



Helping FMs lead the CSR agenda

The word 'recycling' often conjures up images of waste paper bins and crushed aluminium cans, but what about the rest of your office and the furniture in it? The 'waste not, want not' attitude could save you money and boost your green credentials.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has been around for a long time now but against the expectation of many, it has continued to grow in importance during the recession; in fact current political will has pushed the "Big Society" concept to the forefront of the business agenda. CSR requires a company to take responsibility for its actions and ensure that its activities have a positive impact on consumers, employees, local communities and other stakeholders. According to Business in the Community, a Princes Charity that advises supports and challenges businesses to create a sustainable future: "Companies that

consistently manage and measure their CSR activities outperformed their FTSE 350 peers on total shareholder return in seven out of the last eight years."

Consequently, CSR has become more closely tied to business objectives and wider sustainability issues, particularly the environment and many companies, large and small, are integrating CSR into their every-day business.

The challenge for FMs

With this growing emphasis on CSR, it's no surprise that Facilities Managers are playing an increasingly important role in helping organisations set and meet sustainability targets. But the challenge is how FMs are to deliver in

this role whilst continuing with the day to day business of managing the built environment.

Traditionally, FM's have been tasked with supporting charities through their operations but logistical and resource constraints have frustrated this process. At the same time, many charities find one-off support activities consume significant administrative time and resources, and the short term nature of such relationships makes long term planning difficult for them. The cost benefit of such activities is therefore questionable but a long term integrated approach to CSR can provide real advantages for both parties.

"Companies that consistently manage and measure their CSR activities outperformed their FTSE 350 peers on total shareholder return in seven out of the last eight years - Business in the Community"

Helping companies to give back

Premier Sustain's 'Giving Back Project' integrates the company's charitable partnerships into its core business and its new sustainable service is helping FMs do the same. FMs save time and money whilst contributing meaningfully to their company's CSR agenda. The charities supported receive consistent and valuable assistance in areas where it's most needed whilst minimising associated administrative costs.

Established in early 2011, Premier Sustain, a division of the Premier group of companies, provides sustainable workplace solutions for the effective management, storage, resale and recycling of office furniture and equipment. In developing this service, Premier Sustain's market research showed that many clients want to donate furniture but logistics, varying demand and tight timescales made this a frustrating, time consuming process which often failed. By establishing a dedicated project and a network of charities that the company helps, Premier Sustain's FM clients can very easily make donations of furniture to a range of worthy causes.

Real benefits

By donating unwanted furniture, the client not only helps the charities, but also reduces their environmental footprint and waste disposal charges. For each project that Premier Sustain undertakes, the company provides a

'Client Savings Report' which feeds back to clients about their sustainable working practices and the benefits that have been delivered as a result so FMs are not only contributing to the CSR agenda but also providing measurable data to support this. The charities, in the meantime, benefit from an established relationship with a corporate partner that understands their needs and provides ongoing support in a specific area.

In the last six months, Premier Sustain, on behalf of its clients, has donated over 1,250 items to charities and social enterprises.

In line with Premier Sustain's CSR principles, the Giving Back Project supports a range of selected local charity projects, social enterprises and schools. One such charity, St Mungo's, works to prevent homelessness and support homeless people in London and the South. Not only has the charity been receiving furniture and equipment from Premier Sustain since the service began but four members of the

Premier Sustain team took part in a 500ft abseil down Guys Hospital tower in aid of St Mungo's to officially launch the new service. The launch not only generated publicity for the new service but raised over £1,600 for St Mungo's.

"We are delighted to be working in partnership with Premier Sustain and are so grateful for their donations of much needed furniture and equipment. We have over 100 projects in London and the South where these items will be much appreciated by the staff and residents" commented Lisa Long, Corporate Fundraising Officer, St Mungo's.

Phil Oram, Operations Director, Premier Sustain said: "We wanted to genuinely provide a sustainable service that supported our clients and wider society, by talking to our clients and listening to our charity partners we are confident we have found a way forward that helps deliver on all sustainability agendas."

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