

CSR for Employees: Proof of 'Employer Engagement'

Linda Barber



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INSTITUTE FOR EMPLOYMENT STUDIES
Mantell Building
Falmer
Brighton BN1 9RF
UK

Tel. + 44 (0) 1273 686751

Fax + 44 (0) 1273 690430

<http://www.employment-studies.co.uk>

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1. CSR Web Review

The following web review includes a mixture of public and private sector organisations, encompassing thirty organisations. Private organisations were sourced from the corporate register of sustainable businesses (www.corporateregister.com). Public sector organisations overtly dealing in employee-focused CSR were more difficult to find and so make up a smaller proportion of the overall sample. Although this was not – and was not intended to be – a representative sample of organisations, a number of interesting points emerged.

The headings below reflect the categories of employee-related CSR used by many of the reviewed organisations on their respective websites. Although the initiatives detailed in the tables are not necessarily unique to the organisation they appear against, wherever possible, the more innovative CSR activities were selected for inclusion. There is an emphasis, therefore, on those initiatives that in some way marked an organisation out from the rest. Related to this is the specificity with which many of the organisations were able to describe their CSR activities. Rather than merely ‘talking the talk’, the reviewed organisations needed to show they could also ‘walk the walk’ by detailing concrete examples of good practice. Importantly though, it was the websites of the respective organisations which formed the subject of this review, rather than the activities and initiatives themselves. Aside from the occasional third-party endorsement, we had no way of verifying the quality of those practices reviewed.

Some websites visited during the review appeared to be somewhat out of date, demonstrating a lack of attention to the pressing topicality of CSR debates. Also, some organisations described positive CSR-related policies as being ‘in the pipeline’. It is important to note that inclusion here doesn’t necessarily imply that the full range of a given organisation’s practices is exemplary: at some sites, relatively little CSR information was offered. Often, however, an organisational website would give examples and pointers, leaving the report to outline a fuller picture.

Basic web details are listed in Table 1.

Table 1.1: Web review organisations and web links

Organisation	Web address	Link to documents/ reports
Alliance & Leicester	www.alliance-leicester-group.co.uk/	www.alliance-leicester-group.co.uk/non-html/loader.asp?d=group&p=community-relations.html&s=6
Aviva	www.aviva.com	www.aviva.com/responsibility/index.htm
Barclays plc	www.barclays.com/	
Boots plc	www.boots-plc.co.uk	
BSkyB	www.corporate-ir.net/ireye/ir_site.zhtml?ticker=bsy.uk&script=11931&item_id='home.html'	www.corporate-ir.net/ireye/ir_site.zhtml?ticker=BSY.UK&script=11890&item_id='crupdate.html'
BP	www.bp.com	
BT	www.bt.co.uk	www.btplc.com/Betterworld/Publicationsanddownloads/Publicationsanddownloads.htm
Cadbury Schweppes	www.cadburyschweppes.com	www.cadburyschweppes.com/EN/AboutUs/
Capita	www.capita.co.uk	
Debenhams	www.debenhams.com	
Department of Trade and Industry (DTI)	www.dti.gov.uk	www.societyandbusiness.gov.uk/2002/report
Expro	www.exprogroup.com	
HBOS	www.hbosplc.com / www.hboscr.com	www.hboscr.com
Hilton Group	www.hiltongroup.com	
HM Prison Service	www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk	www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk/filestore/1086_1494.pdf
J Sainsburys	www.j-sainsbury.co.uk	www.j-sainsbury.co.uk/csr/env_reports.cfm
Marks and Spencer	www.marks-and-spencer.co.uk	www2.marksandspencer.com/thecompany/corporatesocialresponsibility/index.shtml
National Grid Company plc	www.nationalgrid.com/uk	
Ordnance Survey	www.ordsvy.gov.uk	www.ordsvy.gov.uk/downloads/annual-report/annual_report_2002-3.pdf
PowerGen plc	www.pgen.com	www.pgen.com/world/corporate_responsibility.asp

Organisation	Web address	Link to documents/reports
Provident Financial	www.providentfinancial.com	www.providentfinancial.com/plc/main_html/frameset.cfm?content=/plc/about_us/html/csr.html&side_navigation=/plc/about_us/html/about_nav.html
Reed Elsevier	www.reed-elsevier.com	www.investis.com/reedelsevier/csr/index.shtml
Safeway Stores plc	www.safeway.co.uk	www.safeway.co.uk/cgi-bin/search.cgi?000012000007&location=000012
Scottish & Newcastle	www.scottish-newcastle.com	www.scottish-newcastle.com/sn/responsibility/
Sygen International	www.sygeninternational.com	
Tate & Lyle	www.tateandlyle.com	
Telewest Communications	www.telewest.co.uk	www.telewest.co.uk/ourcompany/investor_annualreport.html
Tesco	www.tesco.com/everylittlehelps/	www.tesco.com/everylittlehelps/
Unilever	www.unilever.co.uk	
Xansa	www.xansa.com	

While almost all of the reviewed websites contained specific and easily accessible CSR information, usually in its own designated section, a number featured details of CSR activities at various locations, including in the general annual report and on the recruitment and careers pages. The extent to which CSR-related issues found mention on the website gave a strong sense of how thoroughly the notion of responsible business practice was ingrained in the organisation. For some, CSR seemed to be more of an 'add-on', whereas for others, the concept appeared to be more genuinely at the heart of business strategy.

In general, private organisations seemed to wear the CSR badge more visibly, with section headers clearly directing the user to relevant parts of the website, without the necessity for a site search tool. It is possible that those in the commercial sector are – and need to be – more mindful of brand power and customer relations issues and so make more of CSR practices. Public organisations tended to be less immediately transparent about their own operations regarding CSR, and sometimes did not seem to have obviously followed the CSR route. Often, employee-related CSR was defined at these sites as a personnel or HR issue, with CSR viewed as solely related to external social and environmental concerns rather than internal workplace concerns.

A number of organisations emphasised the importance of employee-related CSR by including positive 'employer-engaged' core values statements on their web pages. For example, the Civil Aviation Authority values statement refers to three principle areas: performance, people and value for money. Through this, employees are situated at the centre of organisational success: 'We believe in maintaining and developing excellence in our people as they are the source of our reputation and success'. Similarly, CSR values are at the very heart of the Capita Group's vision statement, which details the organisation's aim of 'creating employment and development opportunities for our employees and providing confidence for new employees who transfer to us through public and private sector contracts'. More organisations than not, however, had statements of vision which failed to reflect the spirit of CSR and instead emphasised the more conventional business motives of profit and increased shareholder value.

2. Training and Development

A number of organisations had achieved Investors in People (IiP) accreditation.

Table 2.1: Employee learning

Organisation	Initiative	Description
Alliance & Leicester	Flexible Learning Centres	Sites where employees can access a range of PC-based learning packages
Boots	Communication during organisational change	During recent restructuring, over 52,000 employees across the organisation underwent a group discussion programme exploring the issues, opportunities and challenges thrown up by change
Boots	Leadership assessment programme	Using individual development plans and one-to-one coaching
BP	Time to train	Employees are encouraged to take an average of five days' training every year.
Capita	Financial support for professional qualifications	During 2002, 10% of employees were sponsored by the organisation to undertake a professional qualification in their relevant field
HBOS	Staff secondment programme	To enable employees to experience and learn from different work environments
Hilton Group	The Hilton University	Virtual training centre with faculties covering a range of skills for the hotel industry, from operational and technical to finance and general management
J Sainsbury	Learning@Sainsburys	Intranet learning facility for employees
J Sainsbury	Pre-retirement courses	Prepare leavers for retirement and encourage new interests
PowerGen	Clicks@home	Scheme enabling employees to lease high-spec PCs at low price
Safeway	Aspire	Employee self-directed learning scheme
Tate & Lyle	Learning Resource Centre	For eligible employees to update existing skills or acquire new ones <i>eg</i> study for professional qualifications, learn a new language <i>etc.</i>
Tesco	Talent Spotting	Scheme by which employees are placed into 'talent pool' following career discussions with manager. Talent pool information then used to determine who fills future vacancies and to identify cross-functional movement and development opportunities.
Unilever	Guidance for departing employees	All employees leaving the organisation, specifically after restructuring, receive counselling on issues such as financial management and career skills

Almost all of the organisations had personal development structures in place, which usually involved an annual appraisal along with more regular meetings between managers and staff.

Table 2.2: Performance management

Organisation	Initiative	Description
Alliance & Leicester	Accelerated Leadership Programme	Designed to identify managers who show potential to be future leaders, and to provide them with suitable development opportunities
Alliance & Leicester	Customer Service Champion Award	Recognises employees who have delivered consistently high customer service; winners are awarded enhanced career progression opportunities <i>eg</i> place on a management course
DTI	Career Development Centre	Employee-planning centre to assess skills and areas for development
Telewest Communications	Career and Reward Accreditation Scheme	To encourage employees to develop their knowledge, skills and behaviour in line with both their role and the organisational brand – the first such scheme in the UK to be formally recognised by the Institute of Customer Service
Unilever	Mum's CV	Scheme which helps mothers interested in returning to (or starting) work present themselves more accurately. A checklist helps them realise the business value of some of the activities associated with bringing up children
Xansa	Member of Involvement and Participation Association	A not-for-profit organisation which helps organisations to develop effective working practices designed to improve performance and productivity through employee involvement

3. Communication and Consultation

Many of the organisations reviewed carried out employee attitude survey work in order to gain feedback from their employees for future planning purposes. A number also used staff magazines and bulletins to keep the workforce informed and engaged.

Table 3.1: Channels for communication and consultation

Organisation	Initiative	Description
Alliance & Leicester	HR.direct and HR.online	Telephone helpline and Intranet-based service to provide immediate responses to employees' HR queries
Aviva	Employee consultation	A series of meetings between employees and executive management carried out during 2002 were broadcast to employees via satellite TV and recorded for subsequent reference on the company intranet
Boots	Workforce discrimination briefings	Sessions with employees to communicate what harassment and discrimination actually mean, how to recognise them, and how to take action
Hilton Group	Speak-up and Suggestion programmes	Designed to facilitate employee feedback
Marks & Spencer	Welfare Helpline	Free and confidential helpline for employees on all matters
Ordnance Survey	CareFirst	Independent advice service for employees and their immediate families re legal matters, professional counselling <i>etc.</i>
Provident Financial	Shaping our Future	Financial report specifically for employees
Reed Elsevier	Crispin's Open Door	Intranet-based facility enabling staff to direct queries to CEO, whose response is sent directly to them as well as being posted on the site.
Safeway	Grapevine	Corporate intranet communication facility
Scottish & Newcastle	Whistle-blowing policy	Managed by third party – Expolink – for increased independence
Sygen International	Harrassment policy	Policy details examples / definitions of harrassment, reporting frameworks, investigation and confidentiality
Telewest Communications	Broadtalk	Regular live webchat event for employees directly to contact the managing director and other members of senior management

4. Health and Safety

A number of the organisations included in this review had rigorous policies in place for the monitoring and upkeep of health and safety standards in the workplace. This was particularly so for workplaces perceived to be more hazardous to employee safety, such as those in the oil, gas or engineering sectors. In addition, a majority referred to the occupational health (OH) provision made for employees. OH services included vocational rehabilitation frameworks and counselling services.

Table 4.1: Health, safety and wellbeing provision

Organisation	Initiative	Description
Aviva	Upgrade of premises	In order to prioritise a good quality standard of workplace and work station, a significant office refurbishment scheme is in process
Marks & Spencer	Founding member of Mindout for Mental Health	A charity aiming to help those with mental health problems in the work place
Capita	Staffcare programme	In order to assist staff through change, a Staff Support Team and dedicated Staff Transition Manager are available, along with a wide range of communications <i>eg</i> welcome pack, regular Q&A bulletins, confidential email address and/or hotline for questions
DTI	Sports	A comprehensive sports centre is situated in London premises for use by employees
Expro	Sports	The organisation of sports activities to promote health employee health <i>eg</i> rugby team, five-a-side football and squash tournaments
National Grid Company plc	Sports and leisure	Major sites have subsidised restaurants and gym facilities either on the site itself or via arrangements with local health clubs
Prison Service	Work-related stress management	Four pilot projects aimed at providing help and support to employees suffering from stress are currently being run. These will be evaluated and built upon for the future.
Scottish & Newcastle	Health screening	Regular health screening for all senior managers
Scottish & Newcastle	Provision of bike-parks	To prioritise and facilitate employee good health
Tate & Lyle	Network Safety Committees	A Group-wide network which makes effective use of resources, improves communications and shares best practice. Employee family participation encouraged via distribution of safety promotional items to employee homes, safety slogan contests, calendars featuring the artwork of employees' children/grandchildren, safety fairs and picnics, plant tours for families

5. Work-Life Balance

Table 5.1: Flexible work arrangements

Organisation	Initiative	Description
Alliance & Leicester	Flexible Holidays	Scheme enabling employees to 'buy' or 'sell' up to five days' holiday each year
Barclays	Maternity support scheme	Providing advice, back-to-work coaching and work-life balance guidance before, during, and after maternity or adoption leave
BT	'Freedom to Work'	Initiative to enable employees where possible to develop own attendance patterns
DTI	Workplace holiday play scheme	A play scheme catering for children aged five to 12 operating in all school holidays
DTI	Career breaks	Employees with caring responsibilities may leave for a career break for between six months and five years
HBOS	Flexible working	Options include nine day fortnights, four day weeks, home working and flexible work locations
Marks & Spencer	Employers for Work Life Balance Alliance	Founding member
Ordnance Survey	Springboard	Development programme which encourages women to achieve balance in their personal and professional lives
Scottish & Newcastle	Work-life balance initiative	Project undertaken in partnership with the National Association of Licensed House Managers – part of TGWU – to address excessive working hours amongst managers and out-based employees: has led to reduction in working hours
Tesco	Flexible working for students	A scheme which allows students employed by the company to transfer between home and term-time locations throughout the year

6. Equality and Diversity

Many of the reviewed organisations were members of equality and diversity campaign organisations, such as Opportunity Now, Race for Opportunity, the Employers' Forum on Disability, Cultural Diversity Network and the Employers' Forum on Age. Some were involved with the Disability Symbol scheme, that is, had made a number of commitments in respect of the recruitment, employment, retention and career development of disabled people.

Table 6.1: Addressing diversity issues in the workplace

Organisation	Initiative	Description
Alliance & Leicester	Customer Disability Support Unit	To provide support to management and staff on the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and the implementation of company disability policy
Alliance & Leicester	Women in Business	A programme for women managers, providing networking and development opportunities to help further careers
Barclays	Multi-faith room	New HQ at Canary Wharf will provide facilities to support employees seeking time out for prayer during working hours, including dedicated washing facilities
BSkyB	Disability advice line	Telephone advice line for disabled people interested in a career with the organisation
BT	Parental leave	Parental leave benefits exceed legal requirements and are available to same-sex as well as other couples
Capita	Equality between employees on different contracts	Temporary employees are entitled to the same terms and conditions as permanent employees
Hilton Group	Assistance for employees who become disabled	The organisation's objective is the continued provision of suitable employment, either in the same or an alternative position, with appropriate training being given if necessary
HM Prison Service	RESPECT and RESPOND schemes	Eliminating racism in the workplace and developing ethnic minority employees
Ordnance Survey	Diversity Champion scheme	Invited by Diversity Works Partnership to become Diversity Champion in local business community <i>ie</i> to visit local businesses and share employment and recruitment practices and experiences to enhance diversity
Safeway Stores plc	Recruiting for Diversity	Advertising job vacancies in local communities and on Springboard and 'Age Positive' websites
Safeway Stores plc	Appreciating Differences	Diversity training for managers

7. Pay and Benefits

Table 3: Pay and benefits

Organisation	Initiative	Description
Aviva	Maternity Returners Bonus	Package designed to attract new mothers back to work
Barclays	Share Incentive Plan	Provides employees with opportunity to buy company shares from pre-tax pay
Barclays	Childcare payment scheme	Employees with children can choose to have childcare costs deducted from salary, in return for exemption from NI contributions
Boots	Employee Share Scheme	Free shares to eligible employees
BSkyB	Health insurance	Free membership of private medical health insurance scheme for employees and their families
BT	BT Childcare Salary Direct	Scheme to assist parent-employees to save and pay for approved childcare
Cadbury Schweppes	Choices benefits package	Allows employees to choose how they want their benefits allowance spent, from will-writing to nursery vouchers
Debenhams	Internal and external discounts	For employees, their families, and, at certain times of the year, friends as well. The variety of offers includes health insurance, eye care plans, travel insurance and holiday discounts
Debenhams	Free travel cards	Employees who work in an office or store in central London are eligible for a free zone 1-6 travel card
J Sainsbury	Save as You Earn	Company shares offered to employees at 20% discount; bonus rewards for long-term savers.
HBOS	Parental leave	13 weeks unpaid leave for employees with children up to seven years old (26 weeks where child has a disability)
Marks & Spencer	Transport	Interest-free loans for public transport season tickets and access to preferential car leasing
National Grid Company plc	Childcare vouchers	Available to employees with childcare responsibilities
Unilever	Paternity / maternity leave	Enhanced maternity and paternity leave benefits
Xansa	Management Incentive Plan	Grants eligible managers company share options of between 25% and 100% of salary dependent on the performance of Xansa, the individual and their seniority

8. Other Useful Web Features

Table 4: Interactivity

Organisation	Feature	Description
Aviva	News	CSR 'Latest news' page
BT	Voting	Website-users can vote on a particular CSR question
Cadbury Schweppes	Website update notification	An 'email me when this page changes' function
HBOS	Printing	Easy-to-use 'print this page' and 'print whole website' icons
J Sainsbury	Feedback	Website-users can enter 'feedback' responses to reports
Unilever	Information-sharing	'Forward this page' facility

9. Involvement of the HR Function

The HR function, in overseeing key structures and processes relating to people management, has a great capacity for promoting positive behaviour and relationships in the workplace. In spite of this, its role in respect of CSR strategy and governance was rarely referred to on the reviewed websites.