Begriff Stakeholder (engl.)

Immer wieder kann man folgende Frage hören: Woher stammt der Begriff "Stakeholder"– wie ist er entstanden? Hat er irgendetwas mit dem Begriff des Shareholders zu tun? Hier ist eine kurze Geschichte über die Herkunft des Wortes.

The stakeholder approach to strategic management emerged in the mid-1980s. The impetus behind stakeholder management concept was to build a framework that was better fitting to the concerns of managers who were confronted by unprecedented levels of environmental turbulence and change. In that context, the term stakeholder is an obvious play on the word "stockholder". The stakeholder approach tried to broaden the concept of strategic management beyond its sole economic roots, by defining stakeholders as "any group or individual who is affected by or can affect the achievement of an organization's objectives".

But even in the 1980s the idea of stakeholder management was not entirely new. In the 1960s the Stanford Research Institute (SRI) argued that managers need to understand the concerns of shareholders, employees, customers, suppliers, lenders and society, in order to develop objectives that stakeholders would support. This support was necessary for long term success. Therefore, management should actively explore its relationships with all stakeholders in order to develop business strategies. Yet, at that time, the stakeholder approach was limited to the development of corporate business strategy. In that context, management has two major tasks: first, to scan the environment in order to identify trends that help predict the future business environment, and second, management has to identify the best way for the company to adapt to the future environment in order to maximize its position.

Besides the corporate planning approach the systems and organization theory approach was another root of the stakeholder approach. Systems theory emphasizes the external links that are part of every organization. From the perspective of the systems theory, an organization is best been described as an 'open system' with many links and relationships to external influences. Identification of internal and external stakeholders and the interconnections between them is important for a complete understand of an organization. From a systems perspective, problems can only be solved with the support of the all the members, or stakeholders, in the network.

Finally, a third important influence on the concept of stakeholder management is coming from the social relationship approach. Although this is not a homogeneous point of view, there is one common aspect: stakeholders are been regarded as groups with negative relationships to the company´s business activities. Stakeholders limit the influence of the company´s business. However neglecting the influence of these social activists may even cause more problems. So stakeholder management simply means to get along with those groups or, if enough money is available, to decorate the company´s management with its social responsibility.