



# CSR Review 2006

thegroup

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# Introduction



## Welcome to our first Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Review.

When we sat down to write it, we asked ourselves some basic questions about what we felt CSR meant for us. We found the answers to those questions gave us a clearer idea of what we stand for and helped us to develop our policy and set out ways to measure our performance.

We've decided to publish these questions as part of the review. We've also set out how we fulfil our responsibilities at present and our plans for improvement in the future. Each year we will review progress and update our approach.

It is worth keeping in mind that we have undertaken this review against a background of rapid change in many areas of our business:

- Mobile platforms and video have really arrived
- The rise of user-generated content and Web 2.0 has wide and far reaching ramifications for online communications
- Our people have, quite rightly, high aspirations for training and development and require opportunities for personal growth
- Our clients, naturally, demand the best ideas and execution, that can be integrated with their wider communications, often with significant new technologies and audiences
- And our audiences have grown wiser fast; expectations for usability and accessibility are rising by the day

Where change is concerned, we embrace it and strive to lead. We need to operate responsibly and ethically, without losing sight of commercial reality – we need to be profitable. To achieve that we need to design and build innovative and distinctive web sites and service the needs of our clients while ensuring we have the right structures, skills and capabilities to meet our goals.

We hope you get a feel for our values when you read this review: transparency, honesty, creative thinking, constant improvement and a strong duty of care for our clients and employees. These are the foundations of our business and have stood the test of time – we started in 1991 and our first CSR review is way overdue.

Putting this review together has been a learning experience and generated many internal conversations. Please tell me what you think of our review. We welcome your input.



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# Questions we asked

## Why a CSR Review and why now?

We have created a CSR Review because, as a business and as a group of people, we exist as part of the wider world. Internal debate, reflection and a transparent explanation of what our collective role should be is overdue and a natural part of growing up as a company

## Isn't CSR just for big corporates?

CSR is important for all businesses, large and small.

- Many stakeholders, particularly our employees, take into consideration the CSR actions of a company as well as its ability to generate profit
- Human rights, demographic worries for the future and global warming are now seen to be everybody's concerns, not just those of government. It is good business practice for companies of all sizes to show that they are conscious of their role in society and willing to do what they can about these issues
- From a practical point of view, writing a CSR Review forces a company to examine its own practices and face up to its shortcomings

## Why do we work here?

We are here not only because we need to work for a living but also because we want to do a job which we feel is worthwhile.

We are a group of like-minded people who enjoy providing a top quality service and receiving good rewards in return. We are interested in what our clients do and in the markets in which they operate, and we enjoy the challenge of providing the best means for them to achieve their aims

## Is The Group just about jobs and cash?

Not entirely. To continue to exist the company needs to make a profit. And because we exist as a company, we contribute toward the greater good:

- We provide our employees with the opportunity to develop their skills, knowledge and experience

- We support our employees with time and money in their efforts to contribute to society
- We pay tax individually and as a company toward the economy and wellbeing of the country
- We buy goods and services, so supporting the livelihoods of our suppliers
- We are part of the essential process of employment and wealth generation for the country
- We help our clients to communicate with their stakeholders. Good communication is crucial for our clients so that they can generate business, provide jobs, increase their returns to their stakeholders and contribute to growing the economy. Our clients are major players in the UK economy, so our role in that cycle is very important

## What should we be doing?

We have a responsibility:

- To run our business to high ethical and moral standards
- To treat our clients and suppliers with respect, being upfront with costs and paying our bills on time
- To treat our staff with respect, providing comfortable working conditions and recognising that they have aspirations and home lives
- Not to waste resources

## Anything else?

Yes, we want to be recognised as a good company in every way:

- Providing a first class service to our clients, not just for the money but because we also appreciate their loyalty
- As a conscientious employer, doing more than just providing the basics, encouraging our employees to stay with us and build their careers
- Helping in the community where we can, particularly in encouraging and supporting our employees in their community work
- Being aware that we should cut down on energy use where we can

# Principles

These are the principles on which we operate our business.

## **1. We always act in the best interests of our clients**

We regard our clients as long-term partners and appreciate their loyalty. We work hard to develop and maintain good working relationships with them and are proud of the fact that we have clients who have retained our services for many years

## **2. We recognise our employees as people and want them to enjoy their work and working environment**

As a small company, each of our employees is crucial to the success of our business. We want to provide a friendly and stimulating working environment for them, and encourage them to develop their skills. We want them to stay with us

## **3. We support and encourage our employees in their charitable efforts both inside and outside the workplace**

Through supporting our people we can contribute to the wider community, work as a team and build our awareness of the outside world

## **4. We treat our suppliers as partners, in the same way we like to be treated ourselves**

Many of our suppliers are small businesses themselves and, as with our clients, we like to build long-term relationships with them so they can rely on our support

## **5. We behave as a responsible business in the use of energy, management of our waste and consumer of carbon**

We have the collective will and desire to be a responsible business and we will improve our CSR practices over time

# Performance

This section sets out our performance in the areas that we can influence and outlines what we intend to do to improve.

## Employees

- We have 45 employees in total, 13 of whom have been with us for five years or more
- Our recruitment policy is to choose the people we feel have the best skills for the role and personality fit for the company
- We provide training and mentoring to encourage people to develop their own skills and strengths. We review each individual's progress informally throughout the year and formally through our annual appraisal programme
- We compare our salary ranges and benefits package against external surveys every year to ensure they remain competitive
- We include all our employees in our discretionary bonus scheme so that they can share in the success of the company. We make a company contribution to employee pension funds and run campaigns to encourage people to save for their retirement
- We understand the difficulty in achieving a good work/life balance. We hold regular social evenings and offer generous holidays and family-friendly benefits such as paid dependents leave for emergencies and flexible working opportunities for returning mothers
- Although the company is privately owned, we take corporate governance seriously. We have a board made up of the Managing Director and four Group Directors and an operating committee with representatives from each of our teams.
- We take an open door approach so that people are free to raise issues with their colleagues and managers at any time
- We use our intranet to keep everyone up to date with client and personnel news, and encourage employees to use our internal blog and wiki to share the results of their research and their thoughts on various aspects of their work and technological developments, as well as social news

## Employees – how we can improve

Build on our introduction of personal development plans for each of our employees

Encourage dialogue at all levels of the company which will lead to more collaboration and openness

## Community

- We run an Employee Matched Giving Scheme whereby we match the money raised by our staff for charity
- We hold regular fund-raising staff social evenings throughout the year to raise money for charity
- At Christmas we donate the money we would have spent on Christmas cards to Crisis and Oxfam
- We sponsor our clients in their fund-raising endeavours
- Where we can, we buy our goods from charitable organisations. For example, we buy our printer paper from Helping Hands, the business arm of the charity Mencap

## Community – how we can improve

Target our charitable activities for maximum impact by focusing on a single charity

Raise the visibility of our charitable activities internally and encourage the involvement of all our staff

# Performance

## Environment

- We use recycled printer cartridges
- We recycle our used printer and fax cartridges through the Tommy's Campaign and Great Ormond Street charities empty cartridge collection schemes
- We use paper from well-managed forests
- We encourage double-sided printing and photocopying whenever we can to reduce paper waste
- At the moment we do not recycle paper. In the past, paper recycling was expensive and involved large volume collections that we could not accommodate. The local council does not offer a paper recycling service to businesses yet. We keep the matter under review
- We donate our unwanted office furniture to charity where possible

## Environment – how we can improve

Manage our energy consumption and waste generation more effectively

Raise our understanding of our own carbon foot print and establish ways to manage and offset our emissions

# Contact us

Writing this CSR Review has given us the opportunity to re-examine our business practices and values. It has focused our thoughts on how we run our business and made us aware of areas where we could do better.

We realise this is just a start and each year we will review our progress. In the meantime, why not get in touch and tell us what you think?

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