

# corporate social responsibility review 2008



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# Introduction

## Welcome to our 2008 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) review.

Last year, we sat down and put together our first CSR review. As part of the process, we asked ourselves a number of questions about what we do as a business, why we do the jobs we do and what, as a group of people, we could do better.

We considered how we engage with employees, the community and our environment – as well as our clients and suppliers – and we set ourselves targets that would allow us to measure our progress over the coming year.

Our second CSR review gives us the opportunity to take stock and examine the degree to which we have met those targets. The results have been mixed. While we are satisfied that we are making progress, overall we feel there is room for considerable improvement.

How can we do better? We need to be more bottom up than top down. We recently asked employees to complete an anonymous satisfaction survey, part of a concerted effort to allow ideas to flow more easily from employees to senior management. We need to think more about our CSR strategy. A work in progress, it should be inclusive, empowering and unified. Also, perhaps necessarily, our first review was very broad and our targets lacked focus. This year, we have tried to set ourselves more rigorous and measurable goals.

Finally, CSR is a continuously developing part of our business. As such, we hope readers will see this review, and future and past reviews like it, less as separate documents than as discrete parts of a larger, evolving body of work. In this way, we aim to communicate and deliver a CSR programme that is flexible, compelling, long term and, most importantly, accountable.

If you have any comments, please visit our blog where our HR Director Carolyn Wood has written about our review and continuing CSR commitments or get in touch with me personally.



**Mark Hill**  
Managing Director  
The Group



# 01

## Principles

**While every year we set ourselves specific CSR targets everything we do as a company is guided by five basic principles. These are the foundations of 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 way we use energy, manage our waste and consume carbon**

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

“The Group recognises the needs of small businesses like ours – keeping communication channels open, maintaining and improving workflows and ensuring payment is handled quickly and efficiently.”

**Mike Baldock**  
**Excudit Limited**

# 02

## Employees



**We aim to improve our employee performance – and become a better business – by encouraging open dialogue and providing personal development opportunities for each member of staff.**

### **Build on our introduction of personal development plans (PDPs) each of our employees**

Over the past year, we have put in place a number of initiatives designed to ensure our employees are aware of the personal development opportunities that are available to them and are encouraged to make the most of these opportunities.

- Our appraisal process is currently under review and we plan to build individual personal development programmes into our annual appraisals. We have always been a company that invests in training and development and PDPs represent a logical step in our continuing commitment to the personal and professional development of our employees
- We are currently undertaking a review of our benefits package. Over the next 12 months, we plan to introduce a child-care voucher scheme to help our working parents and a cycle-to-work scheme to encourage our staff to get fit and go green at the same time
- We now have a dedicated HR Director whose role includes developing our PDP programmes and appraisals and ensuring that the conversation with employees is two-way and ongoing

### **Encourage dialogue at all levels of the company to foster more collaboration and openness**

A climate of collaboration is key to building a successful workplace. Our intranet includes a blog, a wiki and a message board that are in constant use and enable employees to communicate and share ideas openly and effectively. In the past 12 months, we have developed a number of initiatives to encourage collaboration.

- Employees have been asked to complete an anonymous questionnaire. We plan to use the feedback to identify areas where we can improve and to act upon recommendations that are made
- We have made our project debrief meetings more formal and efficient over the last year. The meetings are now attended by team leaders who can report back to employees who worked on the projects via the blog and the wiki, or face to face
- As our company grows, we are conducting more knowledge share meetings both company wide and within our different teams. Knowledge sharing is not only useful for training and development, but can also ensure that different parts of the company don't become isolated from each other

### **Our 2007 employee targets:**

- Build on our introduction of personal development plans for each of our employees
- Encourage dialogue at all levels of the company to foster more collaboration and openness

## Our performance at a glance

- We have 55 employees in total, 18 of whom have been with us for five years or more
- We choose people with the skills and personality to fit both the role and the company
- We provide training and mentoring to encourage people to develop their own skills
- We compare our salary and benefits package annually against external surveys
- We include all our employees in our discretionary bonus scheme
- We make a company contribution to employee pension funds
- We run campaigns to encourage people to save for their retirement
- We offer family-friendly benefits and have several mums and carers working part-time or flexible hours
- We hold regular social evenings and offer generous holidays
- We operate an open-door policy so that people are free to raise issues at any time
- We use our intranet to keep everyone up to date with client and personnel news
- We encourage employees to use our internal blog and wiki to share news and ideas

## Case Study: Personal Development



**Carolyn Wood**  
HR Director

**From this year, Personal Development Plans (PDPs) will play a big part in our appraisal process. Human Resources Director Carolyn Wood explains the thinking behind PDPs and how we hope they'll make a difference for each employee.**

There are two main reasons why we have adopted PDPs.

Firstly, as a company that invests heavily in the training and development of our employees we want to build a comprehensive development programme into our annual appraisals. Secondly, our recent survey indicates that our employees have a strong desire to learn and develop in their roles as much as possible.

To meet these objectives we will build PDPs into our appraisal process over the next 12 months. This will mean identifying the specific skills of each employee and mapping a suitable development course. Our target is to have a development plan in place for each employee by the end of the year.

The goal of PDPs is to marry each employee's individual career aspirations with our business objectives. This is especially true with regard to technology. As a company, we pride ourselves on being at the forefront of technological development and will actively encourage research as part of our personal development programme.

I look forward to working with employees to put together individual development plans and I am confident that PDPs will enable us to grow both as a company and as a group of individuals.

# 03

## Community



**Over the past year, our CSR committee has put considerable effort into raising the profile of our charitable activities among employees while all proceeds are now donated to a single charity.**

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

The Sequal Trust is a charity dedicated to “bridging the gap between communication and disability”. Accessibility is a key factor when we design and build web sites and other communication tools and we are proud to support the work of the trust.

- All proceeds from charity events and initiatives this year will go to the Sequal Trust. We won't know the full amount until later this year but estimate we will make a donation of around £2000
- A number of employees have volunteered their own time to work on a new Sequal Trust web site that will launch later this year

### **Raise the visibility of our charitable activities internally and encourage the involvement of all our employees**

We believe that charitable and community initiatives should involve the entire company and actively encourage all our employees to add their input and try to make a difference.

- In January 2008, we started a payroll giving scheme and use the blog to encourage employees to join. Give As You Earn (GAYE) allows employees to support their favourite charities and save tax at the same time
- In May 2007, we consolidated our charity, social and green committees into a single CSR committee. This has made it easier to coordinate our charitable activities and promote and encourage the idea of including a charity element to our social events
- Members of our CSR committee regularly blog to let employees know about and take part in charitable and community initiatives while our HR Director uses our recently launched external blog to let clients and others know about CSR initiatives

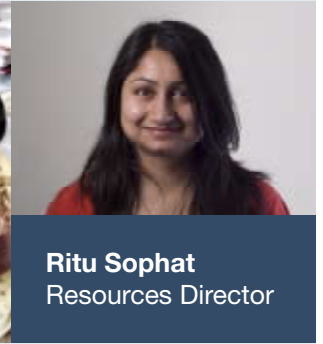
### **Our 2007 community targets:**

- 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 employees

## Our performance at a glance

- We run an Employee Matched Giving scheme whereby we contribute up to £100 to the money raised by our staff for charity
- We hold regular fundraising staff social evenings throughout the year
- We donate the money we would have spent on Christmas cards to charity
- We sponsor our clients in their fundraising endeavours
- Where we can, we buy our goods from charitable organisations
- We provide work experience opportunities to interested young people where we can

## Case Study: Making a difference



**Ritu Sophat**  
Resources Director

**Our Employee Matched Giving scheme supports employees in their individual charitable endeavours by contributing up to £100. This year, Resources Director Ritu Sophat took advantage of the scheme to help her chosen charity,**

The Employee Matched Giving scheme has been running for five years now and is a great way to increase any charity contributions you make. I've used the scheme for the last two years and, as every little helps, it's made a real difference.

The charity I support is called Asha for Education, a global non-profit organisation dedicated to bringing about socio-economic change in India through the education of underprivileged children.

With minimal overhead costs, mainly borne by volunteers, the organisation is able to send 100 per cent of donations directly to projects. But Asha is not just a funding agency; it is also a partner with a range of grassroots organisations who are working daily to make a change in their communities.

I've been volunteering for Asha for four years. This year, I helped to organise a Holi dance party to raise funds for the Mahila Swarajgar Samiti chapter of our projects. The event took place in April and, apart from being lots of fun, raised more than £3,000 pounds. The Group contributed £100 through the Matched Giving scheme.

The year before, we held a "Beats of Bollywood" night, including a dance class, and raised £2,220 towards our Puvudham project in Tamil Nadu. Again, The Group contributed £100 through the Matched Giving scheme. We were delighted to make such a big improvement this year.

Now we're planning for next year's big event and our target is to raise even more. I'll definitely be using the Matched Giving scheme again, and encouraging others to do the same.

# 04

## Environment



**We take our environmental responsibilities very seriously and have identified waste management and the reduction of our carbon use as areas where we can make real improvements.**

### **Manage our energy consumption and waste generation more effectively**

We have focused a lot of our attention on recycling and recycled products over the past year and feel we have made considerable progress.

- We now use First Mile to recycle our waste. In the past, recycling was expensive and involved large volume collections that we could not accommodate. Moreover, the local council did not offer a recycling service to businesses. We are delighted to now be working with First Mile, who provide a dependable and cost-effective recycling service
- The majority of our stationery is now recycled. This has not only helped us to meet our environment targets but has also reduced our stationery costs
- We decided to stop using recycled printer cartridges due to poor quality. This wasn't an easy decision as it goes against our recycling policy. However, we expect quality in everything we do and, ultimately, we could not depend on the recycled cartridges

### **Raise our understanding of our own carbon footprint and establish ways to manage and offset our emissions**

Cutting carbon emissions is key to our environment strategy. Over the past year, we have focused on reducing our carbon footprint by cutting down on unnecessary waste of materials and energy in and out of the office.

- Following consultation, we have decided to postpone carbon offsetting. We have reservations about the effectiveness of offsetting and feel that our first priority should be to reduce our carbon use. We will continue to examine our options in this area, including the possibility of using the money we would have spent on offsetting to support charities dedicated to preserving green spaces and woodlands
- A company-wide energy audit is underway. Among the initiatives already in place is the use of a plug-in voltage meter to measure each employee's energy consumption. We will report on the findings of the audit and our response in our next CSR review
- Our landlord has also initiated a comprehensive energy audit. We look forward to the findings of the audit and will follow any recommendations that are made as closely as we can

#### **Our 2007 environment targets:**

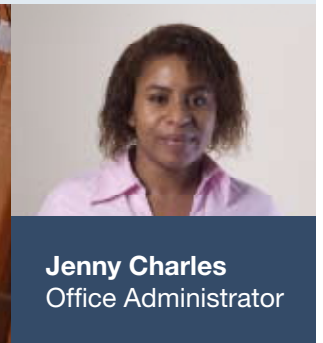
- Manage our energy consumption and waste generation more effectively
- Raise our understanding of our own carbon footprint and establish ways to manage and offset our emissions

## Our performance at a glance

- We recycle our used printer and fax cartridges through the Tommy's Campaign and Great Ormond Street charities empty cartridge collection schemes
- We don't have company cars, we mostly use trains when travelling to client meetings outside London and we very rarely travel by air
- Old PCs are given to employees, donated to charity or recycled
- We donate our unwanted office furniture to charity or recycle where possible
- Our "Switch it off" campaign encourages employees to reduce energy use
- We encourage double-sided printing and photocopying
- Most of the paper we use is recycled. Where this is not the case, we use paper from well-managed forests
- Black and white printing is standard

## Case Study:

# A greener office



**Jenny Charles**  
Office Administrator

**One of our environment targets this year was to improve the way we manage waste. The Group's Office Administrator Jenny Charles talks about how moving to recycled stationery not only helps us to meet our targets but also saves the company money.**

In 2006, I was part of a team that undertook a review and comparison of stationery suppliers. Up until then, we had been using the same stationery supplier for a number of years and, to be honest, we were happy with the service and products the company provided.

Nonetheless, we were interested to see what options were available and we were also becoming more aware of the environmental impact of the supplies we used in the office. One thing our review indicated was that the suppliers we were using did not offer recycled items.

Around this time, we were approached by Wiles Greenworld, an office supplies company that stocks a large number of recycled products. We assumed the recycled items would be a bit more costly, but after comparing the stationery we were purchasing to the price of the recycled products we realised the Wiles Greenworld products were both cost effective and of good quality.

We now purchase a large number of recycled stationery items, including A4 and A3 paper, various folders and dividers, notebooks and notepads, highlighters and paper towels, and we're very happy with the results!

# 05

## Targets

**These are our CSR targets for the coming year. We have tried to choose targets that are as quantifiable and accountable as possible while also giving us scope for developing our CSR strategy in new and effective ways in the future.**

### Employees

- As mentioned, our appraisal process is under review. Our plan is to build a programme into our annual appraisals that identifies our employees' specific skills and maps a suitable development course. Our target is to have a development plan in place for each employee by the end of the year
- We recently undertook our first employee satisfaction survey. We had a response rate of 68 per cent and are in the process of analysing the results. Our target is to identify specific areas for improvement, discuss alternatives and solutions with employees and take appropriate action

### Community

- Since it started in January, eight employees have signed up to take part in the Give As You Earn scheme. Our target for the next review is to double that figure. We will do this through monthly payroll reminders and blogs
- We're a little disappointed at the small number of employees that make use of our Employee Matched Giving scheme, so far only four people this financial year. We will continue to raise awareness of the scheme and hope to double the number of employees taking advantage of the scheme over the next 12 months

### Environment

- As mentioned, we are now using a plug-in voltage meter to measure – for the first time – energy use across the company. Our target is to reduce the amount of energy each of our employees consumes by an average of 15 per cent
- Although we no longer use recycled printer cartridges due to poor quality, we have not abandoned the possibility of finding an alternative. We aim to continue the search for quality printer cartridges that are kind to the environment.

### Clients and suppliers

Ensuring we take all our stakeholders into account is a key part of our evolving CSR strategy. This means that as we firm up our commitment to employees, we do the same in our relationship with clients and suppliers.

- We are proud of the long-term relationships we have developed with many of our clients. This does not mean we are complacent and we're currently putting together a client satisfaction survey. Based on the feedback we receive, our target is to put in place a number of initiatives to improve the services we provide to our clients
- Many of our suppliers are small businesses like us, and we understand the need for prompt payment for services. We aim to leave no bill or invoice outstanding in our dealings with suppliers. We also hope to develop a supplier satisfaction survey in the coming months to help us continue to improve our supplier relationships

# 06

## Contact us

Writing our second CSR review has allowed us to re-examine our business practices and values and consider the degree to which we have met the targets we set ourselves last year. Overall, we feel we are making progress but there is plenty of room for improvement.

In a year's time, we will review our progress once again. In the meantime, if you have any thoughts on any aspect of our 2008 review, feel free to get in touch and tell us what you think.

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