

Digital Inclusion Team – Final report and case studies

25th April 2007

Prepared for:
Paul Waller
Digital inclusion Team
c/o Social Exclusion Unit
7/K10 Eland House
Bressenden Place
London
SW1E 5DU

Prepared by:
Alison Ewings and Jane Fiona Cumming
Article 13
71a The Grove
London
W5 5LL

Phone: 020 8840 4450
Email: jane@article13.com

Article 13 Ltd 71a The Grove, London W5 5LL t: (020) 8840 4450 f: (020) 8566 4738 w: www.article13.com



Commentary on Article 13 Report by the Digital Inclusion Team

We commissioned this research not knowing what we might find. In the end, it has turned up some exciting surprises.

Overall, including the scanning of a long list of companies' CSR activities, the pattern we see reflects the wider Digital Inclusion Landscape, as reported in our study of that name in early 2007. That is to say, there is not a huge volume of activities aimed at disadvantaged people, and of those that are, the majority focus on either the disabled or the elderly with occasional and interesting exceptions. Similarly, the application of ICT does not feature much as a key component of initiatives, nor innovatively drive many. We would have been amazed had this not been the case. Where ICT does form a major part of the delivery of a project (rather than in the back office where it might support, for example, a financial product), the focus is largely on providing people with access to technology (e.g. donating used equipment).

What is interesting is that few if any of the projects finally reviewed in the case studies set out to address social exclusion in its formal sense, i.e. a life situation defined by suffering many disadvantages at once. Quite understandably, they target sufferers of one particular disadvantage, e.g. unemployment. However, it does seem that successfully helping with this one factor starts to impact the others, making a positive overall impact on quality of life.

Where technology and media companies feature in the study, again we see a familiar pattern. Few seem to take inclusive design (i.e. the development of products and services that everyone, including those with physical or mental constraints, can use) really seriously, despite legal obligations. What we see in the case studies are examples where regulatory requirements have kick-started a separate effort which has subsequently been mainstreamed into the corporate marketing strategy, as the benefits became apparent.

Mainstreaming features in the studies of companies from the other sectors. The clearest examples are where initiatives aimed at improving employability of a target group have grown to form part of the company's recruitment strategy.

We conclude that, as in digital inclusion generally, in the commercial sector there is little activity addressing how ICT can provide a win-win for a disadvantaged group and a service provider or enterprise. This probably reflects the universal lack of conscious thought given to this. But where we do find examples, they serve to illustrate the potential, largely as yet unexploited.

Our findings

Scope:

Following a benchmarking exercise exploring how organisations engage socially excluded groups, in-depth interviews were held with those companies identified as undertaking the most, or most interesting activities. This included the way they design, develop and market products and services as well as recruitment activities, philanthropic support and cause-related marketing.

The companies interviewed included:

- Alliance Boots
- Marks and Spencer
- Royal Mail Group
- Tate & Lyle
- Vodafone
- Workspace Group

These named interviewees have also agreed their case study can be published and these case studies on each of their activities are available as appendices to this report.

In summary:

Organisation	Social exclusion	Article 13's finding on the use of ICT in the case study
Alliance Boots	The company also undertakes community programmes around its headquarters in Nottingham, many of which are specifically designed to tackle issues of social exclusion. They are currently undertaking an innovative trial, piloting a programme to increase the number of disabled employees using ICT to work from home.	The pilot applies ICT in a totally new way of engaging disabled members of the workforce. The programme has the potential to provide disabled people with their first opportunity to access paid employment.
M&S	M&S's flagship programme, 'Marks & Start' helps people from groups with particular employment challenges gain work experience. The programme commenced in 2004 and provides a taste of life in a working environment and the confidence and ability to gain employment.	The use of ICT is limited to the administration and measurement of the programme and is not used to directly engage participants. However, it has been identified as an area where more work could be undertaken.
Royal Mail Group	After an evaluation of its recruitment data the Royal Mail Group recognised that it needed to challenge traditional recruitment practices and identify new areas for sourcing employees, particularly from amongst socially excluded groups. These included 380,000 'hidden homeless' people, 700,000 people of working age with disabilities, single parents and the 47,000 servicemen who leave the armed forces each year.	Whilst ICT may be used in the administration of the programme, there is no specific mention of its application in other aspects. However, the Royal Mail Group acknowledges that access to ICT would make job hunting easier for disadvantaged groups, including the homeless.

Organisation	Social exclusion	Article 13's finding on the use of ICT in the case study
Tate & Lyle	Tate & Lyle have operations in deprived areas of the UK and have a tradition of working with these communities to improve their circumstances. In particular, their biggest effort is in East London where they focus primarily on education and, to a lesser degree, health programmes. Another key area of focus is the provision of support services to those organisations working directly with the community. This support includes the provision of rent free accommodation, salary funding for staff and access to business advice.	ICT is used to help manage many of the programmes. More specifically it underpins one of their major support programmes for Community Links. One of the most notable outcomes has been the 'Auction my stuff' idea where people donate old IT and other equipment to Community Links who, rather than source users for the equipment sell it on their behalf via online auction site, e-bay. Community Links retain 30% of the sale price to fund their activities.
Vodafone	Vodafone proactively research and explore the potential of mobile phone technology to bring socio-economic value, particularly amongst socially excluded groups. They have launched the Socio-Economic Impact (SIM) project to try and understand how people use mobile communication and its impact on social and economic growth. In the UK more specifically, the focus is on the elderly and the disabled. These people have a need/wish for mobile technology but may not always find generic models adequate from a usability and design sense.	Vodafone has worked with a number of community partners including the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB), Royal National Institute for the Deaf (RNID) and the UK Council on Deafness. These groups advised on the use of technology to convert voice to text and vice versa for visually or hearing impaired customers. This led to the development of the Vodafone Speaking Phone and the Vodafone Mobile Text Phone. Additional ICT driven solutions include personal alarms and specifically designed products for the elderly or infirm.
Workspace	Workspace has in place a number of activities that use ICT to help their clients grow and develop their business. The nature of their customer base means that these activities improve the success of businesses that often employ or are owned by traditionally excluded groups. This includes small to medium enterprises (SMEs), Black and Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) businesses as well as businesses owned, or majority staffed by women, people with disabilities and other groups protected by anti-discrimination legislation.	Workspace produces electronic newsletters profiling the services provided by their customer base. These newsletters are distributed across their customer network to encourage them to trade within the group. In addition there are electronic Christmas cards with click throughs to selected clients. By encouraging networking within the group Workspace provide market leads to help these often new businesses grow.

Nature of the support:

The initial review showed that although activities often had the potential to engage socially excluded groups, they rarely targeted these groups specifically usually targeting wider groups. For instance, young people are a key focus of many support programmes.

Older people and disabled people were the next predominant recipients of community support from companies. Whilst this often took the form of financial support for charitable organisations, it also included support for broader accessibility including in-store/product design as well as large-print, Braille and talking brochures and bills.

However, a number of the companies interviewed had quite specific programmes of engagement, most often focused on disabled people. Typically these were closely aligned to core business activities including market development and recruitment.

Why are companies seeking to engage?

Although most companies had a CSR framework of which engagement activities were a component, the majority had a strong business case supporting their activities. Whilst it could be argued that the CSR approach of the organisation opened it up to new, creative options for solving business problems, activities were rarely undertaken simply to be a responsible corporate. Rather CSR provided companies with 'a fresh set of eyes' through which business issues could be viewed. These issues typically fell into three main areas:

1. Market development

Whether specifically targeted or not, all companies acknowledged that as members of the general population socially excluded groups are potential customers.

Workspace Group, a privately owned provider of flexible business space for small and medium sized enterprises, takes such an approach. Many of its clients are considered 'diverse businesses' under the Greater London Authority's definition being owned or largely staffed by people from minority and often socially excluded groups. Workspace Group recognises that the performance of its business depends on the performance of their clients' business. With this in mind they offer a number of support services, including an online networking and trading space for clients and advice and assistance in bidding for government contracts. The proof of the success of this model is evidenced by the fact that many companies are prepared to be on waiting lists to become tenants.

2. Recruitment and training

A number of companies interviewed have experienced issues with recruitment and retention of staff. They have looked to socially excluded groups to provide new labour pools for their business.

In what started as a philanthropic activity to provide work experience for the long-term unemployed, Marks and Spencer's Marks & Start programme now provides a steady stream of recruits to the business. It provides valuable leadership opportunities for existing staff and a more diverse workforce.

In contrast, Royal Mail Group actively sought to employ homeless and disabled people to meet current and future demand for operational staff. This approach is crucial to meeting its overall business goal of improving quality and reliability of service. The strategy is expected to provide a sustainable solution to establishing a more permanent workforce.

3. Reputation

For a number of those companies interviewed their engagement activities were an important way to build their brand and develop relationships with key stakeholders, both important activities leading to improved business performance.

Global telecommunications company Vodafone is keen to be seen as going well beyond compliance to lead the debate and implementation of more accessible technological solutions. There are obvious reputational benefits in such an approach, particularly amongst government and regulatory bodies. These are in addition to market development benefits, for instance, Vodafone currently has in excess of 1,300 customers in the niche market of speaker phones. Feedback from these customers indicates that it makes a huge difference to their lives.

4. Corporate citizenship

In addition to core business drivers is the driver of being a good corporate neighbour through support for local communities. Whilst this may build brand, it is done more out of a corporate values approach. It is simply about the way we are, rather than what we are looking to become. The benefits of this approach tend to be more internal in the way people feel about working for the organisation and have the potential to influence retention although they are not undertaken to specifically achieve this.

Renewable ingredients company, best known for its sugar business, Tate & Lyle, take this approach to their community activities in East London where they support a number of local education and health programmes. Most enduring has been their partnership with Community Link, which has seen them fund a business development manager and provide warehousing facilities for their 'Auction my stuff' initiative.

Application of ICT:

Initial benchmarking revealed the most common applications of ICT to be:

- Online education tools for young people;
- Access to equipment, for instance the donation of new or used computer equipment;
- ICT enabled products and services including help lines and mobile services.

Those interviewed focused more on ICT enabled products and services as well as the role of ICT as a facilitator of other activities, for instance tracking and measurement of programmes. In addition was the use of ICT to improve communication and engage a disabled workforce.

1. Products and services

A number of companies provide ICT products designed specifically for socially excluded customers. This includes services for the disabled, for instance subtitling and audio description services provided by British Sky Broadcasting. Similarly, Vodafone has produced a mobile phone designed to be easier for elderly people to use, featuring larger buttons and a less complicated handset.

2. Facilitation

The success of many engagement programmes is underpinned by ICT. For instance, Tate & Lyle developed the 'Auction my stuff' initiative in conjunction with Community Links. The programme uses online auction site eBay to sell items on behalf of supporters in return for a commission. This provides a vital source of ongoing funding to support their community activities.

Furthermore, recruitment programmes are managed and monitored using ICT as is sales data. Although not a direct component of the offering, use of ICT is an important facilitator in the successful implementation of the programme.

3. Creating communication channels

Increasingly ICT is underpinning communication between organisations and socially excluded groups. As outlined in the initial study, a number of companies provide product information and curriculum aligned learning materials on the internet. Additional to this is the example of Workspace Group using the online space to promote the services of members and encourage an information and support network to help client businesses flourish.

4. Workplace engagement

In one of the most innovative applications of the study, Alliance Boots are trialling the ability of technology to allow disabled people to work from home. This addresses a key issue for the business, namely, finding people able to work during early mornings, afternoons and evenings – peak times for their customer care lines. It also addresses a key barrier preventing disabled people from entering the workforce in a full time capacity – the difficulty of travelling to the workplace, particularly during peak hour. By creatively exploring the possibilities ICT provides, the Boots pilot has been able to provide meaningful work for disabled people whilst solving a key recruitment issue.

Key features of success:

Despite the varied nature of their programmes, there are a number of common features of the more successful and innovative activities:

1. Clear business case

Each company started with a clear objective of what they wanted to achieve – whether it be to improve retention, create new business markets or build reputation – and developed a business case before launching into action. Whilst the goals may change over time, for instance a community support programme that becomes a core business activity, it is always underpinned by a clear business strategy.

2. Partnership model

All companies interviewed acknowledged the critical importance of working with community groups who understand the issues faced by socially excluded groups. These organisations provided vital communication links and ongoing support and advice. In fact, they are the key channel for successfully reaching socially excluded groups.

This has also facilitated far more creative problem solving as each group brings to the table a distinct view point and their own unique challenges to be addressed.

3. Challenging stereotypes

Particularly in the area of recruitment, it was vital that companies undertook internal education campaigns amongst existing staff. These explained the reasons for engagement, provided training on the needs of these groups and overcame negative stereotypes. For instance, Royal Mail Group addressed concerns from employees about working alongside homeless people.

4. Regulation working as a barrier

In one case ICT had the potential to aid social inclusion; however the Freedom of Information Act effectively prevents it. Government Data on socially excluded people which would enable the company to proactively offer help and advice on tariffs cannot be made available to the utilities. The case study highlights a dilemma around the capability of information communication technology and the regulation of information.

Summary:

Clearly there is a long way to go in using ICT to engage socially excluded groups. However, encouragingly there is a relatively strong appetite amongst companies to engage with socially excluded groups. Whilst this has traditionally been undertaken in the philanthropic space, increasingly there is an understanding of the benefits of taking a more business focused approach.

Those companies that have been seeking to actively engage with socially excluded groups, both as customers and employees, readily acknowledge the capacity of ICT to assist in this engagement but have yet to fully explore the potential.

Partnerships between community groups, companies and government will be important in bringing together key areas of expertise and the variety of perspectives needed to develop truly creative and innovative solutions as evidenced by the best practice examples identified in this study.

Appendices – Case Studies

Case Study 1 – Alliance Boots	10
Case Study 2 – Marks and Spencer	12
Case Study 3 – Royal Mail Group	14
Case Study 4 – Tate & Lyle	16
Case Study 5 – Vodafone	18
Case Study 6 – Workspace Group	20

Case Study 1 – Alliance Boots

Company description

The merger between Alliance UniChem and Boots Group has created an international pharmacy-led health and beauty group. The health and beauty group comprises 3,000 retail outlets, of which approximately 2,700 have a pharmacy. In addition, there is a wholesale network of over 380 depots serving over 125,000 outlets.

The company also operates over 400 pharmacies in Norway, The Netherlands, Thailand, the Republic of Ireland and Italy.

Overview of projects

Alliance Boots are well known for their health campaigns encouraging customers to improve their health and wellbeing. The company also undertakes community programmes around its headquarters in Nottingham many of which are specifically designed to tackle issues of social exclusion.

They are currently undertaking an innovative trial, piloting a programme to increase the number of disabled employees using ICT to work from home.

Focus on social exclusion

Whilst their health related marketing campaigns are targeted at the community as a whole, this by default includes socially excluded groups. With stores in most high streets Boots acknowledge that they can play a valuable role in providing information on health issues among members of communities hard to reach by other means.

For instance, their Change one Thing campaign run in January 2006 provided expert help to customers to identify a single achievable health or fitness goal. This included helping 500,000 customers commit to stop smoking.

Community programmes are more specifically targeted to socially excluded groups. Alliance Boots experiences more thefts than anyone else on the high street because of the pharmaceutical products held. Therefore many of its community programs focus on young people, particularly in low socio-economic areas to help provide a strong foundation at early stage to build confidence and self-esteem. This includes the provision of breakfast clubs where students can be supervised and receive a good breakfast before school, setting them up for a productive day. Boots staff also volunteer as mentors in the programme, volunteering their time (half the time they spend on the programme is paid for by Boots). Boots also work with a number of local charities for the homeless who help people sleeping on the streets and where practical, provide employment opportunities within their head office.

The HR programme being currently trialled seeks to increase employment participation amongst disabled people. Alliance Boots recognise that disabled people are often users of pharmaceutical and health products and are a group the business should be engaging and supporting.

Drivers and business case

Health campaigns raise awareness of important health issues and generate enquiries and sales for the business as well as encouraging a healthier lifestyle.

Community programmes are linked to improving the communities where Boots operate. The company works with partners to address issues of crime, homelessness and drug addiction. These are issues with the potential to negatively impact Boots, particularly as a pharmacist impacted by increased theft. Furthermore, staff volunteering in these programmes have acquired new skills and report feeling more positive about the organisation.

Alliance Boots provide a 24-hour advice service. The current HR trial is exploring innovative ways of resourcing this. Typically peak call times to the service are first thing in the morning and again in the late afternoon and early evening. Currently staff are predominately parents who find it difficult to work during these times. In a creative approach Alliance Boots are looking to employ disabled people to answer calls from their home.

The approach provides meaningful employment to disabled people, rather than token roles, as well as addressing an increasingly difficult recruitment issue for the business.

Application of ICT

Disabled people report that the most difficult barrier to employment is often travelling to work, particularly during peak hour. Alliance Boots are exploring the possibility of using ICT to allow disabled people to work from home in meaningful customer service roles that provide a vital service to the business.

The pilot applies ICT in a totally new way of engaging disabled members of the workforce. Indeed, for some, the programme has the potential to provide disabled people with their first opportunity to access paid employment. Technology has allowed the company to think differently about how it manages customer demand and by exploring new options for recruitment.

Reaching socially excluded groups

In developing the pilot Alliance Boots have worked closely with a number of community groups including RNIG and the Royal National Institute for the Blind, with whom they have also been involved with on a project looking at store design.

Future

The short-term focus is on reviewing the results of the pilot to see if there is an opportunity to roll out the initiative more broadly.

Summary

By taking a business approach to inclusion Alliance Boots is able to contribute both to healthier sales and a healthier community.

The current trial in home working is an example of ICT being used creatively to not only engage with socially excluded groups but to solve complex business issues. A similar approach is taken in their health campaigns, which take a business approach to community engagement and the application of corporate social responsibility principles.

References

- Interview with Richard Ellis, Alliance Boots
- Article 13 CBI Case Study, January 2004
- 2006 Corporate Social Responsibility Report
- www.allianceboots.com

Case Study 2 – Marks & Spencer

Company description

Marks & Spencer (M&S) is one of the UK's leading retailers of clothing, food, home products and financial services. Over 15 million people visit its 530 stores each week across the UK. In addition, M&S has 220 stores managed under franchise in 35 territories. It also has eight wholly owned stores in Hong Kong and 14 in the Republic of Ireland. The company is structured into business units covering food and general merchandise.

Overview of projects

M&S's award winning community programme, 'Marks & Start' helps people from groups with particular employment challenges gain work experience. The programme commenced in 2004 and provides a taste of life in a working environment and the confidence and ability to gain employment. Participants undertake a two or four week placement and are buddied with an M&S employee as a mentor.

Other cause related marketing activities follow a similar theme and include donations from the sale of specific food products to Shelter, a charity helping the homeless.

Accessibility to products is also an area of focus with 30% of products deliberately sourced and priced at 'opening price points' to provide competitive choices and value for money.

Focus on social inclusion

The experience gained by participants in 'Marks & Start' provides vital confidence and skills to help people re-enter the workforce and shows a direct engagement with socially excluded groups. These typically include parents returning to work, homeless, disabled and young unemployed people as well as students who are the first in their family to go to university.

Homeless people are the focus of cause-related marketing activities whilst opening price points are designed to increase accessibility to people from low socio-economic groups.

Drivers and business case

The founders of M&S believed that building good relationships with employees, suppliers and wider society was the best guarantee of long-term success. This remains the backbone of its approach to CSR.

The 'Marks & Start' program was developed in response to customer and employee research that showed employment to be an issue of concern. In this sense the programme started as a reputation exercise but has provided additional business benefits including new recruitment channels and a more diverse workforce.

Some 42% of participants find work within 13 weeks of placement. Where vacancies exist, participants are encouraged to apply for roles with M&S.

The buddy system also provides training opportunities for existing staff members and improves morale. Up to 76% of staff have said the programme contributes to making M&S a great place to work.

Application of ICT

The use of ICT is limited to the administration and measurement of the programme and is not used to directly engage participants. However, it has been identified as an area where more work could be undertaken.

Reaching socially excluded groups

Participants in 'Marks & Start' are found via four key charity partners including the Prince's Trust, One Parent Families, DisabledGo and Business Action on Homelessness. These partners identify candidates and work with them to provide pre-employment training, recruitment advice and placement debriefs. Job Centre Plus also provides assistance.

M&S meet with these partners monthly to review the programme and target outcomes

In addition, in-house communication programmes build support for the programme internally and overcome perceptions of the stigma that often accompanies disadvantaged people and fosters a greater understanding of the barriers of returning to the workplace.

Future plans

What commenced as primarily a community initiative is being integrated into the HR strategy for the organisation. The programme is continually refined based on the feedback of community partners, customers and participants.

Marks & Spencer is now helping international suppliers develop similar programmes locally.

Summary

This flagship programme benefits not only the participants receiving work experience but increases morale, provides mentoring experience and a greater understanding of diversity issues amongst existing staff. These benefits are particularly important for a business where customer service is an important component of the overall business offering.

References

- Interview with Freda Pinner, M&S
- Article 13 CBI Case Study, September 2005
- 2006 Corporate Social Responsibility Report
- www.marksandspencer.com/csr

Case Study 3 – Royal Mail Group

Company description

The Royal Mail Group was a public limited company wholly owned by the UK Government. It became a plc in March 2001 under the Postal Services Act 2000, which provided the framework for a commercially focused organisation in a more strategic relationship with the Government. It is now Royal Mail Group Limited.

With increased competition in the postal market Royal Mail has undergone a major restructuring to reduce costs and improve efficiency to ensure it can deliver sustained high quality service.

Overview of projects

A key focus of the restructure has been on improving recruitment success and reducing turnover. After an evaluation of its recruitment data the Royal Mail Group recognised that it needed to challenge traditional recruitment practices and identify new areas for sourcing employees, particularly from amongst socially excluded groups. Previously the Group were recruiting 2,000 people at an average cost of £3,000 only to find that many did not stay with the organisation.

This programme is part of a range of workplace diversity initiatives outlined in their most recent Corporate Responsibility Report. Other activities include a zero tolerance position on bullying in the workplace; mentoring programmes for women and people from ethnic minority groups; a review of childcare provision; cultural awareness training programmes and initiatives to increase the number of senior management positions held by women and Black Minority Ethnic (BME) managers.

Focus on social exclusion

The Royal Mail Group identified a variety of groups with the potential to meet current and future demand for operational staff. These included 380,000 'hidden homeless' people, 700,000 people of working age with disabilities (both physical and learning), single parents and the 18,000 servicemen and women who leave the armed forces each year.

Drivers and business case

Recruitment is an important component in successfully meeting Royal Mail Group's objectives of improving quality of service and improving customer confidence. However, they were experiencing difficulty in recruiting and keeping people, particularly in areas where unemployment is low.

Empirical evidence suggests that there is potential for employers to establish long term bonds with recruits from socially excluded groups provided that employers are prepared to provide allowances for personal circumstances. Thus it is expected that this recruitment strategy will provide a sustainable solution to establishing a more permanent workforce.

In addition, is the development of existing staff through coaching and mentoring roles and the reputational benefits of positioning the Royal Mail Group as employer of choice in the business.

The corporate responsibility case is also strong as employing disadvantaged people relieves the tax burden on supporting these groups in a way that delivers meaningful employment.

Application of ICT

Whilst ICT may be used in the administration of the programme there is no specific mention of its application in other aspects. However the Royal Mail Group acknowledges that access to ICT would make job hunting easier for disadvantaged groups, including the homeless.

Reaching socially excluded groups

Potential recruits are sourced through strategic relationships with a number of voluntary organisations with aligned objectives about placing socially excluded groups into employment. These have included the Employers Forum for Disability, the Shaw Trust and Business Action on Homelessness.

Advertisements are also run in the geographic area where roles are available, including Heathrow and Reading. This process has also expanded the number of community partners and includes Mencap, Mindroom and Remploy who have been critical to the upscaling of the programme from the initial pilot.

These partnerships are vital in ensuring that applicants are placed into suitable positions and are offered to people who are keen to work, do not have criminal convictions and do not have alcohol or substance abuse problems. This has been important in overcoming prejudices against socially excluded groups amongst existing employees who may have doubted the quality and integrity of such recruits.

The Royal Mail Group focus on providing recruits with every opportunity to succeed with changes to the induction process to allow extra time for recruits to settle into their jobs. This has also included recognising people's different learning styles and the fact that within a blue collar workforce up to 25% of employees are likely to have some form of learning disability.

To address this Royal Mail Group worked with Mindroom to develop support materials for line managers to help them identify people's strengths and place them in appropriate roles. Some 50,000 booklets have been produced and distributed across the business. Rather than training people on multiple rounds as was traditionally the case, recognising their strengths and training people in one particular round seems to be yielding better results.

Future plans

The focus is on tracking and quantifying the impact of the programme with a view to embedding it further into the organisation. Anecdotal evidence from managers shows that the programme has been well received and is seen to generate better candidates than mainstream recruitment channels. Mencap are recruiting 50 people with learning disabilities over the next 12 months. There is also a rollout of the successful pilot with Remploy in London.

Summary

The selection of suitable community partners has been vital to the success of the programme, providing greater understanding of the issues and support required for people from socially excluded groups to succeed in the workforce. By taking the time to understand these issues the Royal Mail Group has taken a proactive and creative approach, not only to workplace diversity, but in meeting their long-term recruitment needs.

References

- Interview with Martin Blake, Royal Mail Group
- Article 13 CBI Case Study, May 2005
- Corporate Social Responsibility Summary Report 2006
- DWP – 'I can get a job' Leaflet
- www.royalmailgroup.com

Case Study 4 – Tate & Lyle

Company description

Tate & Lyle is a world leading manufacturer of renewable food and industrial ingredients. Based in the UK it is a global company with operations in Europe, the Americas and South East Asia. Tate & Lyle provides ingredients, ingredient solutions and services to food, beverage and industrial customers.

Tate & Lyle operates over 65 production facilities in 29 countries. More than 7,000 people are employed in subsidiaries and a further 4,800 in joint ventures.

The company's product portfolio includes cereal sweeteners and starches, sugars, value added food and industrial ingredients, citric acid, and SLENDA® Sucralose.

Overview of projects

Tate & Lyle has a tradition of working with local organisations in the communities where their operations are based, to make positive changes to the local community. In the UK, Newham (in East London) is home to their main manufacturing operation and is the focus of the company's UK community involvement programmes. This centres on education and, to a lesser degree, environmental, health and arts programmes.

Focus on social exclusion

Generally local organisations tend to be geographically based, rather than targeted to a specific group within the community. However, Tate & Lyle's focus on education means that the majority of its community programmes target young people.

Such programmes include hosting visits from schools to their manufacturing operation, a child safety awareness programme, primary reading support, practice interviews, mentoring, and support for breakfast clubs in primary schools.

Another key area of Tate & Lyle's focus is the provision of on-site support for local community organisations. This includes the provision of rent free warehouse and office accommodation, salary funding for staff and access to business advice and on-site facilities.

Drivers and business case

The main driver for Tate & Lyle's community activities was a strategic decision to support the regeneration of local areas. A full time community role was created within the organisation ten years ago to develop relationships and focused programmes designed to address local needs.

Application of ICT

Information Communications Technology is used to help manage many of the programmes. More specifically it underpins one of Tate & Lyle's major support programmes, for Community Links, a local charity based in Newham and helping over 50,000 local people each year.

Community Links were looking to develop more sustainable funding methods to cover their core costs. A 'blue sky' strategy session resulted in Tate & Lyle funding a business development role to help develop funding strategies. One of the most notable outcomes has been the 'Auction My Stuff' project where people pass unwanted 'stuff' to Community Links who sell it on their behalf via online auction site, eBay. Community Links retain 30% of the sale price to fund their activities.

Over time the programme has grown to the point where Tate & Lyle has donated a warehouse to help store the volume of material donated to this social enterprise. Increasingly support has grown from individuals to companies who donate goods in bulk, including furniture, cosmetics, small electrical, fashion and stationery items.

The size of the programme means that the operation is now run by eight to ten young people over a 10-week course which provides training in employability and business skills. Links are now being made with employers to give the youngsters access to a number of recruitment programmes.

Reaching socially excluded groups

Partnership is vital in effectively reaching socially excluded groups in the local area. Tate & Lyle has a number of long-term local partners whose detailed knowledge and understanding of the area's issues are key to directing the company's community support,

Future plans

The focus will be to continue along the same path and embed these programmes further into the organisation.

Summary

By taking a holistic approach and developing close links with community organisations, business can have a significant positive impact on community regeneration. As evidenced by the success of 'Auction My Stuff', business has an important role in mentoring not only socially excluded groups but the community organisations working to support them.

It is important to continually review programmes and look to create ways where even greater social value can be created. The involvement of young people in the 'Auction My Stuff' training programme is a great example of how community projects can be adapted to provide greater added value.

References

- Interview with Michael Grier, Corporate Social Responsibility Manager, Tate & Lyle Plc
- Tate & Lyle Corporate Community Involvement Report
- www.tateandlyle.co.uk
- www.auctionmystuff.org

Case study 5 – Vodafone

Company description

Global mobile telecommunications company, Vodafone, has equity interests in 27 countries across five continents. They serve over 2 million proportionate customers and 33 partner networks. As well as mobile phone technology, Vodafone provides wireless internet connections and blackberry services.

Overview of projects

Vodafone proactively research and explore the potential of mobile phone technology to bring socio-economic value, particularly amongst socially excluded groups. They have launched the Socio-Economic Impact (SIM) project to try and understand how people use mobile communication and its impact on social and economic growth.

In many of their markets the regulatory environment mandates accessibility requirements. Furthermore, the nature of the product means that people use mobile phone technology to increase accessibility. This often comes about by the way that consumers use the technology rather than how it is promoted.

In the developed world the focus is on providing mobile technology suitable for use by disabled people and the elderly.

Focus on social exclusion

Much of the research outlined in Vodafone's public reports focuses on the developing world. For instance, in remote rural areas in Africa the introduction of mobiles has reduced the need to travel great distances and relieved the impacts of isolation. Mobile phone users are able to save time and money by avoiding lengthy journeys in unreliable vehicles and report being able to stay in touch with family and friends more easily, leading to improved social relationships.

Many of these groups experience social exclusion due to their economic situation and geographic isolation.

In the developed world, and in the UK more specifically, the focus is on the elderly and the disabled. These people have a need/wish for mobile technology but may not always find generic models adequate from a usability and design sense.

Drivers and business case

There are convincing compliance and business development arguments for engaging these groups. Whilst there are 'license to operate' conditions within the industry, Vodafone are keen to be seen as going well beyond compliance to lead the debate and implementation of more accessible technological solutions.

There are obvious reputational benefits in such an approach, particularly amongst government and regulatory bodies. However the business case also firmly stacks up with a clear market existing for these products.

Disabled people are high users of ICT, particularly voice/text conversion technology, 3G datacards and laptops. For instance, Vodafone UK currently has in excess of 1,300 customers in the niche market of speaking phones. Feedback from these customers indicates that it makes a huge difference to their lives.

Application of ICT

Vodafone UK has worked with a number of community partners including the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB), Royal National Institute for the Deaf (RNID) and the UK Council on Deafness. These groups advised on the use of technology to convert voice to text and vice versa for visually or hearing impaired customers. This led to the development of the Vodafone Speaking Phone and the Vodafone Mobile Text Phone.

Additional ICT driven solutions include personal alarms and specifically designed products for the elderly or infirm. An example was the introduction of Vodafone Simply, a handset designed to be easier to use.

The handset seeks to reduce the level of exclusion from mobile communications, estimated at least 9% of the EU adult population. Vodafone are seeking to reduce this level by at least a third before 2010. This brings both the social benefits of mobile ownership to the wider population and helps Vodafone grow the overall market for mobile technology.

ICT has also been employed to improve the health of the community more broadly. SMS reminders for young diabetes sufferers have helped them manage the disease more effectively. Similarly patient reminders have led to a 30-50% decline in missed hospital and doctors' appointments. Teenagers (especially girls) prefer to use their mobile phones to seek advice on health issues for privacy and confidentiality reasons.

Local foundations support homeless youth, work with students to reduce hoax calls to emergency services and provide schools with computers. Other donations include products and services, employee volunteering and redundant IT equipment. Vodafone also establish temporary base stations in areas of natural disaster and are investigating how mobile phones can be used to warn people of impending disasters – actually this is not Vodafone technology it is funded by us but TSF uses satellite technology which is faster to set up

Reaching socially excluded groups

Direct contact is maintained with these groups via the establishment of a dedicated contact centre accessible by phone or email for specialist advice and feedback. It is not known how extensively mainstream channels are also used by targeted socially excluded groups.

The contact centres and specialist products they support were developed in conjunction with community partners who provide valuable insight into the needs of the disabled and elderly.

Future plans

Mobile technology is evolving quickly so continual evaluation of the opportunities for the application of ICT to engage socially excluded groups is required. This will seek to continue the commitment in a way that acknowledges the issues and makes a positive difference.

Summary

By working with community groups to focus on the needs of the elderly and the disabled Vodafone has been able to effectively develop a product offering that goes well beyond compliance. They have developed a profitable market segment that delivers financial and reputational benefits to the company and significant improvement in the lifestyles and accessibility of socially excluded groups.

References

- Interview with Nicola Woodhead, Vodafone
- Corporate Responsibility Report for the 2006 financial year
- www.vodafone.co.uk (disability services and corporate responsibility sections)
- 'Impact of mobile phones in the developing world', pp 1-2, 4-5
- 'Return to vendor – how second-hand mobile phones improve access to telephone services', (prepared by Forum for the Future)
- www.vodafonefoundation.org

Case Study 6 – Workspace Group

Company description

Workspace Group plc is a specialist property-based business providing light industrial workshops and office space for new and existing small businesses in London. Its focus is on assisting business by creating affordable accommodation for rent on flexible and user-friendly terms.

Overview of projects

Workspace has in place a number of activities that use ICT to help their clients grow and develop their business. The nature of their customer base means that these activities improve the success of businesses that often employ or are owned by traditionally excluded groups.

Furthermore, they seek to create inclusive buildings. Guided by the objectives of the Mayor's London Plan, the Group focus on undertaking refurbishments of existing buildings and ensure that they are accessible to disabled people.

Focus on social inclusion

Many of Workspace's clients are considered 'diverse businesses' under the Greater London Authority's definition. This includes small to medium enterprises (SMEs), Black and Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) businesses as well as businesses owned, or majority staffed by women, people with disabilities and other groups protected by anti-discrimination legislation.

Over a third of all Workspace clients contribute directly to London's cultural or creative assets, or to core community services such as health and education.

Across the Workspace Group 40% of its employees are female and 31% are from ethnic minorities further demonstrating their support for diversity.

This commitment extends to the way they refurbish sites. For instance, at their Enterprise House development on London's Southbank, Workspace ensured that door entry panels are at a suitable height for wheelchair users, disabled lifts are available at the entrance and there are disabled toilets on each floor.

Drivers and business case

Given the failure rates of new enterprises Workspace's support for networking activities has the potential to reduce risk within their client portfolio.

By directly supporting the development of their customers' business Workspace are at the same time working to directly grow their own. Their activities have the potential to generate real win-wins. This is evidenced by the fact that companies are prepared to be on waiting lists to become tenants.

Application of ICT

Workspace produces electronic newsletters profiling the services provided by their customer base. These newsletters are distributed across their customer network to encourage them to trade within the group. In addition there are electronic Christmas cards with click throughs to selected clients.

The Workspace website also includes a Tradelink space providing an online customer community area for information sharing, trading and to promote initiatives and events across the portfolio. By encouraging networking within the group Workspace provide market leads to help these often new businesses grow.

Business generation outside the group is also encouraged with Workspace working with the London Development Authority (LDA) and local government authorities to find tender opportunities suitable for their network. Under the Greater London Authority's (GLA) Sustainable Procurement Policy GLA members are seeking to increase the number of diverse suppliers. This includes a focus on SMEs, which make up most of Workspace's customer base. This is just one way in which Workspace help tenants get access to the right channels to access larger bids, primarily through online e-procurement portals.

The entire networking system is underpinned by technology and the CEO, Harry Platt, readily admits that much of what they do is possible because their tenants are active internet users.

Reaching socially excluded groups

Workspace directly contacts customers via online channels who may be from or service socially excluded groups. In addition, some of the Workspace property portfolio is in some of the most deprived wards.

Future plans

Workspace plans to further maximise their contributions to London using the framework provided by the London Plan. This includes using certain sites to include more residential and retail uses, thereby turning London into a more compact city.

Summary

The Workspace business model specifically targets small businesses often run by people from socially excluded groups or with social entrepreneurship aims. Workspace goes beyond their original business proposition to create win-wins for themselves and clients. Online networking is crucial to this model of support.

References

- Interview with Harry Platt, Workspace
- Article 13 CBI Case Study, March 2007
- www.workspacegroup.co.uk
- www.lda.gov.uk