

# PUTTING THE HEAR BUSI

Businesses have the potential to work for change and create an improved world, and the way in which they do this can help build better customer relationships too.

David Finney, CQP MCQI, volunteer for Humane Being and founder of The Energy of Conversation, outlines the principles of corporate social responsibility and explains how to put it into practice

# CSR AT THE HEART OF YOUR BUSINESS

## CHANGE

History has taught us that if we leave change solely to governments, significant societal change might not occur – women may never have got the vote and we might not have banned slavery. Campaigning from grassroots level is essential to a continually progressive society. Laws are changed to reflect the feelings of the people and culture evolves as people become more educated.

We can appreciate what we have improved, learn from the past and seek to make further improvements, by preventing future occurrence of these issues. Sounds a bit like a QMS doesn't it? A QMS is dependent – among other things – on effective risk-based thinking, careful analysis of data and a commitment to continual improvement. But what about the customers? They are the central focus of a QMS based on ISO 9001:2015, so why does the definition of quality exclude them? ▶

ISO 9000:2015 defines quality as the “degree to which a set of inherent characteristics of an object fulfils requirements”. The exclusion of the word “customer” here surely implies that if we focused on customers to the exclusion of everything else, we may end up breaking the law, damaging the environment, or engaging in other unethical or harmful practices. To achieve quality, we must ensure we identify and aim to meet the needs and expectations of all the relevant interested parties (clause 4.2).

**CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

Since ISO 26000 (social responsibility standard) was released in 2010, corporate social responsibility (CSR) has been given a lot of attention. Businesses have realised that by adopting CSR practices, they can acquire more work, build stronger relationships, enhance their corporate reputation and increase staff motivation.

Twenty-first century consumers care about where their money goes, probably more than ever before. The 2019 Aflac CSR Survey found that 77 per cent of consumers surveyed are “motivated to purchase from companies committed to making the world better,” and 49% of Americans say it is more important for a company to “make the world a better place” than “make money for its shareholders.” What is influencing this? The climate crisis and modern slavery are probably two such factors.

Oxford Reference defines CSR as: “Awareness, acceptance, and management of the implications and effects of all corporate decision-making, taking particular account of community investment, human rights, and employee relations, environmental practices, and ethical conduct.”

This is not about initiatives that come and go, this definition lies right at the heart of an organisation and is fully comprehensive. We can look to others for inspiration.

Dale Vince, the owner of Ecotricity and Forest Green Rovers, has recently used plastic taken from the oceans and mixed it with coffee waste to create football shirts.

In 2006, Blake Mycoskie started TOMS Shoes after witnessing the

hardships of Argentinian children having to grow up without shoes, TOMS Shoes pledged to match every pair of shoes sold with a new pair for a child in need (over 60 million given at the last count).

In 2011, Levi Strauss & Co launched a Worker Well-being (WWB) programme to set new standards for the clothing industry by surveying their employees to find out what they need to become more “engaged, healthy and productive”. It aims to improve the lives of workers by addressing issues related to health, financial security and gender equality. The programme runs in 17 countries and covers 190,000 workers; in some cases it generates a 4:1 return on investment.

In response to the frightening statistic that one third of the world’s food produce is wasted, Chipotle and Intermarché pledged to sell their “inglorious” fruit and veg at a 30 per cent discount and even ran ugly fruit and vegetable competitions.

The fashion industry has a reputation for environmental damage, in terms of water usage, pollution and emissions. Hubbub states: “It takes 2,700 litres of water to produce one cotton t-shirt through conventionally grown cotton and it uses lots of toxic pesticides.” The charity teamed up with the Soil Association to promote the use of organic cotton which, it states, “uses up to 91% less water in the growing process”.

Business leaders can work together to create an improved world for people, animals and the planet. If the history of Earth was presented as a 24-hour clock, it is estimated that humans have been around for less than 12 minutes and make up 0.01% of all species on Earth.

In May 2019 – after considerable work by campaign groups – UK MPs approved a motion to declare an environment and climate emergency. As if a climate emergency was not enough to contend with, we find ourselves in the middle of a global pandemic which has caused the worst economy in 300 years and already killed more than 100,000 people in the UK alone.

When colossal events occur, we clearly need to react and deal with



**Above:** Campaigners David Finney (left) and Jane Tredgett (right) are challenging the UK Government over its failure to address the issues associated with factory farming.

**Opposite:** Free range versus caged pigs. Kept outdoors, pigs are able to enjoy wallowing and other instinctive behaviours, but these activities are denied to intensively reared pigs.

**“TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY CONSUMERS CARE ABOUT WHERE THEIR MONEY GOES, PROBABLY MORE THAN EVER BEFORE”**



them, removing the issue as quickly as possible – eg, a vaccine. ISO 9000:2015 defines this as “correction”, but in the spirit of the ISO 9001:2015 standard, cause analysis and corrective action is essential to preventing future recurrence. Is this where some businesses and governments fall down? For instance, what is the government doing now to prevent a future pandemic?

Change drives governments and businesses. Risk-based thinking ensures we are constantly looking ahead, conducting research to use historical data to deal with issues and anticipate future change – without that we are the mercy of change, always reactive, never proactive.

### ANIMAL HEALTH: THE CASE FOR CHANGE

The Covid-19 pandemic has raised awareness of how diseases can jump from animals to humans, and how the conditions in which animals are kept – whether in wet markets or on farms – has the potential to affect the health of us all.

Two business leaders, Jane Tredgett, co-director of Results Through Training, former Board Trustee of the RSCPA and founder of non-profit organisation Humane Being, and David Finney, former Quality Director in the Market Research industry and founder of The Energy of Conversation, are challenging the UK government over its failure to address the issues associated with factory farming. Their concerns over animal welfare, the climate crisis and the pandemic led them to challenge the government to be more proactive.

Currently, most new and emerging infectious diseases in humans come from animals – three in four according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

Swine flu first appeared in Mexico and reached Britain in 2009. In England alone there were 540,000 cases and 138 deaths. Avian flu has been occurring in Britain since 2006 and frequency has intensified in recent years, with 12 outbreaks in 2017 and 25 outbreaks between November 2020 and March 2021.

Various forms of avian flu are present all over the world, and a particularly lethal form of it called HPAI H5N1



is known to infect people, with a 60 per cent mortality rate. In February 2021, Russia reported cases of the first known H5N8 avian flu infection in humans.

Earlier this year, Professor Robert Bragg, a researcher at the Department of Microbial, Biochemical and Food Biotechnology, University of the Free State, South Africa, told Plant Based News: “There will be more pandemics and there is a feeling among some scientists that this could just be a dress rehearsal for the real big pandemic.” He added: “Many virologists, including me, have been predicting an influenza pandemic for many years... The bird-flu virus, influenza H5N1, has a mortality rate of around 60–65 per cent, but it has not yet developed human-to-human transmission. If this virus does develop human-to-human transmission, we could be in for a really serious pandemic!”

Antibiotic resistance is another serious global health concern. It is common to treat farm animals with antibiotics when they get sick – typically pigs and poultry. Sometimes it is more economic and more efficient to treat an entire shed of animals than a few sick ones. Bacteria evolve and become resistant to antibiotics and these superbugs can be transferred through human contact with the animal, through the food chain or through animal waste.

The WHO reported that antimicrobial resistance will cause around 10 million

deaths a year by 2050, stating that the biggest driver is the “misuse/overuse [of antibiotics] in humans and animals”.

Despite the rising demand for plant-based food, animals are still farmed intensively in the UK, where there has been a rise in mega farms (massive industrial-scale farms with huge numbers of animals). One has 23,000 pigs, while another has 1.7 million chickens. Around 20 dairies in the UK house between 700 and 2,000 cows, mostly kept indoors with their food brought to them. Over 16 million hens are kept in colony cages, which are not much better than the now-banned battery cages they replaced. Non-free-range sows are confined in metal farrowing crates for up to 12 weeks after giving birth. Mutilation of beaks, tails and horns without anaesthetic is common practice, as is the early separation of young from parent. It is well documented that intensive animal agriculture is a contributor to climate change, through methane from cattle and nitrous oxide from animal waste, fertiliser and pesticides (which are estimated to be 28 times and 300 times more potent than carbon dioxide, respectively).

Mackenzie Aime of Food & Water Watch emphasises that the next serious disease could happen anywhere: “As people point fingers at the dangers of ‘wet markets’, it’s easy to overlook the closer-to-home problem of factory farms,” she says. “Our next zoonotic pandemic could easily come from a factory farm.” ▶

## THE SCRAP CAMPAIGN

Tredgett and Finney have set up a campaign called SCRAP Factory Farming and aim to launch a legal case to force the government to address these issues. The aims of the campaign are to persuade the government to abolish factory farming (or develop a plan to do so) and to generate awareness of the issues. In addition, there is a long-term aim to set a legal precedent for other countries to follow. SCRAP was created as an acronym to summarise the key issues:

- **Suffering**
- **Climate chaos**
- **Ravaging the planet**
- **Antibiotic resistance**
- **Pandemics and disease**

There were many challenges to taking on this project. Tredgett and Finney needed a strong legal team, funds to cover legal costs and extensive research, plus PR to gain support and generate publicity. There were multiple risks, with the two largest being financial. What would happen if the funds could not be raised? What were the financial implications of losing the case? These risks provided opportunities. Tredgett approached human rights QC Michael Mansfield, who also has a reputation for supporting animal rights. His response was quick and decisive: an immediate yes and a CrowdJustice fundraiser was launched.

The legal team presented a case that was spearheaded by health risks and supported by the abhorrent treatment of sentient animals and the ongoing damage to the environment. They sought to demonstrate that by allowing factory farming to continue, the government was not adequately protecting its citizens or animals.

## OPERATION AND EVALUATION

Once the campaign was underway, daily operational activities were focused on communications. Detailed operational and communication plans were drawn up by the wider team with weekly videoconference meetings. The team of volunteers included media and press specialists who were able to help fine-tune the key messages. As this legal challenge on the impacts

of factory farming was a world first, it quickly gained a great deal of attention and the campaign's reach grew to the point where positive messages of support were coming in from individuals and organisations across the world.

Four key performance indicators were set to demonstrate the campaign was working:

- Responses from the government.
- Messages from interested parties.
- Social media hits and shares.
- Funds being raised.

These are all actively monitored as the campaign continues to grow in momentum.

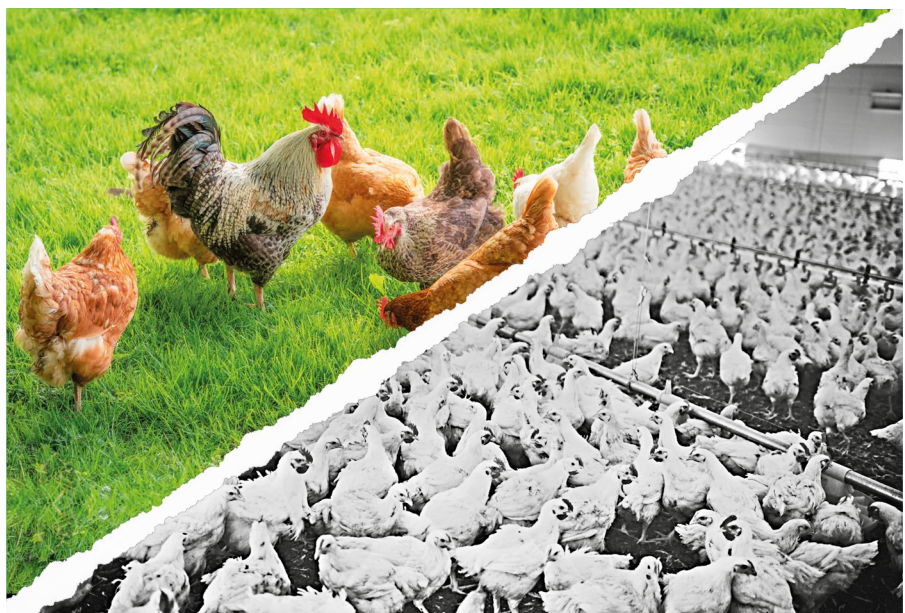
At the time of writing, the Humane Being legal team (Hackett and Dabbs) received a response (on 25 May 2021) from the DEFRA legal team to their Letter Before Action (submitted on 26 April 2021). The response has been deemed unsatisfactory by Humane Being and their legal team and a court application has been made to seek permission to apply for a judicial review.

The government's decision to facilitate the continuation of factory farming presents health risks to UK residents (eg, spread of disease and antibiotic resistance), a lack of protection for animals (eg, mutilation and confinement in cages, crates and crowded areas), and damage to the environment (eg, emissions and pollution).

The objective is to present a challenge to a regime that Humane Being, and its legal team, believes is not adequately protecting people, animals and planet. The Humane Being campaign goal is for the government to phase out factory farming in the UK by 2025.

**Above:** The legal team believe the case is unique.

**Below:** Free range versus caged chickens. Outdoor birds have an active life with plenty of space, rather than overcrowded and unnatural conditions.



Getty.com/Peopleimages; George Clerk

# CSR IN A QMS

How can your organisation tap into your employees' sense of individual social responsibility (ISR) and weave it into your CSR? Here is a step-by-step guide based on Annex SL. What do you care about? What will you focus on: children, people, animals, planet, or a mix of them all?

## STEP ONE

Revisit context and reimagine your future by broadening your review of issues and interested parties. Some questions that may be useful are:

- What aspects of our work are currently impacting negatively on the environment?
- What aspects of our lives are currently impacting negatively on the environment?
- Are activities in our supply chain impacting negatively on the environment?
- Are there any aspects of our work impacting negatively on people or animals?
- Are there any aspects of our lives impacting negatively on people or animals?
- Do the activities in our supply chain have any negative social impacts?
- Is there any forced labour in our supply chain?
- What do our interested parties expect of us?

Everything we eat, wear or use has an impact on the quality of the world. The production of non-organic and non-sustainable cotton can devastate local communities and wildlife habitats by causing drought and pollution (eg, Kazakhstan). Around 80% of the world's soya bean crop is fed to farmed animals resulting in deforestation in South America.

## STEP TWO

Revisit key policies and extend statements to incorporate broader intent. Maybe the quality policy is focused so much on the customer that it ignores the world around us. Extend business and quality objectives to

incorporate social and environmental objectives. Ask employees about their passions. Calculate how much time you could give employees each week to focus on voluntary work.

## STEP THREE

Revisit risks and opportunities and plan actions to create a broader set of benefits to a wider set of interested parties. Weigh up the risk of 'losing' x hours a week to voluntary work against the gains of staff experiencing a deeper sense of fulfilment and to help them feel less isolated, especially if working remotely. There may be additional opportunities to use the great work your staff can get involved in to promote the business and attract more clients.

**“IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT WE DO NOT ISOLATE OURSELVES IN OUR WORK BUBBLE WITHOUT... MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS”**

## STEP FOUR

Consider resources carefully to ensure there is a strong and effective balance between customer care and extracurricular activities. Maybe a rota system could be useful. This might be a good time to increase (or augment existing) actual or virtual communications by organising workshops and including CSR/ISR in line manager appraisals and catch-ups.

## STEP FIVE

Integrate socially responsible activities into the working week. Environmentalist and animal welfare politician, Jane Smith, has consulted with companies in these areas, such

as working with bank employees to spring clean the outdoor areas of a wildlife hospital; an IT department had a team building away day assembling sheds and coops for a farmed animal sanctuary; one company went on a 'face mask litter pick'; another team had a 'tree enrichment' day of applying good soil and planting seeds around the bases of neglected trees in their local town; an engineering company spent a morning applying mesh to grids so toads don't fall down them during their spring migrations. It's important that these kinds of activities are not one-off projects, but become part of the working week. The added value for employees is that it brings them closer to nature and is something that can be done remotely as well as in a team. Workshops could be arranged to share experiences, or they could be posted on a company intranet site.

## STEP SIX

Evaluate the effectiveness of activities. Some may be obviously measurable, some less so and hence employee engagement surveys may be helpful or if a small sample size does not facilitate this, qualitative feedback can be just as powerful. Include CSR in team and management reviews and make it an instinctive and routine part of the plan, do, check, act cycle. Seek to continually improve your CSR profile and link it to your strategic direction.

An organisation does not have to have ISO 27001 to care about information security. An organisation does not have to have ISO 14001 to care about the environment. Recent events have created some social separation in our lives, but behind every risk lies an opportunity, such as spending more time in nature. It is essential that we do not isolate ourselves in our work bubble without seeking to create meaningful connections for the greater good.

As Margaret Mead once said: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." ■