

Introduction to Responsible Business Check-up

Responsible Business for SMEs

1. What is a Responsible Business Check-up?

A Responsible Business Check-up is a review to uncover what responsible business practices your organisation is already undertaking. This review spans your business – from your engagement with stakeholders such as staff, suppliers and customers to your environmental footprint to how you support your local community. The output is a private recommendations report which identifies key strengths and cost effective improvement opportunities in the short to medium-term. The reviews are undertaken by a Corporate Responsibility Adviser from Business in the Community Ireland (BITCI). BITCI is the network for responsible business in Ireland, in operation since 2000. See www.bitc.ie for more information.

2. Why do a Responsible Business Check-up?

Responsible business goes by many names – Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Sustainability, Citizenship, Triple Bottom Line.

As an SME, you are not expected to have the ability to dedicate large amounts of money or resources to being a responsible business. But the good news is that being a responsible business entails many of the day-to-day business practices your organisation is likely already engaging in. The purpose of the review is to:

- Raise awareness of what responsible business practices are and the types of initiatives other SMEs get involved in;
- Help you identify what responsible business practices you are already involved in; and
- Give you practical, cost effective ideas to help your organisation become more responsible and sustainable that will reap benefits for your organisation.

3. What does the Check-up entail?

Overview

The process is a two-hour discussion with at least two people from your organisation to explore and assess the four main areas of responsible business: your employees, the environment, the marketplace (customers and suppliers) and your community.

- Under Employees, we will discuss responsible practices that create a good workplace.
- Under Environment, we will get you to look at your potential environmental impacts and the ways your organisation manages your resources.
- Under Marketplace, we will explore how you behave within your marketplace, such as with your customers and suppliers.
- Finally, under Community, we will discuss how your organisation currently engages with your local community.

How it will work

Pre-work

You will have identified at least two people to attend the discussion with a BITCI representative to explore your organisation's responsible business practices.

During the discussion

We have developed a set of questions to help explore responsible business practices in your organisation. The discussion should last approximately two hours and will take place either in your premises or via phone / teleconferencing. An estimated timeline together with next steps will be discussed and agreed at the end of the session.

Post the discussion

We may have follow-up questions for you as we begin to build out your Responsible Business Check-up Report. Any supporting documentation identified during the discussion should be forwarded to your BITCI contact within 5 working days. BITCI will send you a soft copy of your draft Responsible Business Check-up Report for your review. We recommend you share this with (a subset of) your staff to validate the information contained therein and confirm that it is a fair representation of your organisation's responsible business practices.

The discussion in more detail

(i) Why focus on employees?

Creating a good workplace for your employees is a major part of social responsibility. Helping them to reach their full potential will see a valuable return and **they contribute to your success!** Here are some reasons:

Reason # 1:

Involving your employees will allow you to **get more from them** in terms of ideas, commitment and loyalty, **enhancing your effectiveness**. Your organisation's long-term success can depend on their knowledge, skill, talent and innovative creativity.



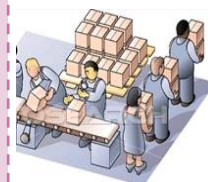
Reason #2:

Creating a **motivating environment** for your employees will **help your organisation thrive**. Visible commitment to the improvement of their job satisfaction, career development and personal welfare will demonstrate that you really value them as individuals - and that you value their contribution.



Reason #3

Employees work on **the frontline** of most organisations so may often **see problems - and the solutions**. By ensuring that they understand your organisation's values and way of working, and by allowing them to **contribute their ideas**, they will help you manage change as you evolve.



Top tips:

- Nurture trust between managers and employees.
- Consult with your employees on matters of importance to the company.
- Consider how individual employees can benefit your business in the long term.

(ii) Why focus on Environment?

One of the main reasons to focus on environmental issues is that **it is measurable** and can be used to communicate your responsible business credentials. Here are three good reasons:

Reason # 1:

By using your resources more efficiently—that is, your raw materials, energy, water and transport- related resources—you can reduce your business costs, leading to **increased profits**.



Reason #2:

In a push to create a greater demand for greener products, the European Commission has introduced a **Green Public Procurement Policy (GPP)**, which is being rolled out in EU member states. Good environmental performance can **help you win public contracts**.



Reason #3

The resulting **environmental benefits** include fewer emissions, less pollution, reduced use of fossil fuels as well as reduced waste. Benefits also include **helping to conserve the earth's limited resources** for the future.



Top tips:

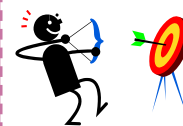
- Minimising waste can reduce your raw materials cost.
- Measuring your energy consumption, water use and transport cost can help you manage efficiencies.
- Greening your products can make them more valuable.

(iii) Why focus on Marketplace?

This is where you **build important relationships** - suppliers, customers, business partners etc.

Reason # 1:

Your organisational success relies on good networking to **help you to achieve your goals**.



Reason #2:

Your **reputation** relies on the sum of your working relationships.



Reason #3

There are many benefits to networking with other organisations; for example, access to **information**, **new ideas** and **peer support**.



Top tips:

- Join networks to share your experiences.
- Treat your suppliers and your customers well.
- 'Do the right thing' to gain a good reputation.

(iv) Why focus on Community?

Social responsibility makes you more attractive to your customers, and keeps the **community** around you **happy that you are operating in their locality**.

Reason # 1:

Your employees are likely to be from the local community, so active involvement in your community can **enhance your workplace**, improve **staff retention and recruitment**.



Reason #2:

Small businesses are often vital parts of their community. Good relationships can foster good **networks**, increased customer **recognition and reputation**.



Reason #3

Good community engagement can help you **collaborate** with local authorities, investors and potential partners and **identify new markets, customers and opportunities**.



Top tips:

- Align your community activities with your own vision and values.
- Engage with the employees from the community and get them involved.

4. Is my organisation eligible for a Responsible Business Check-up?

You are eligible for the Responsible Business Check-up offering if:

- You are committed to responsible and sustainable business practices
- Your company has
 - fewer than 250 employees
 - less than €50m turnover or balance sheet figure of €43m
- You are an Irish company and the headquarters are based in the Republic of Ireland. (If you are based in Northern Ireland please visit www.bitcni.org.uk)
- You are a wholly independent company (not owned by another company or have a major shareholder)

For more information, contact Jen on (01) 874 2847 or email jcasey@bitc.ie

**BUSINESS
IN THE
COMMUNITY
IRELAND**

Business in the Community Ireland

32 Lower O'Connell Street,

Dublin 1

www.bitc.ie

info@bitc.ie

01 874 7232

CHY No. 13968

Business in the Community is a company limited by guarantee.