to understand a population through empirical evidence.

2. For businesses, understanding the lives, desires, motivations, and habits of their client is critical for providing the right products and services to the right people. This is where ethnography is crucial. One can make assumptions about a person’s purchasing habits or service needs, or one can discover what’s beyond their wallet through direct interaction and communication. This discovery process is the cornerstone of ethnography.

3. Where business can truly benefit from ethnography is through consistent and systematic application of techniques. The models can also be applied within the business. Want to reduce turnover, increase worker satisfaction, or streamline a process? Don’t assume a top-down approach. Oftentimes, the person with the most insight is the person actually doing the job, and ethnographic exercises are ideal for vetting the expert knowledge and experiences of your team.

4. In a mass produced society, we are desperate to know that our individuality and sense of self are being cared for through the things we purchase, be it an iPod or a yoga class. People want to feel that the product or service they are buying is right for them as a unique entity. Ethnography can be vital to determining what drives a specific group or individual so that their experience feels more personal and fulfills that need for connection. Thus, ethnography provides a human-centered way of doing business.

5. An ethnographer’s personal network influences corporate policies. The corporate bodies are increasingly disconnected (from the people’s food, heritage, and environmental sustainability), they are seeking the advice of those closest to the people.

**4. Business Consulting Firms and Business Anthropologists**

Business anthropologists play an important role in the private sector by providing an overview of a number of consulting firms in the field as:

***Consumer Insights:***   Context Consumer Insights provides a lens into consumer behaviour based on their ethnographic research. When looking for a deep insight into the lives, attitudes and behaviours of customers, a Consumer Insight Deep Dive Study may provide useful information. These custom studies delve into the lives of consumers, targeting the specific areas of behaviour and attitude that align with the organization’s needs.  The results of these studies come in many different forms, including consumer segmentations and detailed maps of consumer behaviours and attitudes.

***Unmet Product Needs (Product Development)*:**  The best new products are those that fill a particular void in people’s lives. Unfortunately, people often can’t articulate their needs, or do not even realize what they are. Context’s Unmet Needs Studies examine people’s behaviours in certain categories, looking for any gaps between what people have and what they need. Unmet Needs Studies typically collaborate with product design firms. Product designers accompany Context anthropologists and enter into people’s homes and workplaces, to help develop new product.  At the end of these studies, the consultants at Context work with the design firm to deliver an ethnographic model showing consumer needs and product concept sketches designed to meet those needs.

Many consumer product, retail, and software companies are reinventing themselves and growing market share by better empathizing with the people who use their products or services. Increasingly, other businesses – from B2B companies to doctor clinics – are learning the potent power of empathy.

Traditional market research and connection tools only take insight so far. To build a real bridge for innovation and new product efforts, new applications and approaches were needed to supplement the old mix. While some aspects of this trend are labeled as Design Thinking or User Experience, the field gives rise to a new role: anthropologist or ethnographer. Whether it is a retail, consumer or business anthropologist, these specialists take an immersive approach to getting to know the people for whom products and services are being created.

Companies such as Proctor & Gamble, Target, and the Mayo Clinic have gained insights that create new markets using this method. Empathy is the key. Business anthropology unlocks the opportunities.

**Corporate Social Responsibility**

Corporate Social Responsibility is a management concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and interactions with their stakeholders. CSR is generally understood as being the way through which a company achieves a balance of economic, environmental and social imperatives (“Triple-Bottom-Line- Approach”), while at the same time addressing the expectations of shareholders and stakeholders. In this sense it is important to draw a distinction between CSR, which can be a strategic business management concept, and charity, sponsorships or philanthropy. Even though the latter can also make a valuable contribution to poverty reduction, will directly enhance the reputation of a company and strengthen its brand,  the concept of CSR clearly goes beyond that.

Promoting the uptake of CSR amongst SMEs requires approaches that fit the respective needs and capacities of these businesses, and do not adversely affect their economic viability. UNIDO based its CSR programme on the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) Approach, which has proven to be a successful tool for SMEs in the developing countries to assist them in meeting social and environmental standards without compromising their competitiveness. The TBL approach is used as a framework for measuring and reporting corporate performance against economic, social and environmental performance. It is an attempt to align private enterprises to the goal of sustainable global development by providing them with a more comprehensive set of working objectives than just profit alone. The perspective taken is that for an organization to be sustainable, it must be financially secure, minimize (or ideally eliminate) its negative environmental impacts and act in conformity with societal expectations.

**Key CSR issues**: environmental management, eco-efficiency, responsible sourcing, stakeholder engagement, labour standards and working conditions, employee and community relations, social equity, gender balance, human rights, good governance, and anti-corruption measures.

A properly implemented CSR concept can bring along a variety of competitive advantages, such as enhanced access to capital and markets, increased sales and profits, operational cost savings, improved productivity and quality, efficient human resource base, improved brand image and reputation, enhanced customer loyalty, better decision making and risk management processes.

## Types of Corporate Responsibility

Recognizing how important socially responsible efforts are to their customers, employees and stakeholders, many companies now focus on a few broad CSR categories:

1. **Environmental efforts:**One primary focus of corporate social responsibility is the environment. Businesses, regardless of size, have large carbon footprints. Any steps they can take to reduce those footprints are considered good for both the company and society.
2. **Philanthropy:** Businesses can practice social responsibility by donating money, products or services to social causes and nonprofits. Larger companies tend to have a lot of resources that can benefit charities and local community programs. It is best to consult with these organizations about their specific needs before donating.
3. **Ethical labor practices:** By treating employees fairly and ethically, companies can demonstrate their social responsibility. This is especially true of businesses that operate in international locations with labor laws that differ from those in the United States.
4. **Volunteering:** Attending volunteer events says a lot about a company's sincerity. By doing good deeds without expecting anything in return, companies can express their concern for specific issues and commitment to certain organizations.