



Melanie Teal, Chief Executive

Welcome to our third Responsible Business report which covers a period of unprecedented economic turmoil. We have been fortunate in being fairly protected from events this year but we recognise that the next few years are likely to be more difficult. In times like this it is all too easy to see to believe that responsible business practices are a luxury. We believe, however, that they are an even greater necessity. We need fully engaged and committed staff and suppliers if we are to properly weather the coming storm.

We may well need the support of our community too.

We, therefore, remain committed to our responsible business agenda for 2010 and beyond and I look forward to reporting on our progress again next year.

Melanie Teal
Chief Executive
January 2010

Responsible Business Report 2009

What we mean by Responsible Business?

The success or failure of this business is dependent on the interplay between our customers, our suppliers, our employees and the community in which we operate.

If we manage each of these relationships with the long term in mind, taking the time to understand what matters to each constituent, we will build a stronger and more sustainable organisation.

That is the responsible approach to running a business and an approach which, all other things being equal, will ensure our future success.

In terms of managing and reporting on our performance, we have found it useful to group our activities into 6 categories:

Organisation

Customers

Suppliers

Community

Environment

Employees

Organisation

Values

- Be Brave
- Innovate and inspire
- Be caring and understanding
- Be Yourself
- “One Winning Team”



Which means:

Our employees feel able to share new ideas, and shout when they think something isn't right, They also seek to inspire customers and suppliers to trade with us and their colleagues to deliver of their best. We highlight the importance of caring about and understanding the impact we each have on our customers, suppliers and colleagues. We encourage everyone to be themselves, not to feel they have to put their “Consortium head” on when they come to work. We trust in our recruitment process to ensure we recruit the right people. Once they join us we want 100% from them – warts and all! Departmental team spirit within The Consortium is very strong, sometimes that means people can forget they are working for the larger Consortium team. Hence we reinforce the view that together, we are “one winning team”.

Accredited Standards

ISO 9001:2000 - Quality
OHSAS 18001 – Health & Safety
ISO 14001 - Environment
Investor in People
NEW A Beacon Company

Codes of Conduct

Ethical Trading Initiative/UN Global Compact
Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (CIPS)
British Educational supplies Association (BESA)
NEW Prompt Payment Code

Commitment

UN “Caring for Climate”

Customers

Customer Satisfaction Surveys

We encourage our customers to tell us what they think of us and donate £1 to our nominated charity for every customer survey we receive. We also encourage customers to complete an on-line survey rather than a paper-based one.

Our Active customer base increased by 4%

Core customer retention remained steady at 80%

Sales revenues increased by 3.7%

Score (out of 5)

- 2009 Results = 4.28
- 2008 Results = 4.24
- 2007 Results = 4.19

Suppliers

New Single Carrier



One of the deciding factors for consolidating all our carrier deliveries with TNT express was their increasing use of LPG and Electrically powered vans.



Manufacturers

We are working directly with a number of our manufacturing suppliers to

- a) change the way we order to reduce the number of deliveries and,
- b) find uses for waste products. e.g. paper off-cuts to be used in a new scrap box set for schools.

Introducing Greener Products

BE Exercise books made from the waste produced from crush sugar cane instead of from trees.

Bambu Homewear - a range of products made from a fast growing renewable resource. Bamboo also grows well without the use of pesticides or fertilizers & produces 35% more oxygen than equivalent trees.



BE-Books

the consortium



Member of



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



Community



We donated goods to a variety of customers and community groups throughout the year helping over 20 separate organisations raise funds and/or reward performance:

Snazaroo Face Painting kit worth £42.95 donated to Springmead Preparatory School, Beckington Children's Food Festival in Gloucestershire - range of product samples which promoted healthy living to young children. This included cook books, role play food and equipment. Interactive white board to John of Gaunt School, Trowbridge – in return, the school made a £250 donation to our nominated charity! Camera (approx £100 in value) donated to The Queen Elizabeth's Foundation Training College in Surrey as a prize for their star student. £2000 annual donation to the National Activities Providers Association (NAPA) Nintendo Wii to a Care Home in Halifax – helping to keep their residents active!

Various donations of products for School and Care Home fetes (value between £5 and £10) Jungle Lodge and Animals donated to Friends of Trowbridge Community Sensory Garden for use in a prize draw £200 of products donated to the AMBER Foundation (a local charity for homeless and unemployed young adults) for use in their in-house classes.

West Wiltshire Show – various product donations



Working with Schools:

Two students from Critchill special school worked in key areas of the business for ten weeks. They were selected by interview and received induction, training and appraisal like all new employees. We have been running this programme for over 10 years and were delighted to extend it to a second local special school (Larkrise School) in September 2009. Our HR team supported 2 local schools, one with careers advice and mock interviews (for the 6th year running) and one with a Dragons Den type event. 3 sixth form students visited from a school in Holland (The Da Vinci School) for ten weeks work experience. This is a long running scheme which delivers significant benefit to students and our organisation alike.

Nominated Charity

Build Africa

Over £7600 has been raised through a number of events and donations including:

Suppliers attending a golf day with raffle (£2600),
The raffling off of supplier Christmas gifts to staff (£660)
Sale of Mince Pies in customer services (£23.50)
A race night for staff and their families (£620)
Sponsorship for a member of staff running the London Marathon (£760)
Raffling "Take That" tickets donated by a company director (£206)
Raffling a Picnic hamper donated by our Canteen operator (£119)

The company made donations in excess of £9600 including:

£1 per customer survey received (£943)
£1 for every customer switching to electronic documents (£1000)
Obsolete and damaged goods made available for sale to staff and customers (£2674)
20p per box of Consortium Copier paper sold (£5000)
We hope to reach our target of £25,000 earlier than planned. Unfortunately, the cost of building a school has escalated to over £30,000 so we will have to dig deep next year.



Students from
The Da Vinci School



Golf day

Environment

Re-accredited to BS EN ISO 14001

Carbon Footprint

We continue to measure and monitor our carbon footprint for Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions. In 2009 we achieved an 8% reduction from 494 to 455 tonnes of CO₂.

Scope 3 emissions from our outsourced distribution providers have decreased from 391 tonnes of CO₂ to 285 tonnes of CO₂ this is a decrease of 28%.

Waste Management

We achieved a packaging waste recycling target of 68% - monitored by Valpak. We continue to review our use of packaging, the latest initiative being to replace the plastic void fill with a more eco-friendly cardboard void fill. This should reduce waste collections from site and prove easier for our customers to dispose of our packaging responsibly.

Energy Use

We have installed motion sensors in the corridors and offices to control the use of lighting. We source all our electricity from Green Renewable sources.

Pollution

No incidents were recorded and ongoing risk assessments have helped us to improve our handling of liquids

Promoting Electronic Documents

We encourage our customers to switch to electronic delivery notes, invoices and/or statements and donate £1 to Build Africa for every customer that makes the change. £1000 donated this year.

Customer Behaviour

We encourage our customers to share ideas and experiences around being better global citizens by hosting a Go Green blog.

Staff Behaviour

Our sustainability group ran a number of campaigns in increase awareness, culminating in the launch of three specific consumption reduction targets for paper, water and electricity for 2010.

Employees

Induction

All new starters undertake a comprehensive, tailored induction programme

Training & Development

The organisation is committed to supporting appropriate professional development.

We believe in "growing our own" where we can.

In 2009, 25% of our vacancies were filled by internal applicants – an excellent demonstration of the quality of our employees and their desire to progress.

Updated management development support has been introduced, tailored for needs of line managers, especially those new to management.

Investor in People

We continue to be accredited as an Investor in People

Pension

The pension offering has been improved and taken up by more staff.

Communications

A combination of weekly, quarterly and annual briefings ensure that our employees are well informed and contribute to the development of the business.

Employee of the Year

The winner, chosen from among the winners of our employee of the month competition, was Mo Collis. Mo has worked in our Warehouse for 22 years but is still keen to try new things. She was nominated for her work on a project to install a whole new picking area which increased our pick capacity by 20%.



Mo Collis,
Employee of the year

Employee Voice

This year we completed the Best Companies Survey and were rated as one to watch. We are holding feedback sessions with staff and will draw up an action plan for improvement.

Consultation

10% of employees choose to belong to a union.

Our internal communications policy ensures we properly consult with our staff and follow clear procedures when implementing change. At the request of our warehouse staff, we run a monthly staff forum for them to raise any issues and feed in ideas for improvement.

Diversity in the workplace

Our staff profile reflects that of our local area and around 20% have flexible working arrangements.

Health and Safety

Following our accreditation to ISO 18001 we have an active Health & Safety working group. Practical measures and targets have been established to clearly identify trends in accidents and near-misses.

Welfare

We retained our accreditation to BS EN ISO 18001 for Health and Safety.

We provide a subsidised canteen and offer a staff discount on our own goods.

We also offer subsidised health checks. 1/3 of our staff have taken the opportunity so far.

This year, we held a Family Fun Day at nearby Longleat for all staff and their families. Over 400 people attended.

All Staff Bonus

We paid this bonus, in full, for the second year running.