

Corporate Social Responsibility

What is it?

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is about how businesses align their values and behaviour with the expectations and needs of stakeholders - not just customers and investors, but also employees, suppliers, communities, regulators, special interest groups and society as a whole. CSR describes a company's commitment to be accountable to its stakeholders.

CSR demands that businesses manage the **economic, social and environmental** impacts of their operations to maximise the benefits and minimise the downsides.

Key CSR issues include governance, **environmental management, stakeholder engagement**, labour standards, **employee and community relations, social equity¹, responsible sourcing** and human rights.

CSR is not only about fulfilling a duty to society; it should also bring competitive advantage. Through an effective CSR programme, companies can:

- ➔ Improve access to capital
- ➔ *Sharpen decision-making and reduce risk*
- ➔ *Enhance brand image*
- ➔ *Uncover previously hidden commercial opportunities, including new markets*
- ➔ Reduce costs
- ➔ *Attract, retain and motivate employees*

Why is it important to iMPOWER?

As a business, iMPOWER is aware of the impact that we have on both the community and environment in which we operate. Our CSR programme allows us to make a formal commitment to investing both time and skills into our local community, as well as ensuring we do all that we can in terms of being environmentally responsible.

Our CSR programme has existed since 2005. Our charity partner is selected by staff nomination and voted on each year. Our chosen charity partner for 2008/09 was Disability Action in Islington. They have helped us to develop our skills, knowledge and understanding around disability issues by running workshops for our staff. This has obvious links with the work we do around adults and children's social care with many councils.

In addition to this, we brought DAII on board to work with us as partners on a project we were delivering for the Department for Works and Pensions on the Right to Control for Disabled People.

The National Academy of Public Administration defines social equity as "The fair, just and equitable management of all institutions serving the public directly or by contract; the fair, just and equitable distribution of public services and implementation of public policy; and the commitment to promote fairness, justice, and equity in the formation of public policy."¹

Our commitment is demonstrated by award recognition to date:

(1) 2006 Business in the Community (BITC) Big Tick winner; (2) highly commended as a BITC national example of excellence for Impact on Society by a small company (3) winner of the 2006 Lord Mayor's Heart of the City Dragon Award.

Sustainability

We are also fully aware how our work with our clients creates sustainability in a number of ways. Examples include:

- ➔ Delivering work on the personalisation agenda in Adult Social Care, which encourages councils to transform the way they deliver increasingly slender resources in a sustainable manner.
- ➔ Ensuring a major emphasis on skills and knowledge transfer as part of our project deliverables, to ensure that initiatives can be sustained once our work is finished.

Environment

We are also proud of our efforts on environmental sustainability. Among some of the proactive steps we take are:

- ➔ Signing up to and promoting our Cycle to Work scheme
- ➔ Procuring recycled stationery products
- ➔ Recycling all paper and other recyclable products, ie. cans, cardboard, some food packaging
- ➔ Using public transport to travel to client sites (wherever possible and practical)
- ➔ Recycling old laptops and equipment by donating them to charity
- ➔ Purchasing Fairtrade products
- ➔ Using a taxi service that uses low emission vehicles

We have achieved ISO14001 accreditation, which ensures that we behave in an environmentally responsible way in all we do. We seek to work with suppliers who feel the same way as we do about the environment and are committed to sourcing "green" office supplies and products whenever possible.

Our environmental policy is available here: [2006-04 iMPOWER Consulting Environmental Policy.pdf](#)

Interesting links:

Community Links <http://www.community-links.org/>

City Action <http://www.city-action.org/>

Heart of the City <http://www.theheartofthecity.com/>

Business in the Community <http://www.bitc.org.uk/index.html>

**Our CSR programme**

iMPOWER's programme is designed to offer two levels of involvement:

➔ **Company-wide involvement**

- ⇒ **Charity partner of the year** – it is critical to the success of the programme that all staff (including non-executive directors) are involved in this aspect, therefore everyone has the opportunity to nominate a charity that we will work with on a partnership basis for the duration of twelve months.
- ⇒ **Environment** – as a company we must remain committed to minimising our impact on the environment. We currently do this through a number of measures including paper recycling, providing fair trade tea and coffee, taking public transport where appropriate and practical, purchasing recycled stationery items and introducing green cleaning products.

➔ **Supporting individual involvement**

- ⇒ **Payroll giving** – [available](#) to all staff and iMPOWER covers the cost of all processing fees.
- ⇒ **Volunteering** – each employee has eight hours to spend per year to volunteer for a charity of their choice. (This is dependant on work commitments at time of intended volunteering activity, and therefore needs to be approved by your project manager in advance). Unpaid leave additionally for any volunteering work is considered and supported on a case by case basis.

Criteria for nominating charity partners

iMPOWER seeks to work with charity partners who have a requirement for our time and skills. The following sets out our criteria for identifying potential suitable charity partners:

- ➔ We want to work with organisations where we can make a positive **impact** by adding value or transferring skills. We have to ensure that we choose a partner where the project has a very clear focus and where we are able to see the potential benefits of our involvement to ensure that we will have maximum impact.
- ➔ Ideally we would like to work with organisations that have some sort of link to our business. Where this is not feasible, organisations will still be considered.

- ➔ Our chosen partner must have a requirement for our **time** and **skills**. We believe that the value for a charity in engaging with us will come from sharing our time and skill set. They need to have a requirement for skills we have to offer, ie. finance, project management, etc.
- ➔ Due to our capacity and limited internal resource to manage the programme, we need to choose and work with a partner who is able to share the workload and support us in terms of organising events (where necessary) and co-ordinating volunteering.
- ➔ Partners must have the ability and willingness to host a **one-day event** for up to 40 people. This event will be the cornerstone of both the charity partner relationship and the programme. iMPOWER will close its office for the day and undertake a company-wide volunteering event. Before selecting a charity partner, we need to be very clear on the focus of this potential one-day volunteering event and how it would work in practice. It is key we are confident that the day will not only be enjoyable for staff, but that people leave with a sense of having contributed to something worthwhile and made a difference. We are investing a considerable amount in terms of business time that we would otherwise be billed out to clients. Event should be followed up with a mini evaluation exercise to determine success and the tangible difference/s made.
- ➔ Ongoing **volunteering opportunities**. The way in which the programme is structured facilitates further individual involvement so it is essential that the charity can offer a variety of opportunities for people to get involved.
- ➔ Any charity we choose to work with must be registered with the Charities Commission.

iMPOWER is committed to supporting individual involvement, but it is down to individuals to organise their involvement.

Payroll giving

Individuals interested in signing up need to complete the [form](#) and return it to Eve, who will sort out the rest.

Employee volunteering

We encourage individuals to organise this for themselves, but it needs to be signed off by your manager.

Company-wide involvement

For those individuals who want to put forward a charity for potential partnering opportunities, please complete the relevant [form](#) and return to Sam Campbell.