

The Corporate Foundation Programme

Engagement and business impact

A recent global workforce study by Towers Perrin points to employee engagement as a key driver in creating a commercial competitive advantage. Many businesses are now seeking to address the so called 'engagement gap' – the gap between the discretionary effort a business needs from employees in order to succeed and the effort employees themselves are prepared to contribute.

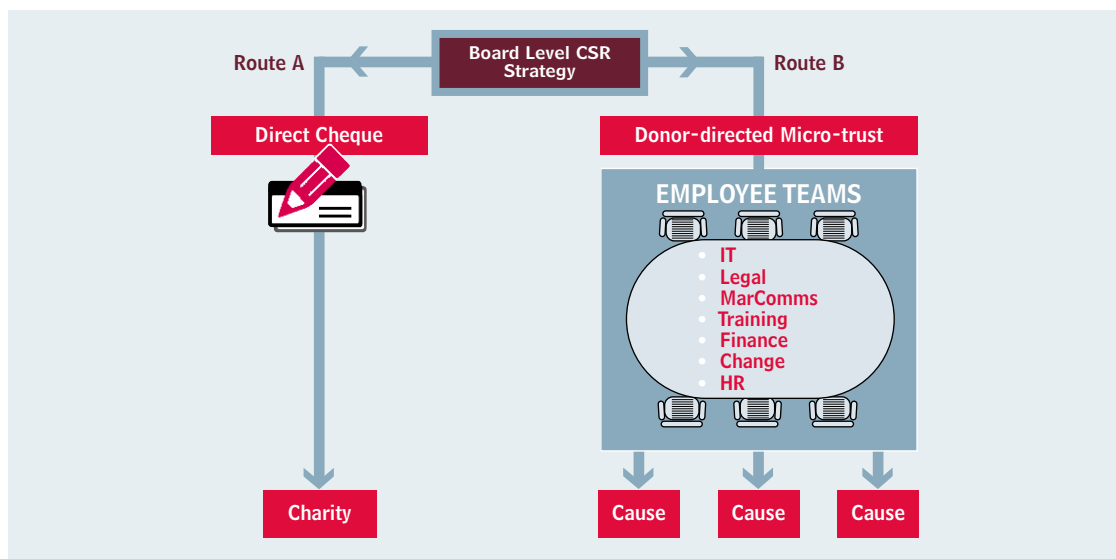
Part of the answer can be found in the design and delivery of your Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategy. Evidence indicates that employees will look to this aspect of corporate behaviour to demonstrate your commitment to a wider social agenda. This can be a key factor in engaging and retaining your most talented employees.

An Important Choice - Route B

Neil Sandy believes that businesses need to readdress how they incorporate philanthropy and talent development into their CSR strategy.

'There is a choice to be made between the traditional model of charitable donation from on high and a new approach where employees make the important decisions about which philanthropic causes to support and exactly how they should be addressed.'

These two differing routes are summarised in the diagrams below.



Neil Sandy believes that CSR strategy has evolved beyond being the symbolic board level philanthropy inherent in route A. While this may still be a worthy practise at a corporate level it fails to fully involve employees.

As Sandy says 'route B is certainly not about symbolism. It's not just about sending a SWAT team out to remove graffiti from the walls of deprived inner city estate. It's about getting talented employees to use the skills for which they are employed such as Legal, Finance, Risk, IT, Training, Change, MarComms and HR to drive delivery of your CSR from the bottom-up and make a positive impact on the lives of others.'

Such an approach creates engagement and also aids the development of talent within the business, creating a commercial competitive edge.

The Foundation Project Cycle

There are many aspects of the foundation programme that you can adopt within your CSR strategy – making it more accountable in delivering a double bottom line with both commercial and social impact.

The chart below shows the path of a typical foundation project cycle from inception to review. Truestone is there to help your business at every stage:

1. Defining aims and objectives
2. Project sourcing and selection
3. Project preparation and design
4. Project delivery
5. CSR and people development – post project review

Truestone already has a number of projects that you might wish to consider involving your business with and a team of facilitators who are ready to help you start structuring a programme to your exact requirements. You can contact Neil Sandy on 020 7488 7110 or email neil.sandy@truestone.co.uk to find out more.

Below are two examples of the Foundation Programme in action. Each has reached a different stage of the programme cycle.



Project sourcing and selection

Sourcing and selection is regarded as the second stage of a foundation project cycle after aims and objectives have been agreed. Key to this stage is the ability to conduct meaningful research.



Truestone employees recently led a week long exploratory visit of business professionals to Sierra Leone in West Africa. Torn apart by a civil war that ended just six years ago and ranked as the third poorest country in the world, Sierra Leone is in acute need of both capital and external expertise to help it recover. Through its extensive network Truestone has developed local contacts in the country to help identify opportunities for both philanthropic and commercial investment that will change the lives of so many who have suffered over almost two decades.

Investment needs to be and can be delivered in a form that empowers rather than exploits the local population. Starting from scratch again, Sierra Leone has the chance to learn from the mistakes of its own history and that of other developing nations but it has a long road to travel.

The team unearthed major projects in telecoms, farming, schooling, health and microfinance which now form a focus for future investment within Truestone itself and other partner organisations. Each project is now being written up as a business plan, allowing business teams to contribute their professional skills to finding the best solution.

Project delivery

A major part of the delivery stage of a foundation project is likely to be the provision of some form of capital. This can be through commercial involvement, philanthropy or the giving of time and skills through employee involvement on the ground.

Through one of its partner organisations, GivingWorks, a registered charity, Truestone is able to help you create your own micro-trust, a type of charitable fund that can be used to provide capital to the causes you wish to support. The micro-trust account acts as a tax efficient vehicle for a business to amass donations but also a focus for employees to be involved in wider CSR activities.

One client has used GivingWorks to deliver a huge social impact in one of the poorest parts of northern India by building and sustaining a local school. Thousands of children have now passed through the school, receiving an education that otherwise might not have been possible. Teachers and support staff continue to be provided with funding via the micro-trust.



Ask Truestone to help you integrate your CSR strategy into your business so it can deliver the employee engagement programmes that have an accountable commercial impact. Call Neil Sandy on **020 7488 7110** or email neil.sandy@truestone.co.uk