

Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate Social Responsibility - An overview by Simon Humphrey

Adding value to the business and society through Corporate Responsibility

Being responsible and generous to your community has always been good for business. Today more than ever, businesses of all sizes recognise how their contribution to local communities and society at large adds value to their business. Examples of how this value can be established include:

- Enhancing reputation which attracts new customers and strengthens relationships with existing customers
- Creating goodwill with local communities and customers
- Motivating and inspiring employees which can aid retention and loyalty, and improve productivity
- Improved ability to attract the best people to work with, and for you
- Opportunities to influence and engage with decision makers (i.e. legislators)
- Promotion opportunities through the media and 'word of mouth' building brand value and sales

Since the late 1800's companies like Rowntree, Peabody and Lever Bros (later to become the Unilever we know today, a company recognised as a global leader in corporate responsibility), built strong organisations with social activism at their heart. Often wrongly described as philanthropy, more accurately this was local community investment driven by the needs of the business in ensuring a healthy, happy, secure, and therefore productive workforce.

For a vast majority of people living in developed economies today the basic human needs are met which wasn't always the case in the 19th century. Nevertheless there remain quite significant groups that survive on the edge of safety, due to poverty, substances abuse, the fear of violence or mental or physical ill health.

We are all part of the same system of society. The edge some sit closer to is not too far from any of us. Corporate responsibility is not just something for large company programmes, it is about how the individuals within organisations or any size come together and contribute time and money to a better, fairer and caring society.

There are innumerable direct and measurable benefits to a business, its owners and its employees, who establish meaningful social responsibility programmes. There is also a wealth of helpful advice on offer and there are no barriers to starting up. No contribution is too small, nor any business more or less capable.

Simon Humphrey is Corporate Responsibility Manager at ARM Limited. He is also a Trustee of the Cambridgeshire Community Foundation.