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The Learning Curve

building effective
corporate community
engagement



ENGAGE[™]
COMPANIES PEOPLE COMMUNITIES
INTERNATIONAL EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT CAMPAIGN

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The aim of this publication is to provide a tool to support people in business who are (or who seek to become) actively involved in corporate community engagement – whether as managers of the process or as participants. It draws on the many years experience of two organisations – Business in the Community (BITC) and The Prince of Wales International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF) – that have both pioneered methodologies for developing and managing corporate community engagement in systematic and imaginative ways. It is a handbook for practitioners – those working in either Community Affairs or in Human Resource departments – and is designed to enable them to develop their own programmes in ways that will bring tangible results and benefits to all those involved.

What is 'corporate community engagement'?

Corporate community engagement is a company's approach to their involvement in the communities in which they operate. Companies, in partnership with the public and non-profit sectors, invest in local communities to create healthy and sustainable circumstances in which they can continue to operate well. Corporate community engagement programmes are designed to meet community needs as well as core business objectives. This kind of engagement is not about simple cheque writing. Effective community engagement combines financial support with:

- The deployment of the skills, talents, energy and enthusiasm of employees, managers, supply chain colleagues and key others
- Gifts in kind (including company products)
- The use of business premises and facilities, as well as
- The transfer of skills, expertise and access to business contacts and networks.

Corporate community engagement programmes can take many different forms but all forms in their different ways seek to bring tangible and sustainable benefits to communities. The potential for company benefits are increasingly well known. They include: building the business, building the company's licence to operate and building the company's people. It is the last of these that is the focus of this publication.

Corporate community engagement provides a unique opportunity for active, experiential learning – learning about other sectors and situations as well as learning about oneself.

What is involved in managing the process?

Those responsible for developing corporate community engagement programmes require a wide knowledge and experience base including a good understanding of:

- Local/national or international community issues
- How the company can best respond to these issues
- How such programmes can contribute to overall business objectives and the human resource department's training and development or learning agenda.

To be effective, they will require a considerable number of skills to ensure that programmes genuinely meet community need, business objectives and contribute to employees' learning. Below we offer a summary of the key professional attributes and skills that we consider to be essential to be an effective manager of corporate community engagement programmes. We have chosen to emphasise what we feel to be a particularly important aspect of the role – that of learning manager – in order that all corporate community engagement can involve a real challenge and a creative learning curve for all those involved.

KEY ATTRIBUTES

Effective organiser

- Personal authority/leadership skills
- Efficient and effective events organisation
- Enthusiasm and energy
- Decision-making.

People skills

- Group process skills
- Negotiation skills
- Learning needs assessment skills
- Networking and internal relationship-building.

Insight and understanding

- Cultural and sectoral sensitivity
- Understanding of relevant issues
- Ability to be critically analytical
- Flexibility
- Commercial astuteness.

Imagination

- Capacity for innovation
- Lateral thinking ability
- Forward-looking.

Adapted from Tennyson, R, Managing Partnerships: Tools for mobilising the public sector, business and civil society as partners in development (1998).

What are the ground rules?

One of the most important responsibilities for Learning Managers is to create some explicit ground rules that will be adhered to by all those involved. These will vary according to the specific circumstances but there are three that probably apply to all corporate community engagement activities. These are:

1 Confidentiality

Being aware of personal, organisational and sectoral boundaries and understanding what is and what is not appropriate to share with others

2 Transparency

Being open and honest in the way interactions and relationships are developed

3 Respectfulness

Being able to acknowledge the diverse values and operational styles of all the individuals and organisations involved.

How is the learning captured?

Another challenge for Learning Managers is to help those involved both to reflect on and to record the learning experience. Learning is often stimulated most effectively by clever questioning. Keeping a learning log is one way to prompt questions. It is also a useful form of record keeping.

SAMPLE FORMAT FOR A DAY-TO-DAY LEARNING LOG

In advance (i.e. at the beginning of the day)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do yesterday's unanswered questions feel today? • What are my new questions? • How will I find answers to them? • What is the focus of today's learning? • What are my learning expectations? • What might I be able to share from my experience? • How might today's experience be useful for my work/organisation?
During the day (if possible)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are my immediate impressions/responses? • What has been said so far that is particularly significant/memorable? • What is still unclear? • Any other key points/questions?
At the end of the day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was most important for me about today? • What will I be able to incorporate into my work? • What more could I contribute to their organisation/project/programme? • When? • How? • Were my expectations met? • What are my still unanswered questions? • What are my new questions?

Adapted from Tennyson, R, *Managing Partnerships: Tools for mobilising the public sector, business and civil society as partners in development* (1998).

Of course there are many other options for recording experience: photographs; videos; tape recordings; drawings; creative writing. Each individual will make their choice based on personal preference, levels of skill or creativity and – perhaps most importantly – out of a sensitive assessment of what is least intrusive into the lives of others.

A good record of the learning from corporate community engagement activities will be invaluable to the learner, but it will also be useful in disseminating lessons to others – thereby encouraging colleagues to try such activities themselves – as well as using the experience to contribute to corporate culture change.

What are the potential impacts?

There are two types of impact from corporate community engagement programmes: practical benefits for the community and personal/professional development for those who have participated.

Practical impacts can be on the organisations and/or the working methods of those involved.

TYPES OF PRACTICAL IMPACT

- Improving effectiveness of community project, programme or organisation
- Sustaining initiatives because of renewed interest or energy
- Scaling up initiatives as a result of new contacts
- Resource procurement as a result of engaging new players
- Recruitment of new people/organisations into a project
- Evaluation by benefiting from an outsider's observations
- Changes to projects as a result of challenges
- Seeding new initiatives from discovering unexpected synergies.

Taken from records of The Prince of Wales's Seeing is Believing Programme, organised by BITC and IBLF's INSIGHT programme.

The personal/professional development benefits can be of many different kinds as demonstrated by a survey of 90 people from Eastern Europe (from all sectors) who had completed a 5-day study visit to partnerships projects in the UK.

TYPES OF PERSONAL/PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 'Better understanding' of partnerships in practice
- 'Radically changed views' of other sectors/cultures
- 'Improved skills' in observation, listening, negotiation etc...
- 'Greater flexibility' – of attitude and/or approach
- 'Greater self-confidence' – about a new way of working
- 'Insight into different working methods'
- 'Meeting with new people and accessing new networks'.

Survey completed in 1997 by IBLF.

Ideal corporate community engagement will have both kinds of benefit – practical impacts as well as personal/professional development.

Corporate community engagement as a change agent

Corporate community engagement is – at its best – a form of 'action learning'. And the great thing about action learning is that the experience lives on in a particularly vivid way. Action learning is essentially about transformation, and different types of corporate community engagement provide different forms of action learning. Each type therefore has the potential for transformation in different ways:

- Study visits are about transforming ideas and preconceptions. We characterise this as **Learning by Seeing**
- Employee engagement is about the transformation of the physical surroundings and working relationships. We characterise this as **Learning by Doing**
- Formalised cross-sector collaboration is about transforming institutions and professional practice as well as influencing strategic planning. We characterise this as **Learning by Partnering**.

These three different, yet complementary, forms of corporate community engagement are explored in some detail in this publication. We hope that you will find what follows both useful and inspirational.

Ros Tennyson and Amanda Bowman
November 2003

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Section One

LEARNING BY SEEING

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The material in this section draws on the many years of experience from two well-established study visit programmes: Seeing Is Believing, established by Business in the Community in the UK in 1991, and INSIGHT, an international programme launched by The Prince of Wales International Business Leaders Forum in the USA in 1994.

The starting point

The starting point for corporate engagement in community activities is to bring the different key players together in a situation where ideas can be explored and attitudes transformed in response to seeing something new or from a fresh perspective. We have described this type of learning as a 'study visit' – a term used to describe any type of site visit designed for learning purposes.

'It is not often that one is given the opportunity to visit an inner city area to see first hand the problems that people living and working there have to cope with on a day to day basis. As one moves up the corporate ladder and becomes sheltered in an affluent lifestyle it is easy to become remote from these problems and regard them as something one sees on TV.' Corporate Communications Director, Vodafone.

Study visits can be local (business people visiting a neighbouring community initiative), national or international (either within a region or global). Obviously the focus will be quite different in each case, but despite clear differences in scale and expectations, the management and development of study visits will have many similar features.

Most study visits take place over one to seven days. Anything beyond that length of time invariably becomes something more like a secondment, internship or training programme – where participants have more defined roles with actual responsibilities, tasks or skills development.

'I approached the day fretting about the amount of time out of the office and armed with a certain amount of cynicism. All that evaporated within five minutes of arriving. It was the most rewarding and thought-provoking morning I have had for some time. I hope in future I can make a tangible contribution to this very worthwhile initiative.' Director of Programmes, Granada Television.

There can be many different triggers for a study visit including:

- Observing examples of good practice in action
- Experiencing community challenges and tough issues first hand
- On-site problem-solving
- Challenging preconceptions.

'As we sat on the coach I couldn't believe that here was I – someone dedicated to campaigning against big business for polluting the environment – going on a visit to a steel factory! I expected to hate everything I saw but I was wrong. Within an hour I was completely fired up (almost literally given the size of the steel smelting furnaces!) by the huge contribution of steel to the development of my country and deeply impressed with the vision of the company's founder in the early part of the century. Until today, I thought we NGOs were the only sector with vision.' NGO leader visiting Tata Steel, India.

Developing and managing a study visit effectively is quite a challenge. It is important that the tasks involved are understood and shared between appropriately qualified people. Here we have defined the key roles for any study visit as those of organiser, host and facilitator.

Together (and perhaps with others from key organisations involved in the programme) they will constitute the staff team who develop and manage the study visit throughout the planning, implementation, de-brief and, perhaps even follow up stages. These roles are quite different and for those finding themselves given such responsibilities for the first time, we offer some simple guidelines.

Developing the programme: guidelines for organisers

The organiser of a study visit may either be the person who initiated the idea or he/she may have been asked to take on the management of someone else's idea. In either case, it is the organiser who takes overall responsibility for the visit and who carries the whole process from start to finish.

Key characteristics of a good organiser

- Enthusiasm for the task (including the mundane aspects)
- Reliability and efficiency
- Resource procurement experience
- Management skills
- Proven track record in building teams
- Good communication skills (face-to-face, written, phone and e-mail)
- Commitment to follow-up
- Happy to work away from the limelight but able to take a lead when necessary.

There are a huge number of tasks involved in any study visit – and (as in many things) the really time-consuming element is getting the details right. Broadly there are ten key tasks that a study visit organiser has to work through systematically.

KEY TASKS	NOTES
1 Setting learning objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This will be the foundation of all other decisions • Discuss the learning objectives with host, facilitator and participants well in advance of the visit.
2 Building the staff team and allocating tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure the staff team have between them all necessary skills, experiences and contacts • Give all staff precise tasks and timetables – preferably in writing to ensure no misunderstandings • Meet as a team regularly throughout and during the visit.
3 Selecting the host organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes the host organisation will have initiated the visit, in other cases the organiser will be able to select an appropriate host organisation • Selection should be made carefully with a number of pre-visits and frank discussions to ensure all needs/aspirations are met appropriately.
4 Choosing and briefing participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aim at getting a group that provide diversity of experience and backgrounds • Be selective – say no if a potential participant seems ill-qualified or to have an unhelpful attitude • Give plenty of briefing over and above logistics of the visit (e.g. written up case studies, contextual materials, prompt sheets to stimulate interest and engagement prior to the visit).

KEY TASKS	NOTES
5 Planning the programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow plenty of lead time – the details always take longer to work out and there may be many unforeseen changes needed Draw up a well-timed programme and ensure that enough time has been allowed for travel between sites and for reflection – both as a group and individually.
6 Mobilising resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draw up a full resource requirements list and decide how many of the resource needs can be met by: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Host organisations Participants paying their way Gifts in kind, e.g. free use of local accommodation Sponsorship (e.g. of travel or meals). If cash resources have to be raised from third parties (e.g. foundations or other donors) secure these well in advance and be clear about how much you have collected in terms of matched resources.
7 Drawing up logistics plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An outline plan is useful for all members of the staff team – and hosts A detailed plan is essential as a check list for the organiser and his/her support person Ensure the plans have exact deadlines for each activity Remember to double check important logistics one or two days before the visit.
8 Managing the visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make sure everyone knows exactly what they have to do Brief the host and the facilitator well and meet with them during the visit to ensure things are going according to plan Get to know the participants and build a sense of community from the beginning Be a good listener to ensure that you are meeting the specific needs of each participant Distinguish between urgent and important actions Distinguish between serious and minor difficulties Ask for feedback on how things are going at various stages of the visit Be prepared to change arrangements (or your style of operating) if necessary.

KEY TASKS	NOTES
9 Disseminating the lessons and ensuring follow up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be clear about who needs to know what, in what form and by when Encourage participants and hosts to disseminate their own experiences as appropriate Clarify any action points before the end of the visit (including the possibility of a future visit or a return visit – i.e. of host organisation to participant organisation(s)) Check up that action points (including those of others) have been completed.
10 Evaluating outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree with host, participants and (if appropriate) external funders/sponsors what evaluation they expect Distinguish between immediate end of visit feedback and further evaluation to assess longer-term benefits/impacts.

Tips for organisers

- Develop 'SMART' objectives (i.e. Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound)
- Ensure complementary skills in your staff team (be clear what specific skills you will need)
- Invest time in briefing (e.g. the host organisation, facilitator and, eventually, the participants)
- Create a participatory process throughout (people don't like having things done to them)
- Allow time for learning (don't fill every moment of the programme and don't rush people)
- Keep the programme interesting (there are many different ways to learn: ensure that there is a good variety of learning methods)
- Be ready for any eventuality (even the best-prepared visit is likely to spring surprises!)

Providing the inputs: guidelines for host organisations

These guidelines are provided to support those agencies that carry responsibility for hosting a site visit – the 'host organisation'. Host organisations can vary enormously in terms of culture, scale and focus. They can be NGO-led projects or community-based organisations, public sector initiatives or business-led activities. Host organisations can operate at community/city/regional/national or even international levels.

Invariably the host organisation will allocate the planning process to a specific individual or to a small committee with a designated leader/co-ordinator – it is this individual whom we term the 'host'. Whilst he/she is unlikely to undertake all tasks personally, we assume that it is the host who will ensure that tasks are carried out effectively. They are ultimately accountable – to their own organisation, to the visit organiser(s) and ultimately to the participants themselves – for the success of the visit.

Key characteristics of a good host

- Authority to act on behalf of the host organisation
- Good working relationships with key players involved in the visit
- Proven communication and consensus-building skills
- Programme and resource management skills
- Ability to exercise leadership in a tactful and flexible way.

The host organisation essentially provides the learning inputs for any site-based learning programme. It is therefore critically important that the host organisation prepares well and hosts the visit with confidence and credibility.

Creating a hosting check list

Whilst sector diversity and differences in scale will have both resource and management implications, there are a number of essential requirements in the hosting process that are common to the role of all host organisations. These are characterised below:

PHASE	ACTIVITIES	NOTES
Deciding to go ahead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get buy in from all key players involved in the visit • Build a resource map/ check list • Identify potential learning and other benefits. 	The host must be prepared to invest considerable time in the initial stages of planning a visit. He/she needs to keep in active contact with all key players throughout so that there is a sense of shared ownership and commitment.
Preparing the ground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree learning and sharing objectives • Address any remaining concerns • Prepare a 'count down' action plan • Allocate tasks. 	These activities are best conducted in small/regular planning group meetings. Such meetings need to be highly focussed and well managed. The host should consider appointing someone else to act as meeting chair or facilitator.
Agreeing in-puts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree actual sites to be visited • Agree speakers • Develop other learning materials • Agree style of event(s) • Agree and circulate a precise timetable. 	During this phase it is important to build the confidence of all those involved by ensuring that they all understand what is being proposed, why and how it will work. Plan to engage as many different people as possible in different roles during the visit – be willing to take a level of risk by asking individuals to step outside their usual roles. This will make the event more exciting and a genuine learning experience for everyone.

PHASE	ACTIVITIES	NOTES
Briefing key players	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speakers • Staff and others at site • Organiser(s) • Facilitator • Participants (when they arrive). 	All speakers and people at site visits should understand the goals of the visit and the focus of the programme. They should also know who the participants are in advance of their arrival and what they expect from their visit. Organiser(s) and facilitator need to be confident that speakers are well briefed and prepared to deal with challenging questions.
Being a good host	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticipate the needs of the participants • Be willing to address their concerns (even if they seem trivial!) • Recognise that the host will be a role model for others (in the host organisation, at site visits etc) and behave accordingly. 	The host can make or break a visit by his/her attitude. It is important to be open, friendly and welcoming throughout. The host needs to act as an intermediary between the participants, the host organisation and those involved at site visit level.
De-briefing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From participants • From organiser and facilitator • From host organisation/ planning group/site staff/ key others • Learning and sharing the lessons. 	Collecting feedback (perhaps informally) can be an on-going process during the visit – indeed it can usefully contribute to good adjustments being made as the visit progresses. At the end of the visit there can be a more formal feedback session as a group. Consider how best to share the lessons learnt both internally (host organisation) and externally (to other individuals/ organisations involved in the visit).
Managing follow-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree with the organiser what the follow up with the participants will be • Agree with planning group at the de-brief what other kinds of follow up are appropriate/necessary • Implement both agreements directly or by mandating others. 	The value of a study visit can be lost if the experience is not consolidated – particularly if agreed actions are not undertaken. This applies to both the participant group and to all those who have been involved in the visit locally. The host's responsibilities do not end when the last participant has said goodbye.

PHASE	ACTIVITIES	NOTES
Building on the experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the experience as an opportunity for reflection and change Use the visit for project publicity/impact on policy makers or donors (if appropriate and in agreement with key others). 	<p>A programme of this kind can often provide a form of mirror to the host organisation – leading to (sometimes challenging) internal questions about working practices and achievements. It is important to manage this process so that it is creative rather than destructive. This is the responsibility of the facilitator, but the host may be able to help. In any event it is important to make the most of the visit both internally and externally so that its benefits are felt medium to long-term.</p>

Tips for hosts and host organisations

- Be clear about what you and your organisation want from the visit
- Identify and communicate potential benefits in advance of the visit
- Establish parameters (e.g. size, timescale, expectations) in advance
- Be a good host – ensure visitors are welcomed, not resented
- Accept challenges constructively (e.g. about your organisation/project)
- Give time for reflection – before, during and after the visit.

Managing the process: guidelines for facilitators

Effective study visits benefit enormously from good facilitation – often best undertaken by someone quite new to the situation and therefore able to take a completely objective view of the process. Facilitators will be selected by the organiser (probably in consultation with the host) and will need detailed briefing about the objectives of the visit, the priorities of the host organisation(s) and the expectations of the participants in advance of the visit.

Key characteristics of a good facilitator

- Personal authority – able to command respect (i.e. from the participant group)
- Skilled manager of group dynamics and learning processes
- Good listener
- Good distiller of information
- Good timekeeper
- Proven track record in creating productive and conducive learning environments
- Ability to withhold personal opinion/viewpoint.

The facilitator is advised to clarify issues of boundaries between their role and the complementary roles of organiser and host. He/she may also like to suggest some ground rules both for how the staff team operates and for the participants during the visit. These should be agreed with the organiser in advance and in due course discussed (and if necessary adjusted) with the staff team and the participant group.

Facilitators are likely to have a lot of experience but there are some specific challenges about facilitating study visits that may be different from other types of facilitation. These are listed below:

CHALLENGES	NOTES
Staying focussed	Important to judge when discussion is relevant and when it is wasting time allocated to more important things.
Keeping to time	If the activity is planned well, the timing should be appropriate – one session over-running can have dire consequences on other people and the overall balance of the programme.
Managing expectations	Participants will have high expectations – it is important to help them distinguish between what is realistic and what is not. This may be a continuing process throughout the programme.
Giving time for reflection	Most study visits/action learning activities are over-programmed. Participants will learn less if they do not have quality time to think about what they have seen and heard. Less (programmed activity) is often more (learning)!
Staying in support mode	The facilitator is a servant, not a leader, of the visit. He/she needs to manage the process on behalf of the organiser, host and participants without dominating the proceedings inappropriately.
Being a good role model	How the facilitator manages the role may be a key learning for all those involved. Facilitation is an art – and increasing numbers of people working in partnerships need to acquire it!

There is one issue that should be singled out for more attention. This is the challenge that all facilitators face at some time or other – that of coping with difficult people. There are many different reasons why anyone can be (or appear to be) difficult including:

- Personal feelings of insecurity or inadequacy
- Sense of displacement (being away from familiar surroundings)
- Personality clashes with another individual in the group or the group as a whole (leading to being isolated)
- Resistance to the action learning process itself.

The facilitator has three choices of action:

- 1 Initiating a quiet conversation with the person concerned (perhaps also involving the programme's organiser)
- 2 Discussion with the team about the problem and agreement about how to tackle it appropriately and jointly
- 3 An open discussion with the whole group – enabling the group to recognise the difficulty and arrive at a collaborative solution.

Whilst it is important to understand the destructive role that difficult people can play in a group, it is often the case that these are the very people who actually raise important issues and take the level of debate further. Their unhappiness, impatience or critique may be justified. The facilitator is the person whose job it is to see the situation from an objective perspective and to manage any discomfort within the group as a creative part of the learning process.

Managing the unexpected – tips for facilitators

- Helping everyone (especially the organiser and host) keep steady under pressure
- Adapting the programme as necessary
- Being honest with the participants (e.g. about what has changed and why)
- Looking for learning opportunities out of any difficulties that arise
- Communicating a sense of enthusiasm and adventure throughout the programme
- Keeping a lively sense of humour at all times!

Guidelines for participants

It is really up to the organiser to develop appropriate briefing notes and guidelines for their participant group – we have therefore kept this section brief. Organisers should consider including all or some of the following tips in briefings to participants in advance of the visit:

Tips for participants

- Be clear about why you are a participant and what you hope for from the experience
- Communicate your expectations to the organiser in advance of the visit
- Be prepared to share your own experience (e.g. bring with you any materials you that may be relevant and of interest to other participants and/or to the host organisation(s) you will be visiting)
- Allow your views (about other participants, sectors, projects, cultures) to be challenged during the visit and enjoy reviewing your preconceptions in the light of the experience
- Anticipate what you will need and remember to bring it with you – including appropriate clothing, travel documents and directions
- Decide in advance how you will record the experience – note book, camera/digital camera, video recorder, tape recorder – and check in advance with the organiser what will be acceptable on site visits (i.e. some of these may be regarded as too intrusive)
- Be as open as possible to what you might learn from the whole experience including from the diversity of your fellow participants
- Be precise about follow up and dissemination of your experience – make an ACTION LIST before the visit ends and follow it through!

Potential risks

Whilst the experience of many suggests that study visits can be invaluable in transforming thinking and practice, there are some potential risks attached to this form of learning. Such risks include:

POTENTIAL RISKS	NOTES
Development tourism	Where those involved in development work see visits as an excuse for 'time out' in interesting settings under the guise of work.
Voyeurism	Types of visit where participants essentially observe the distressing situations faced by others.
Over exposure	Projects that have become known as success stories and are the subject of too many visits and excessive publicity.
Seeing rather than doing	Where the experience is essentially passive and internalised rather than practical and action focussed.

In addition, whilst not constituting a risk there is the added challenge of justifying the time and money involved in such activities (especially at an international level) for a perhaps rather nebulous return. Any organiser should face these concerns and be confident that he/she has considered them fully and can justify the study visit to any criticism that may come from those who might have cause to feel uneasy – or even angry – at being study visit 'fodder'.

Some actual outcomes

There are many different and exciting outcomes possible from study visits – here we describe three real life stories that illustrate three different types of outcome.

1 Immediate project development outcome

A senior partner of the consultancy firm KPMG participated in a Seeing is Believing visit organised by Business in the Community. The programme involved visiting a primary school in north London. During the visit the senior partner asked the head-teacher what she felt she would value most from the business community. She replied: 'Someone to talk to'. From this one remark a programme has been established linking head-teachers and senior business managers in practical dialogues that bring improved performance and effectiveness to the schools and new insights and skills to the businesses. The initial visit was the spark that led to the development of a national programme that has now involved more than 5,000 head-teachers (1 in 5 schools in the UK) and more than 1,200 companies.

2 Exchange visit leading to long-term 'twinning' arrangement

A group of business leaders, city council staff, NGO representatives as well as a journalist and a police officer from Birmingham (UK) went on a one-week study visit to Johannesburg (South Africa). The intention was to meet their counterparts in order to explore the value of corporate partnerships in urban regeneration and management and to discuss opportunities for practical exchanges between the two cities.

Out of that one week a number of new initiatives were established:

- A new business education partnership was set up in Johannesburg using the Birmingham model developed by Business in the Community
- Continuing exchanges were set up between schools, football clubs, small business agencies and cultural organisations largely funded by the city councils and local corporations in both countries
- The two police forces set up a one-year programme of secondments of senior personnel with a particular focus on combating institutional racism
- Twinning of urban regeneration and enterprise development initiatives was established with much (and continual) learning on both sides.

3 Unexpected outcome with long-term consequences

A senior bank manager working as an advisor to the Atlanta Project in America was invited to participate in a series of international study visits looking at tri-sector partnerships for development. Following on visits to Brazil and South Africa he joined a review of the process in the UK with a number of other participants. In addition to the obvious enthusiasm for the programme and much evidence of useful learning, he and the rest of the participant group whilst together concocted a proposal that has now become an international project known as PAINT PALS.

The basis of the project is locally run painting competitions for children from poorer or marginalised communities all over the world. The children are given basic materials (paper and paint) by local companies that also provide modest prizes to the winners at the local level. The best pictures are dispatched to the Paint Pals HQ (transported free by DHL) and prizes are awarded at the international level. In the case of the first Paint Pals competition – pictures on the theme of global peace to coincide with the Olympic Games in Atlanta, USA – the winning three children and their parents from Russia, India and Hungary were invited as special guests to attend the Olympic Games.

Since then, the Paint Pals project has been given a permanent gallery and office in Atlanta (donated by the city) and staff continue to coordinate international painting competitions that provide children's artwork for major exhibitions. For example, Paint Pals exhibitions have been staged at UN conferences where they serve to illustrate for delegates – often with intense poignancy and vividness – the harsh realities of living in the midst of poverty, disease, drug trafficking, violence, pollution and crime.

It is clear that there is much potential in this form of corporate exposure to sustainable development, and there are countless examples of how this kind of experience has provided such insight and enthusiasm that further encounters and practical engagement have followed from what might have initially been seen as a one-time event. Sections 2 and 3 explore this further.

Section Two

LEARNING BY DOING

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Much of the material for this section has been drawn directly from companies operating all over the world that are pioneers and leaders in the field of employee volunteering. These companies include: Anglo American • AXA • BBC • Boots • Cadbury Schweppes • Cisco Systems • Deutsche Bank • Diageo • Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer • GE • GSK • HSBC • IBM • KPMG • Levi Strauss • Lovells • Nokia • Pfizer • PWC • Shell • Unilever • UPS

The rationale for employee engagement

Employee engagement – the unpaid contribution of talent, energy, skills and competencies from a company’s workforce to community projects or programmes – can have significant value for the company, the employees involved and the communities they engage with. Whilst most reviews of such programmes tend to focus on the community benefits, the impacts on the company can be just as noteworthy. Research from the US-based Conference Board (1998), based on interviews with US executives, identified many specific skills that can be enhanced through employee engagement. These include:

- Communications
- Organisational and time management
- Relationship-building (specifically, negotiating and listening)
- Planning
- Budgeting
- Reporting
- Assessment
- Survival (specifically, stress management and prioritising).

A survey of 200 top UK businesses in 2000, conducted by the volunteering charity TimeBank, showed that 94% consider that employee volunteering adds considerably to the skills of their workforce. Such findings are encouraging for Human Resource Managers who are looking for more effective opportunities to build new competencies in the workforce over and above those available through formal education and training. Employee engagement is a powerful way of learning by doing, since related activities aim at transforming not just the physical surroundings but also the quality of societal and working relationships.

Alongside this, there is a growing expectation that companies should – as a matter of principle – be actively and creatively involved with their communities. Companies are responding to this – often in the wider context of comprehensive corporate responsibility programmes – and as a result, employee engagement is an increasingly global phenomenon. In fact, employee engagement programmes often provide the most visible demonstration of a company’s commitment to community investment and social responsibility.

As experience grows, the rationale for corporate-sponsored employee engagement initiatives becomes better articulated – such programmes are experienced as being good for the community, good for the employees who get involved and good for the company. And as employee engagement initiatives involve more employees, they provide increasingly refined and useful tools for organisational as well as individual learning.

Employee engagement in action:

Cadbury Schweppes has supported Junior Achievement Kenya (JAK) for over three years. The programme is designed to teach students about their roles as individuals, workers, consumers and members of society in achieving a successful future. Secondary school initiatives prepare students for key economic and workforce issues they will face in the future. Cadbury Kenya

employees at all levels have been involved in delivering programmes. So far, more than 25,000 Kenyan school children have completed JAK programmes and there are currently over 800 business volunteers involved.

The **British Gas National Sales Centre (NSC)**, a call centre based in Cardiff, South Wales, developed a community involvement programme to improve staff retention. After over 1,000

hours of employee time in the community, an evaluation was conducted showing:

- Higher retention rates for individuals that volunteered
- Improved rating as an ‘above average’ place to work (63%)
- Increased job satisfaction levels (67%)
- Increase from 49% to 57% of people who would speak highly of the company
- 28% of volunteers achieved promotion

- Absenteeism significantly reduced
- Improved customer satisfaction ratings
- Increased positive media coverage.

Barretstown Gang Camp in Ireland and L’Envol in France provide therapeutic recreation for seriously ill children from all over Europe. **GlaxoSmithKline (GSK)** has funded these camps since Barretstown was set up in

Today, companies see volunteering as a resource for:

- Personal/professional development and skills-building
- Leadership and management development
- Organisational learning
- Team-building
- Networking both between employees and beyond.

Successful employee engagement programmes are those: where the activity is part of organisation-wide approaches to community involvement; that are designed to break down the barriers of management hierarchies; that build genuine collaboration with community groups and offer opportunities for individuals to enhance their professional experience by developing new insights, knowledge and skills.

Potential benefits

Company benefits

Enhancing knowledge and skills:

‘For us, the Community Links programme provides a very valuable mechanism for a young lawyer to develop advocacy and presentational skills. It is also improves their communication skills by learning how to explain complex legal ideas to people who might find these difficult to get to grips with.’ Yasmin Waljee, Lovells.

Team-building:

‘In an organisation like ours, which values and encourages skills development as well as personal and professional growth, volunteering allows us all to actively engage with our local communities and offers a number of greater benefits than traditional training courses. Project management, teamwork, interpersonal, communications, and leadership skills are all developed and honed via our community programmes.’ Kate Cavelle, Deutsche Bank.

Leadership development:

‘Participants learn to be creative, to work with people from throughout the world, and to adapt their problem-solving skills to new communities. They also learn types and ways of work different than what they are accustomed to at home. Natural leaders emerge and hierarchies are replaced with true teamwork and a focus on getting the job done.’ Perry Yeatman, Unilever.

1994 and over 150 GSK employees have participated as volunteers for the programme. The Barretstown programme is unique, providing therapeutic recreation that enables children to rediscover their inner strength, confidence and self-esteem. Many paediatricians view participation in the programme as an integral part of their patients’ clinical treatment. The programme’s reach – which expands across Europe –

has helped break down barriers and create tolerance and understanding among children from diverse backgrounds and cultures. GSK’s long-term investment goes beyond giving cash; the company also provides meeting and reunion facilities and goods in-kind such as Ribena and Lucozade. Employee engagement ranges from participation in team events to involvement as chaperones and

translators on the camping programmes. This has enriched employees’ personal experience and created a great sense of pride in working for GSK. James Hill, Chairman, Barretstown Gang says: ‘The partnership we have forged with GSK has been a great example to other companies and I know that many other firms now recognise the value of partnering with a charity rather than merely donating money’.

One GSK volunteer commented: ‘The camp is unique because kids come from all over Europe, so it was a learning experience to work in an environment where there were so many different languages and cultures. I also met other GSK employees there and this made me realise that GSK can be a leader in social responsibility by supporting employees who want to give.’

Community benefits include

Building better management systems

'My partner's business acumen and experiences often gave me new insights into how I could address management issues. He was particularly helpful when I was looking at appraisal systems... Having a business partner helps me to create thinking time and then to have someone to bounce ideas off. This in turn helps the whole school to function more successfully. I am glad that KPMG has given their people the opportunity to do this. It is a very practical way to help the community.' Headteacher, Islington inner-London school.

Economic development

'Access to business skills in developing countries can act as an engine for sustainable growth, which we believe is one of the most effective responses to global poverty.' VSO Business Partnerships.

Empowerment

'Our experience with Unilever provides us with a valuable lesson. Firstly it is very good for us to learn and understand that we, as a non-profit organisation, can be an equal partner with a corporation. We learnt a lot about management, team-building, project and budget management and public relations. We learnt how to create a long lasting partnership and how to work together as a team – meeting our own objectives, those of the company and those of the community.' Olga Sozanska Hestia, Czech Republic.

Models of employee engagement

Employee engagement can take a number of different forms – it is useful to consider the range of possible programmes in order to ensure that every initiative is appropriately tailored to the needs of the individual, the company and the community. All the models of employee engagement outlined below have been tried and tested and have proved to have real value to the individuals involved, their company and the community or non-profit organisation where they have worked.

The BBC World Service created the BBC World Service Trust in 1999 to help developing countries and countries in transition tackle reconstruction, health and poverty issues through the use of media. The Trust taps the extensive experience and expertise of BBC staff and draws from close working partnerships with local and international NGOs, government and international agencies. Part of the BBC's remit is to ensure the existence and proper functioning of

infrastructure that enables it to broadcast to Afghanistan. However, the Trust went beyond this duty, leaving the country with a lasting legacy of broadcasting skills and principles. Through the Trust, the BBC helped to build up Afghanistan's local and national media, concentrating on five areas:

1 Training: Providing basic journalism courses for more than 500 Afghan journalists from Kabul, Kandahar, Herat, Mazar-e-Sharif and Jalalabad

2 Equipment: opening a multi-use Media Resource Centre in Kabul providing vital equipment for broadcasting and training

3 Studios: Equipping Radio Afghanistan with two digital studios, the first in the country, enabling nationwide broadcasts

4 Guidelines: Working with the Afghan Interim Authority (AIA) to put in place a legal framework for free and independent media

5 Shows: Producing World Service radio programmes on local issues in Pashto and Persian.

A line manager working in the sales and marketing department of **Boots**, a retail chemist, divided his staff into two teams and presented each with a volunteering challenge: one to improve facilities at a day care centre for the elderly and the other to reinvigorate gardens at a local hospice. Departmental employees had the opportunity to work together –

MODEL OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

SUMMARY

Community fellowships or project development assignments

Short placements in community organisations where the projects to be undertaken are clearly defined and usually time-specific.

Secondments

The employee (or retiree) works full-time as a member of the staff team of the non-profit or community-based project with salary and expenses covered by the company. This model is often used at a time of significant career change – for example, in a case of early retirement or mid-career management development.

Team development assignments

Projects created by the company in close collaboration with the non-profit or community-based organisation specifically and openly designed to meet the company's own team-building goals.

One-to-one support mentoring

The company employee takes on an agreed coaching or support role for one or more individuals who would benefit from such a relationship. Those mentored can be either the staff in organisations or their project beneficiaries – for example: teachers/pupils; probation officers/ex-offenders; business development staff/unemployed.

Non-executive roles

There are a number of non-executive roles that employees can take on in a voluntary capacity including: membership of a non-profit organisation's management committee; acting as a formal trustee or governor; the honorary roles of committee chair or treasurer.

in some cases for the first time – and develop a good working culture. They also gained valuable relationship-building skills and interpersonal understanding.

Anglo American's enterprise development and empowerment initiative, Zimele, aspires to create sustainable, commercially viable businesses powered by people with entrepreneurial spirit. The success of Zimele's investments hinges upon a relationship between stable funding structures and managerial,

legal and technical support. In addition to financial support, the initiative provides entrepreneurs with access to Anglo American's administrative resources (e.g. legal, tax, finance, secretarial and human resources) as well as to its extensive network of commercial and financial contacts, both locally and abroad, at no cost. One example of a Zimele-sponsored initiative is Go-Awaste, which was established following a decision by Anglo Platinum to outsource the entire waste management function

at its Rustenburg Platinum Mine. A joint venture comprising local business people, Zimele and Onyx, Go-Awaste will handle all waste management services for the mine. The business is developing new facilities in the Rustenburg area to handle the various waste products generated by processing plants and shafts at the mining operations, as well as office and housing complexes. Domestic, commercial, mining and metallurgical waste, which contains heavy metal residue and

contaminated liquid waste, will also be managed by the Go-Awaste. Since the 1998 start of the **General Electric (GE)** Volunteers groups in Jakarta and Yogyakarta, employees have been actively involved in more than 100 community programmes in and around Jakarta, Yogyakarta and the Bandung area. Projects are designed to help employees learn about the social, economic and environmental issues and challenges in their locality.

MODEL OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

SUMMARY

Individual volunteering

The company supports the efforts of individual employees with formal or informal acknowledgement, matched funding or time off in lieu. Employees choose a project that has a particular personal resonance.

Done-in-a-day projects

Local activities/events that are designed to involve all or part of the company workforce. Often used for team-building, breaking down barriers, boosting morale and increasing motivation. These work best when used to kick-start longer-term projects, or as a 'global service day' to involve employees from different company locations and divisions.

Whichever form employee volunteering takes, the potential for personal and professional development can be quite transformational.

'I was comfortable in my day to day job but my volunteering gave me greater confidence to explore new avenues and helped me to recognise and apply the skills I had such as listening and negotiating skills. Subsequently, I applied for and gained a new job in a customer-facing role that I enjoy and in which I feel I am doing well. My life has been transformed.' An employee on his experience as a corporate volunteer

Building an effective engagement programme

Building an effective programme requires both vision and attention to detail. To ensure an appropriate match between a community project, an individual employee and the company, a lot of questions need to be asked.

For example, local GE employees plant thousands of trees each year in Indonesia to combat deforestation and contribute to environmental development.

Unilever has a long history of corporate community engagement out of which has grown its Leaders in Action programme. The programme is designed to engage 20-30 managers at a time, with participants overseeing the development of a community

service initiative. This involves: determining the concept for the initiative; creating the plan; fundraising and managing the project through implementation to evaluation. Teams are evaluated on project completion and quality (measured against expectations), as well as on team dynamics and the nature and degree of team learning. One of the programme's central aims is to institute a more creative and enterprising culture across Unilever.

The Cadbury Trebor Bassett Winter Watch project is an example of how effective a combination of employee engagement, cash and gifts in kind can be. Winter Watch's aim was to transform a vandalised property in the UK into four completely furnished flats that would provide temporary accommodation for long-term rough sleepers across five weeks in December and January. Backed up with a £6,000 cash donation, employees formed a community steering group who took on the

huge task of co-ordinating the project. The committee organised the collecting, sorting and storing of furniture donations and organising teams of volunteers to paint over graffiti and transform freezing cold, derelict flats into show homes. Donations from staff ensured each flat was fully kitted out with furniture, bedding, crockery, and cutlery. There was even a colour TV for every bedroom and a fully decorated Christmas tree in each living room. Food and toiletries for each resident were

Asking community project leaders the right questions

The important thing is to ensure that the programme is developed with sensitivity to the community's actual needs and preferences. Key questions for project leaders might include:

- What are the key issues that your organisation is currently facing?
- What experience do you have of working in partnership with companies?
- How do you currently use volunteers within your organisation? What kind of roles do they or might they play?
- In which areas of your work could our employees bring the most benefit in terms of skills, practical help, financial advice, project management, strategic management, research and development, etc?
- What kind of resources do you think our company has that would be of value to you?
- Do you have a project manager/co-ordinator who will be our main contact? Can you support and evaluate our contributions?
- Do the values and objectives of our two organisations align?

Asking employees the right questions

It is important to ensure that the activity matches the employee's personal and professional development goals. Key questions for employees might include:

- What do you see as your particular talents that enable you to do your job well?
- What types of tasks best suit these talents?
- What do you see as your most important professional development needs and/or skill gaps? Why are these important for you?
- What type of job do you see yourself doing five years from now?
- What types of inputs will enable you to reach that goal?
- Provide examples of any community involvement programmes that would interest you.
- What other types of projects or tasks would you be interested in doing?

Asking companies the right questions

It is imperative that the company (e.g. senior management) accepts the value of employee engagement and actively supports the process. Key questions for the company might include:

- How does employee engagement support the company values?
- What aspects of employee engagement are you most proud of within the company?

also provided, every single item of which was donated by employees. On 23 December 2002 11 people, who had been pre-selected by outreach workers, arrived at the flats and during their five week stay received specialist support. A year on, eight out of the 11 are still off the streets. The graduate training team at Deutsche Bank departed from its traditional training programme in 2002, instead embarking on charity and community projects with 420 new employees. In the past, new

graduates had taken part in conventional team-building activities such as orienteering, abseiling and other outdoor pursuits. This time graduates were split into eight teams and given a series of charity projects – tied-in with Deutsche Bank's Citizenship UK campaign – to manage. In line with the Bank's ethos, graduates were expected to treat their charities as company clients.

Lovells legal staff provide advice and assistance to marginalised

people in the communities in which they operate. Through this contribution, the firm learns about the local, legal, and benefit issues affecting the communities of their own employees.

Nokia's Helping Hands project builds on the company's core business values, including respect for the individual and continuous learning. Employees engage in various volunteer activities, contributing their time, effort and expertise – both on and off

the job – to make a positive difference in Nokia's local communities. Helping Hands participants have contributed to efforts such as: nature cleanups in Australia; reforestation projects in China; mentoring initiatives in South Korea, Canada and Germany as well as building playhouses for orphans in Finland. Employees gain first-hand experience in caring for others and playing a role in social and environmental change.

- What social issues do you think employees could make the most difference to?
- What business objectives do you think employee engagement can support?
- What kind of support do you feel the company should provide, e.g. release time, internal communications, matched funding, practical support for projects (transport, equipment costs, food/snacks, logistical support), training, recognition, in-kind product donations, risk assurance, central staff support and operating budget?
- What personal contribution could you make to an employee engagement programme?

Lois Duguid, who manages an employee volunteering programme for Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer, identifies key success factors as:

- Picking a community project that really needs help and that makes a difference
- Working with community organisations that know what they are doing and that are prepared to work with the company's needs and expectations as well as their own
- Attaining buy-in and – wherever possible – active participation from senior management
- Agreeing in advance if the company is planning to offer financial backing
- Anticipating and addressing any health, safety and liability issues
- Ensuring the community projects and the volunteering approach comply with the company's mission statements, values and good practice guidelines
- Preparing employees beforehand – making sure they have all of the information they require in good time.

Over the years, a number of companies have developed tools to help employees use community engagement for professional development and skill-building. These include:

- Worksheets that help to identify individual learning needs
- Checklists of competencies or specific skills to target for development
- Tables that relate competencies and skills to specific volunteer opportunities
- Briefing notes to prepare employees prior to meeting with community agencies
- Maps or guidelines to steer them through the process
- Learning log books to record the experience
- Feedback forms to enable all those involved to review the programme and constantly work to improve it.

KPMG, in partnership with UK-based Business in the Community, took its headteacher mentoring programme (see section 1) to national scale. The programme was then adapted by the Department for Education and Employment and has now become an integral part of the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) Programme for Serving Headteachers, which forms a major part of the government's strategy for the training and development of headteachers.

Levi Strauss employees have the opportunity to get involved in one of 80 Community Involvement Teams around the world. Established in 1968, the company-sponsored, employee-led Teams partner with local charitable organisations to identify needs, plan activities and create volunteer and donation opportunities for company employees and retirees. They are designed to help raise awareness among employees about important issues in their communities.

To encourage volunteerism, the company offers full-time U.S. employees up to five hours per month paid time off to volunteer at a charitable organisation of their choice. This is being expanded to employees in other countries. The company's Foundation matches employee contributions to charitable organisations and provides grants to organisations where employees volunteer. For convenience, employees may make donations through automatic payroll deductions.

In association with Earthwatch, HSBC runs Investing in Nature, a programme through which 2000 employees from around the world have the opportunity to spend two weeks working on environmental issues. Participants can take part in activities such as: researching why over 40 species of frog, unique to Australia, are threatened with extinction; monitoring the effects of acid rain in the Czech Republic and/or helping to put in place re-forestation programmes. Over the lifetime of the initiative,

'It is important to be sensitive to the needs of both your community partners and your colleagues. Understand both your corporate objectives and your people. Some projects may not put all participants on the same level or they ask for problem solving rather than interaction. This can be disheartening to employees and undercut the value of their experience. It is important to select projects that allow everyone the chance to show their best work.' Perry Yeatman, Unilever

Don't forget to build sustainability for employee engagement initiatives within the company. It is not uncommon for volunteering activities to be discontinued when companies are facing senior management changes or radical re-structuring. Full integration of such schemes into performance management and assessment systems can ensure their durability when corporate circumstances change. In fact, these schemes may help to maintain individual motivation and sense of worth during difficult times.

Ten tips for effective learning through community engagement

- 1 Be clear about why community involvement is important for the company and as a tool for employee learning
- 2 Secure a senior-level champion for the employee volunteering initiative – preferably from the company's human resource team or from the Chief Executive's office
- 3 Ensure a co-ordinator is appointed to ensure that progress is being achieved and adjustments made where necessary
- 4 Ensure that the activity feeds into company policy and any general guidelines for community involvement
- 5 Be realistic about the objectives of the community project, the employee(s) involved and the company. Agree at an early stage how success will be measured
- 6 Engage hearts and minds by talking to colleagues about who they think might be motivated to participate in this project
- 7 Start from where you are – your programme will be more effective if it is built on existing corporate community involvement
- 8 Check out good practice from other organisations; join networks and talk to HR colleagues from other companies
- 9 Take advantage of community engagement that is already active within the company and build on it in addition to developing new contacts
- 10 Create a clear action plan for delivering against agreed objectives so that performance is assessed according to defined measures.

Above all, be intentional in all aspects of any employee engagement programme. The best learning will result from well-structured opportunities that include appropriate preparation, relevant assignments and reflection time.

HSBC staff will contribute the equivalent of one hundred years of field research, creating a global network of conservation champions within the HSBC Group.

GE's GE Volunteers programme is an employee led initiative that has been active for the last 75 years. With over 55,000 employees and retirees in 135 groups in 33 countries, contributors get involved with a wide range of projects to meet local community needs. For example, the GE team

in Shanghai, China coached 200 students from 10 universities and secondary schools at the Junior Achievement China/GE China Business Competition in 2003. One student explained, 'The JA program is especially valuable in China since we're rarely exposed to economics and business in our school curriculum. Through [this] program, we've learned to combine the economic theory with the real business situation; we've also improved our decision making, teamwork and leadership

capabilities with the help of volunteer business consultants.' Every year, more than 30,000 AXA employees worldwide volunteer their skills, time and energy to charitable organisations as part of the AXA Hearts in Action programme. Focussed around a Community Action Day, AXA supports employee volunteers by providing them with the financial and logistical resources needed to carry out clearly defined projects. The

company also supports traditional grant programmes, but believes that human exchange and support go hand in hand with social commitment.

Diageo in the UK supported the Business in the Community Twinning programme, which paired senior business executives with Chief Executives of non-profit organisations in order to provide opportunities for mutual learning and support. Meeting between six and eight times a year,

Opportunities for employees at all levels

Employees at all levels and in any type of company can use volunteering as a tool for personal and professional learning. Whilst some employee engagement programmes are designed to offer skills development to a wide range of employees, others are targeted at employees at specific stages of their careers.

Graduate employees frequently cite the existence and availability of community engagement programmes as a top priority in their choice of company. They often relish volunteering as a mechanism for testing out many of the competencies and skills acquired during formal training.

And for many employees at senior management and even Chief Executive levels, engagement in the community can play a significant part in both professional and personal growth.

'I met people I otherwise would not have met. I was exposed to aspects of American life that I otherwise would never have seen. I would have had a diminished life had I not been involved in volunteering. This is as clear to me as the nose on my face.'
John Akers, former CEO, IBM.

Chief executives can make a particular contribution to communities by bringing leadership skills, reputation and authority to a range of civil society and public service assignments.

'Employee engagement is at the heart of the success of the many YBI programmes around the world. These initiatives are entirely business-led and the engagement takes place at all levels: senior executives join the national boards who decide the broad strategy for the programme; regional panels meet monthly with employees engaged in assessing which young people will benefit from support; and perhaps most importantly, individual business people provide mentoring and one-to-one guidance to the disadvantaged young people seeking to become entrepreneurs. Youth Business International would not exist without this massive voluntary support.'
Richard Street, Executive Director, Youth Business International.

'twins' shared experiences and explored alternative approaches to action, addressing long-term strategic issues as well as immediate projects and challenges.

When changing economic conditions forced the world's leader in networking for the Internet, Cisco Systems, to cut costs and reduce its workforce in April 2001, the corporation worked hard to do so with respect and care for those most affected. The Cisco Community Fellowship

Program was developed and allowed affected employees to work as Cisco Community Fellows at non-profit organisations for a year, at no cost to the non-profits. Fellows agreed to accept one-third of their salaries plus benefits in place of a separation package. Within four months, most had begun using their technical and professional skills to improve the lives of others both in the USA and abroad.

As part of their performance contracts, Boots employees discuss personal and professional development needs with their line managers. They can then choose to gain those competencies through either formal training or an employee volunteering activity. Boots has mapped employee engagement activities against required business competencies so that individuals can relate what they are doing in a voluntary capacity to the development of job skills. Mapping also helps

employees identify which activities to get involved in to develop specific skills. To ensure that skills gained through volunteer activities are formally recorded and recognised, Boots introduced a Certificate of Recognition as a Community Associate. To gain accreditation, candidates must keep a learning log (available online or as a hard copy) to help them effectively plan, implement and review their activities.

Volunteering – at whichever level – provides tremendous potential for employees to use their skills differently, build greater professional confidence and/or develop new competencies (see examples outlined below). Individuals are exposed to a new range of work activities and expected to:

- Do something out of the routine
- Manage without familiar support systems
- Be innovative and inventive
- Work in unfamiliar surroundings
- Use natural instinct rather than professional expertise or formal training
- Adapt to new challenges.

STAFF LEVEL	EXAMPLE	POTENTIAL VALUE
School leavers	Induction activities – to include community programme(s).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a bridge between community and world of work • Obtain early development of basic work competencies (time-keeping, teamwork, reliability) • Instil a sense of pride in company values.
Graduate trainees	Team challenges – setting new graduate recruits community-based activities in competitive teams.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply formal training to real life settings • Experience company values in action • Become an ambassador for the company's values.
Front line staff	Project work – placement with an NGO to undertake a specific task.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase understanding of customers and improve customer relationships and services • Improve teamwork and communication skills • Renew enthusiasm for a repetitive job.

Founded in 1968, the UPS Community Internship Program is an intense management training course designed to immerse senior-level executives in the community, exposing them to a variety of social and economic challenges facing today's workforce. Participating managers leave their jobs and families to spend a month living and working in one of three sites run by local non-profit agencies. The programme helps managers enhance problem-solving skills

and develop a greater sensitivity toward employees. Managers become heavily involved in the work of the non-profit agencies and gain firsthand experience of a variety of social problems, including poverty, homelessness, illiteracy, drug dependency and alcoholism. Shell is one of several companies participating in Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) Business Partnerships. The company offers up to five employees the

opportunity to take six to twelve months assignments with VSO. Employees utilise their business and management skills to assist organisations and communities throughout the developing world. An independent evaluation of the Shell programme found that for employees, the assignments fulfil personal aspirations, enable direct contribution to sustainable development and substantially improve management and business skills. Local communities cited the transfer of crucial business,

management and technical skills as being an engine for sustainable growth. Shell's commitment to sustainable development – demonstrated by its enhanced stakeholder engagement and skill-building activities – has increased staff morale as well as improved recruitment and retention in a competitive labour market. Unilever brought together 250 managers from around Europe for a management conference in Prague, Czech Republic. Attendees

STAFF LEVEL	EXAMPLE	POTENTIAL VALUE
Senior managers	Team leaders/NGO advisors – using management skills and experience in a community setting alongside more junior work colleagues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broaden experience-base • Exercise coaching, mentoring and negotiation skills • Demonstrate leadership in action.
Directors	Twining – senior executives exchanging experience with an NGO counterpart on a regular basis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to re-think company policy/strategy/operational style • Strengthen company’s external relationships and reputation • Provide a more values-based/holistic experience of the workplace.
Staff retiring or facing redundancy	Secondments – being attached to a community programme as an additional senior member of staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply skills and experience in a new setting • Develop new competencies/confidence in preparation for other things • Represent the company in a creative and useful way.
All staff	Matched funding – company financially supports employee fundraising efforts. Award schemes – to recognise and reward volunteering. Time off in lieu – for staff developing/leading volunteering initiatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a culture of volunteering throughout the company • Confirm the value attached to employee volunteering by senior management • Encourage company-wide team-building and sense of common commitment to a cause.

At whatever stage in their career within the company, every employee who undertakes a volunteering programme has something to bring back to his/her colleagues – whether in the form of renewed energy and enthusiasm or bringing new ideas from which the company as a whole can benefit and learn.

undertook projects designed to have practical impacts on the Prague community, whilst providing an opportunity for company managers from different parts of the world to get to know each other better. Each of the projects focused on repairing and redecorating a part of the city badly damaged by floods in 2001. By the end of one day’s work, all the projects were completed and ready for immediate use.

Freshfields, Bruckhaus, Deringer – a global law firm – has for several years organised projects where 80 employees from six countries work in teams over four weeks on ‘house builds’ with Habitat for Humanity in Eastern Europe. An unexpected consequence is the ability to serve customers better.

KPMG in the UK believe that their volunteering programmes link environmental management to community investment.

An example of this is the strong link formed between Klegal, KPMG’s associated law firm, and Argyle Primary School in Kings Cross. Every week over 30 volunteers visit the school as Reading and Number Partners. As the relationship developed and communication grew, employees could really start to identify what else the school needed. It is an old Victorian building with a drab rooftop playground. Volunteers spotted a need, raised the money and helped to develop an exciting

new rooftop garden with murals, decking and plants. Since KPMG people began helping children with skills at Argyle Primary School, the aggregate SAT scores improved from 27 points below the national average in 1999 to 41 above the national average in 2001.

Action for Sick Children (Scotland) is a small charity encouraging young children to role-play being in hospital to help them deal with any fears they may have. They use ‘playboxes’

Employee engagement: helping to build a learning company

Learning by the company need not be a marginal by-product of employee engagement. In fact, organisational learning can be as much an anticipated/hoped-for outcome as individual learning. A company will – quite rightly – seek to maximise the return on its investment.

Mechanisms and methods for achieving the most learning for the company from employee engagement programmes

- Make it clear management policy to use employee engagement as a way to build the company’s knowledge of the community
- Identify issues of key concern to the company and develop opportunities for employees to participate in projects that will enable them to work on those issues
- Consider employee engagement opportunities in organisations that the company already supports financially as a way to evaluate the impact (in terms of company learning as well as other company and community benefits) of that support
- Let employees who get involved know that the company hopes and expects to learn from their experience – (whilst still ensuring that an employee’s sharing of experience and lessons is always optional, not mandatory)
- Develop mechanisms and methodologies to learn from employees’ community involvement – focus groups, debriefing sessions, appraisal discussions, etc
- Find ways to communicate the learning to the people who most need to hear it (probably those in management)
- Employees who bring their experiences back into the company should be acknowledged and respected for sharing their learning – especially where their experience is used to influence or change company policies or practices.

The best programmes actually change the company for the better – impacting morale, strategic direction and/or operational good practice. Even if a volunteering programme starts essentially in a spirit of altruism towards the community, it often mutates into a force for change within the company.

‘We know that people who step up to lead projects gain serious recognition by their peers for this additional leadership opportunity. It is highly visible, influential and valued throughout the company.’ David Warshaw, General Electric.

containing child-size nurses uniforms, masks and gowns as well as bedpans, model ambulances and toy versions of medical instruments. The charity had a low profile and needed funding to supply more play boxes. Pfizer was looking for a project for its employees that would help to build an exceptional team. An intermediary organisation – Three Hands – was asked to devise such a project and The Children’s Hospital Playbox Challenge was the result. The five-day challenge

was to: raise £7,500 to pay for 25 Hospital Playboxes; deliver the Playboxes to 23 hospitals throughout Scotland and Northern Ireland using only public transport; raise the public and media profile of the charity; carry out a survey at each hospital on behalf of the charity to measure the impact of what they had achieved. In fact, Pfizer employees raised nearly £20,000 for the charity, delivered all the Playboxes to the right places within the allocated time and

gave 18 interviews about the challenge and the charity to newspapers, radio and television. They completed the whole project with just 15 minutes to spare. And they built a fantastic team!

Project Ulysses is a leadership development programme for senior managers and new partners in PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PwC). The project’s objective is to develop a new breed of leaders who are culturally aware and able to operate in a global

environment. The focus is to develop leadership skills, to understand the dynamics of multicultural teams and to gain an awareness of the issue of sustainability. It tries to achieve this through an innovative approach to active learning and by fostering business to civil society partnership. The project teams work closely with local and international non-governmental organisations as well as with inter-governmental organisations in high impact projects in developing

Maximising the opportunity

The employee engagement activities that have the greatest impact on the community, employees and companies are well-conceived, well-planned and well-managed. They are designed to meet the company's human resource development and other business objectives. They enable employees to give something back and to get the satisfaction of making a useful and tangible contribution to society.

'Employee volunteering is one of the most effective ways for a company to make a positive contribution to the communities in which it operates... Volunteering can bring real benefits to those in the community, gives the employees involved a sense of achievement and opens the door to a whole new set of skills.' Mike Rake, International Chairman, KPMG.

The most successful employee volunteering programmes of all are those developed in close consultation and collaboration with the communities and/or projects involved.

Companies seeking to maximise the opportunity that good employee volunteering programmes offer should be prepared to:

Build corporate commitment to learning by identifying and implementing changes in policy and practices that will build a corporate learning culture in which employee volunteering is increasingly accepted as core business.

Recognise the community as a place of learning by acknowledging that non-profit organisations; public sector agencies and grassroots groups have a wide range of attributes – whether in the form of experience, skills or knowledge – that they can contribute to corporate employees who engage with them.

Learn from the volunteering process by capturing insights from employee volunteering experiences and exploring how these can be shared more widely throughout the company and how they can be used creatively to influence and impact corporate business practices.

Over time, initiatives that start as short-term employee engagement programmes may grow into medium-term learning partnerships. And some of the best initiatives may evolve even further – into long-term sustainable development partnerships. This is explored more fully in the next section.

countries. Team members are selected from different PwC offices. One example was a project with the United Nations Office for Project Services in Tajikistan. Colleagues from Malaysia, Botswana and Indonesia came together to support the second phase of its rehabilitation and redevelopment programme. (In the first phase, the UN concentrated on redeveloping the infrastructure that was destroyed in the civil war). The focus was on three areas of development:

small and medium enterprises; micro credit schemes and revolving funds and community-based organisations. The team's pro bono consulting assignment lasted for eight weeks and involved assessing the existing economic situation and activities in the three areas, and recommending the strategies and plans for UN to implement. It required meeting UN and government officials, the private sector, entrepreneurs, non-governmental organisations and other aid organisations. The end

product was a report to the UN. The team ran workshops with UN staff with their findings and recommendations so that the latter could also give their input and feedback.

Section Three

LEARNING BY PARTNERING

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Material for this section has been drawn from a number of sources:

- Local Partnerships in Europe – an action research project managed by Louise Kjaer of The Copenhagen Centre
- Business Partners for Development Water and Sanitation Cluster managed by Ken Caplan
- The group project experiences of participants in years 1 and 2 of the Post-graduate Certificate in Cross-sector Partnerships jointly managed by the University of Cambridge Programme for Industry, The Copenhagen Centre and the International Business Leaders Forum
- The on-going pioneering partnership work of the International Business Leaders Forum.

So we come to the last in our trio of types of corporate community engagement – the type that requires most commitment and investment and that is the most likely to place corporate community engagement at the heart of responsible business practice. This is cross-sector collaboration for sustainable development – commonly known as partnership.

What is partnership?

'Partnership is commonly understood as a voluntary and collaborative relationship between various parties in which all participants ('partners') agree to work together to achieve a common purpose or undertake a specific task and to share risks, responsibilities, resources, competencies and benefits.' UN definition of partnership from a report to the General Assembly, 2003.

Why is partnering a particularly good form of corporate engagement?

Partnerships – by which we mean a committed cross-sector working relationship – are forms of 'negotiated collaboration' to which all parties contribute and from which all parties benefit. In other words, partnerships are about exchange. They are really a form of sophisticated bartering. The working assumption is that partners expect and accept that the relationship is about give and take and that all partners – no matter what their relative resource or power bases – have validity and value and a unique range of contributions to make through the partnership to the wider community.

Being in partnership allows business to build long-term quality relationships with other key players in society. Quality relationships are those that survive the test of time and enable important projects and programmes of work to be developed appropriately to specific circumstances and to become self-sustaining over time.

The reason that businesses are increasingly working in such partnerships is simple: they recognise that they cannot achieve long-term solutions to intractable social, environmental and economic problems alone (and they need such solutions in order to be able to do business). Only through committed, long-term corporate engagement with the public sector and civil society organisations can the health and prosperity of communities be assured.

Types of partnership

Local partnerships are seen to emerge either as a response to – or in anticipation of – local social, economic or environmental challenges. In each case, partnerships introduce prospects for change: change in working methods or procedures, in strategic planning, in working relationships or in attitudes.

As the partnership paradigm becomes a more established phenomenon, a number of different types of partnership are emerging. Some key types are outlined on the opposite page.

TYPE	CHARACTERISTICS	KEY STRENGTHS
Global alliance	Partners from all main sectors given equity of involvement and decision-making responsibility within a somewhat independent formal structure operating at an international level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economies of scale • Greater sphere of influence • Strategic linkages and impacts • Potential for influencing legislation • Can usefully internationalise initiatives by being beyond limitations set by national boundaries.
Local alliance	Partners from all main sectors given equity of involvement and decision-making responsibility within a somewhat independent formal structure operating at a local level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong sense of local ownership and self-determination • Builds and institutionalises collaboration at the local level.
Dispersed	Partners have agreed a common aim and a modus operandi but they rarely meet. Instead they operate by different partners (or sub-groups of partners) being mandated to complete tasks on behalf of the partnership – to which they are accountable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum flexibility • Greater freedom of operation for key players/partners • Considerable self-determination • Allows for particularly wide diversity in the partnering group.
Temporary	The partnership is designed for obsolescence. It is time-specific and therefore is dispensed with once the agreed programme of work is completed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short-term commitment leads to a high level of focus on immediate gains/benefits • Allows for an intensity of involvement from key players because of its short-term nature.
Consultative	The task of the partnership is to provide advice and/or a 'sounding board' for new ideas rather than to develop or implement a project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authority drawn from consensus rather than power • Considers a range of options rather than a 'one shoe fits all' model.
Intermediary	An organisation that operates between (and on behalf of) many other players. It essentially supports the development of a number of independent partnership initiatives rather than being a partnership itself.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An empowering model that is focussed on building a culture of collaboration as well as appropriate support structures • Non-directive.

TYPE	CHARACTERISTICS	KEY STRENGTHS
Learning	A partnership established with the primary aim of learning from and sharing information arising from other partnership experiences, rather than creating new partnership initiatives per se.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility • Self-determination • Drawing on diversity as a particular strength • Building knowledge and/or capacity as a primary (rather than secondary) aim.

Adapted from: Tennyson, Ros. Institutionalising Partnerships: Lessons from the Front Line, IBLF, (2003).

Whatever the partnership type, partnerships invariably have a common pattern of phased development and there is potential for significant corporate engagement and learning in each of these phases as indicated below.

PHASE	POTENTIAL FOR LEARNING OUTCOMES
Scoping phase	Beginning to understand: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the necessity for collaboration • what other sectors may be able to contribute • the potential value of collaboration for own organisation.
Negotiating engagement	Developing a range of new skills and competencies including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • active listening and careful speaking • mediating and conflict resolution • resource mapping.
Relationship building	Learning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to understand and articulate a perspective different from your own • the value of cultural/sectoral diversity • that your lack of trust in others may be mirrored by their concern that you have not yet proved your own trust-worthiness.
Programme and project development	Learning that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • other approaches to project development may be even better than yours • you may need to give ground gracefully sometimes in order to arrive at genuine consensus, commitment and better collaboration • new mechanisms for governance and accountability may need to be invented that are radically different from the systems you are used to.
Implementation	Respecting that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the transition from talk to action can be a difficult one and may need skilled/facilitative leadership from yourself or others • there is always more than one way to tackle a challenge • it is worth taking time out to reflect on progress/results with your partners since they may view the implementation process quite differently to you.

PHASE	POTENTIAL FOR LEARNING OUTCOMES
Review and Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognising that there may be other things worth evaluating (e.g. in addition to financial return) • Developing new methods for articulating and evaluating performance and project outputs/outcomes/impacts.
Moving on	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-thinking personal/professional values as a result of the partnering experience • Being confident enough to make braver personal/organisational decisions • Exercising new-found creativity in exploring further challenges or new opportunities.

So by being involved in cross-sector partnering, business personnel have a tremendous range of opportunities for professional development in addition to achieving an even deeper level of corporate community engagement and impact.

Tools for collaborative learning

One might argue that successful partnering requires a considerable amount of ‘un-learning’ from all those involved. In order to be able to partner successfully, potential partners may need to deepen their understanding of a number of issues and directly confront their:

- Preconceptions and prejudices about other sectors
- Assumptions about their sector’s superiority
- Use of language (jargon) that may, albeit unintentionally, make others feel inadequate or excluded
- Tendency to stay within a particular comfort zone with like-minded others
- Conviction that they know best (particularly what is good/appropriate for others).

Recognising and tackling preconceptions, assumptions and prejudice takes both effort from the individuals themselves as well as appropriate opportunities for challenging and changing attitudes and behaviour. Setting up and facilitating such opportunities well can provide the foundation for creative systemic change. The partnering process – well managed – can provide a number of useful learning tools.

Shared meetings management

Cross-sector meetings (especially decision-making meetings) require new skill sets for all those involved. These include active listening, speaking succinctly and in jargon-free language as well as being sensitive to and tolerant of different perspectives. Taking it in turns to chair or facilitate such meetings offers both the chance to practice these skills and to observe how those from different sectors may undertake these tasks in unexpected yet equally (or even more) effective ways.

Cross-sector workshops

In the early stages of partnering it is not uncommon for those involved to participate in one or more workshops with the specific objective of getting to know each other better and arrive at deeper understanding of the different values and potential contributions of all those involved. Workshop themes can include future scenario planning/visioning, resource-mapping and storytelling. Such workshops can achieve useful goals in their own right but also make a major contribution to greater cross-sector dialogue and understanding.

Joint study visits

See Section One

Working on a practical project

See Section Two

Keeping the right records

There is a particular skill to record keeping in a partnership. Records need to be clear, concise and tangible. They also need to be tailored to meet the needs and expectations of the different partner organisations. At their best they should try and capture the spirit of the meeting or activity – capturing what has gone well and tracking those things that need to be reviewed or re-done or have yet to be tackled. Records will also provide the base-line materials for communicating the partnership to others either within the partner organisations or to a wider external audience. Partners can usefully work together to agree what they need to record, what they want to track and what they want to share with others. They can then mix and match their diverse communication skills and approaches to tackling the communications task as dynamically as possible.

Working with an ‘action research’ approach

‘Action research’ is a participatory review process that involves everyone and operates in a continuous cycle of action and reflection. An action research approach is essentially about promoting an attitude of mind where all experience is interesting and valid as long as it gives rise to learning, change and/or further focussed activity. Partnerships – because of their entirely collaborative nature – benefit particularly from an action research approach since it provides a shared framework for work that can tend towards being diffuse and messy.

Collaborative review procedures

When the time comes for a partnership to be reviewed there is yet another opportunity to create a collaborative learning tool. Partnerships do not respond well to external and analytical review procedures – indeed this type of approach can have highly negative impacts on the partnership itself. Partnerships, therefore, are increasingly evolving collaborative review procedures where the partners themselves all participate as both reviewers and those being reviewed. Where external people are involved, this tends to be as facilitators of the process.

All these – and more – are tools and methodologies for learning from partnering.

‘Partnerships are largely about learning and adapting to the architecture of change; about understanding and reflecting upon the ability to act in accordance with changes within society and/or within the organisations in question. Or indeed to catalyse changes to existing circumstances or conditions that are deemed unsatisfactory.’ Louise Kjaer, Local Partnerships in Europe: An Action Research Project (2003).

Potential learning impacts

As we have seen above, learning can come from all phases and aspects of the partnering process. Corporate engagement in partnership initiatives ideally involves employees as both learning providers and learning recipients.

BUSINESS CONTRIBUTIONS AS ‘LEARNING PROVIDER’	OTHERS (NON-BUSINESS PLAYERS) INVOLVED IN THE PARTNERSHIP	BUSINESS BENEFITS AS ‘LEARNING RECIPIENT’
Practical demonstration of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> efficiently managed and delivered projects a can-do attitude focus on deliverables. 	Project/programme beneficiaries	Insight into: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> unexpected capacities and competencies the fact that time and energy can be more valuable (and more valued) than money.
Leadership in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> getting things done thinking outside the box strategic thinking and infrastructure planning bringing projects to scale and having maximum impact. 	Public sector partners	Greater understanding of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> range and scale of issues public sector responsibilities, pressures and constraints different priorities of politicians and civil servants balance of power between local/regional/national and international levels of decision-making.
Evidence that business people: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> also have social and environmental values are willing to learn can complement the skills, knowledge and experience of their civil society counterparts. 	Civil society partners	The importance of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> this sector in ensuring a just and integrated society civil society in understanding, articulating and championing individual rights and community values civil society as a conduit to different constituencies.
Helping traditional donors to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> see the added value of a multi-sector as opposed to a single sector approach develop more collaborative relationships to the initiatives they fund see resourcing as a wider concept than simply cash. 	External donors/resource providers	Learning about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> new approaches to project development, management and accountability new ways of assessing success/impact.

Challenges

Partnering may have innumerable benefits for both business and communities but that does not mean it is easy. All partnerships face a number of challenges that can require some tough decisions and hard work. Some of these challenges include:

- Selecting the right/best partners
- Convincing partners/partner organisations that learning is as valid an outcome as other – more tangible – objectives
- Walking the talk (i.e. transforming talk into action)
- Managing partnerships beyond the honeymoon period
- Internalising lessons within the partnering institutions
- Seeing partnering as a continually evolving phenomenon.

Such issues provide all partners with opportunities for rising to the challenge – and those from business are no exception. In fact, business personnel can be particularly good at responding to challenges with confidence – it is a core part of business culture and means that business partners can often provide real leadership in this area.

Risks and benefits

Of course there are a number of potential risks in partnering. Interestingly, many of these risks are likely to apply equally to partners from all sectors. Equally interestingly, each risk has a clear counterpart potential benefit – as suggested below:

POTENTIAL RISKS	POTENTIAL BENEFITS
Potential loss of autonomy (e.g. through the requirement for collective decision-making)	Personal and professional development for the individuals involved
Potential conflicts of interest	Access to different types of knowledge and information
Drain on resources (especially staff time)	Increased access to resources (especially non-cash resources)
Clash of operational styles (e.g. during project implementation phase)	Improved effectiveness
Negative reputation impact	Enhanced organisational reputation and credibility

Of course it is a question of balance – and all partners will have their own systems for assessing whether the potential benefits outweigh the risks or vice versa.

Golden rules for successful partnering

There are, however, some golden rules that those who have been engaged in partnering arrangements for some time are beginning to articulate. These are:

- 1 Treat those with whom you partner with respect
- 2 Deliver what you promise
- 3 Be more than ‘fair weather friends’
- 4 Have realistic expectations
- 5 Keep your focus on the purpose of the partnership.

This form of corporate community engagement requires commitment and considerable levels of organisational (as opposed to simply personal) engagement. But – perhaps for these reasons – it has the capacity to have even greater and more durable impact. Businesses have been partnering for centuries – usually with other businesses and/or supply chains – as part of achieving business targets. But partnering with other sectors for wider purposes is comparatively new – and somewhat less well charted territory. Perhaps at this stage businesses have only just scratched the surface of the potential presented by this form of corporate community engagement – and there is a great deal more to discover in the interesting times ahead.

‘The best partnerships are ‘learning partnerships’ and one of the best ways to learn is by making mistakes. Each of the partnerships studied in this project had to test things out and – without exception – made mistakes. The key to their subsequent success was that they used the experience as a foundation for being innovative and trying to do things differently – breaking through barriers and thinking about an old challenge in a fresh and original way. It is about facing failures or mistakes and being able to learn from them.’ Louise Kjaer, Local Partnerships in Europe: An Action Research Project.



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- *Partnership Brokers Forum* – A website dedicated to developing the vision and leadership skills necessary for brokering and building effective cross-sector partnerships. Website: www.partnershipbrokersforum.net
- *Partnership Matters* – Annual publication from the Cross Sector Partnership Initiative (see above) – a collection of essays that demonstrate cutting edge thinking in the field of cross-sector partnerships written by speakers, tutors and students from the Post-graduate Certificate in Cross-sector Partnership course run annually based at the University of Cambridge (see below).
- *Post-graduate Certificate in Cross-sector Partnership* – A one-year award-bearing course run collaboratively by the University of Cambridge Programme for Industry, the Copenhagen Centre and The Prince of Wales International Business Leaders Forum. Course information and application form from: Website: www.cpi.cam.ac.uk/pccp
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This project started out as a commission from The World Bank Group to The Prince of Wales International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF). In a radical new initiative – Business Partners for Development – the World Bank Group brought together some 60 corporations, a number of leading international and local NGOs and a range of different public sector agencies to explore tri-sector partnerships for sustainable development. Inspired by the IBLF's INSIGHT programme, a study visit element was planned to expose newcomers to established partnership programmes as a starting point for their own partnering initiatives. IBLF was commissioned to write a tool book that would enable such visits to work well and to achieve their various goals.

In spite of two successful pilots (in Argentina and South Africa), it quickly became clear that there were simply not enough well developed and appropriate examples of partnerships in action to support the study visit programme as originally envisaged – so the production of the tool book was put on hold.

That was five years ago and a lot has happened since...

Multi-sector partnerships are now well and truly on the map and corporate community involvement has become increasingly the norm rather than the exception. Both the Seeing is Believing and the INSIGHT programmes (upon which so much of this publication is based) are being adopted and adapted in many different parts of the world. More recently, the ENGAGE campaign has been established to promote employee community involvement and to make it a key element in responsible business practice portfolios.

Many of those involved in all these programmes have had an influence on the thinking behind this publication in addition to those listed on the inside cover as contributors.

The editors would especially like to thank the many companies that contributed their corporate community engagement stories so generously in the belief that these stories would inspire others.

Thanks are also due to the World Bank Group for providing funding for the initial project and to acknowledge the far-sightedness of those involved in awarding that grant (Nigel Twose and Amanda Blakeley specifically). It was this funding that enabled the material to be collected from so many different sources and published in this form – even if it has arrived on the desks of corporate Community Affairs and Human Resource Managers five years later than initially expected.

Last but not least our gratitude to Joe Phelan and Amanda Souk Gardiner (two colleagues from the IBLF) who were central to getting the final version of the publication ready for printing.

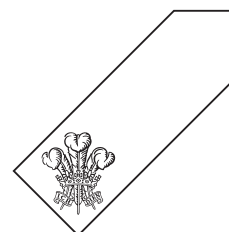
BUSINESS *in the*

COMMUNITY

Business in the Community (BITC) is a unique organisation in the UK of 700 member companies whose purpose is to inspire, challenge, engage and support business in continually improving its positive impact on society. Together the BITC member companies employ over 15.7 million people in over 200 countries worldwide. In the UK, BITC member companies employ over one in five of the private sector workforce. BITC works globally through its collaboration with the International Business Leaders Forum and operates across the European Union as a partner of CSR Europe and as the co-ordinator of the Cecile Network.

HRH The Prince of Wales's Seeing is Believing Programme invites senior business leaders to see for themselves how business can play a role in tackling some of Britain's most pressing social issues. The visits focus on specific issues such as underachievement in schools, youth unemployment, homelessness and regeneration of disadvantaged communities. Cares is another programme developed by Business in the Community that provides a vehicle for employers to support their employees in getting involved in the communities where they operate. In 2003, 16,000 employee volunteers' arrangements were brokered through Cares, working with 867 community partners.

More information on Business in the Community, Seeing is Believing and Cares from www.bitc.org.uk



IBLF
THE PRINCE OF WALES
INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS
LEADERS FORUM

The Prince of Wales International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF) is a not for profit organisation established in 1990 to promote responsible business practices that benefit business and society and contribute to sustainable development. The IBLF believes that business has a significant role to play in addressing the downsides of globalisation: poverty, social inequity and environmental degradation. With a membership of over 80 companies from around the world, the IBLF works primarily at strategic levels and in developing/transitional countries.

INSIGHT is an international, innovative, capacity-building programme pioneered by the IBLF and launched in 1994. It is based on direct cross-sectoral and cross-cultural exchanges of experience. Programmes operating at local, regional or international levels have involved: policy makers; business leaders, senior managers and employees; donor agencies; NGO and civil society representatives. Customised programmes ensure that each programme is designed to fit specific objectives of organisations as well as individual participants.

More information on the International Business Leaders Forum and INSIGHT from www.iblf.org



ENGAGE is a three-year international campaign that aims to increase the quality and extent of employee engagement in the development of healthy and sustainable communities. Led by the International Business Leaders Forum, in partnership with the UK's Business in the Community, ENGAGE is helping to build business competitiveness whilst also meeting community needs through the time, talents, energies and resources of employees.

The goals of the campaign will be achieved by:

- Raising awareness of the benefits of employee engagement in communities, to business and society
- Inspiring companies and working with them in selected countries to increase the quality and extent of their employee engagement
- Helping business and civil society to work successfully together to maximise the effectiveness of employee engagement

A range of campaign elements bring together education, partnership building and communications including:

- ENGAGE Online – the global one stop shop portal for employee engagement for information, resources, case studies and signposting on all aspects of employee community engagement
- The ENGAGE Register – an online database of organisations around the world with experience and expertise in employee engagement
- ENGAGE in Europe, ENGAGE South Africa, ENGAGE Brazil, Linking Worlds to ENGAGE (Philippines) and several other regional or country led campaigns
- ENGAGE Update – the Campaign's newsletter

ENGAGE is supported, developed and delivered in collaboration with a number of companies and other organisations including:

Anglo American, Business in the Community, Citigroup, Civil Society Consulting Group, CSR Europe, Earthwatch, Edelman, EMPRESAS, European Commission, European Volunteer Centre, Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer, GSK, International Association of Volunteer Effort, International Federation of Red Cross Red Crescent Societies, KPMG, Microsoft, National Business Initiative (South Africa), Philippine Business for Social Progress, Points of Light Foundation (USA), United Way International.

ENGAGE

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