

Corporate sustainability lessons learned

The business benefits of mentoring social entrepreneurs

We're building our blueprint for better business. We're learning what works and what doesn't.

Stakeholders expressed an interest in hearing about our experience. So we've created this series of 'lessons learned', from our major initiatives.

Why mentor social entrepreneurs?

We've always sought to do the right thing for the communities around our offices – one of our major stakeholders – and our engagement extends back over 20 years. It's an important part of our sustainability and in 2011 we contributed more than £10m through a combination of donations, in-kind advice and time in the UK alone.

But sustainability is about building a blueprint for better business. So what is the business rationale for our community programmes? And what business benefits do they bring?

In recent years we've started measuring the impact of our volunteering programmes. The case study below highlights the results of one of our programmes, in which employees mentor social entrepreneurs¹.

Next generation community affairs

Our PwC in the Community programme extends back over two decades but has always aimed to make the biggest possible impact on behalf of our community stakeholders. It's an extensive programme and in 2011 helped over 400 community partners and over 26,500 individual beneficiaries through our volunteering.

We offer our people a variety of ways to get involved, so that as many of them as possible can benefit from the opportunity. And we know they appreciate the chance: this year more than 4,200 people invested 50,000 working hours to contribute to our communities.

But we've recently revisited and refreshed our priority areas to ensure they're relevant to today's world. Our new, 'next generation community affairs' strategy aims to:

- tackle current issues in the areas round our offices, as prioritised by local government
- create tangible social, environmental and business value
- use our core competencies more fully
- measure outcomes and impact, not just activity.

As part of this, we've expanded our employability programmes to help tackle unemployment. And we've extended our support for social entrepreneurs, who are creating new ventures, and jobs for people who are often hard to reach.

Social entrepreneurship as part of our sustainability

Sustainability is one of the biggest issues of the twenty first century. And a sustainable world is one that's not only economically viable but is also environmentally stable and socially inclusive.

Social entrepreneurs are innovating to tackle the pressing issues of our time, combining passion, creativity and commerce to find new, more sustainable ways of working. We've been supporting some on their journey.

Our client teams, for example, have been helping social enterprises and government to improve the effectiveness, reach and impact of social innovation for over a decade. We've also been involved with social enterprises as part of our community affairs programme for around five years, supporting organisations such as the Spark initiative and the School for Social Entrepreneurs (SSE).

Our collaboration is mutually beneficial with strong strategic fit: our business and financial skills can contribute to the success of such ventures, while giving us the opportunity to explore new forms of value and value measurement, as well as the chance to offer our people different experiences as part of their career with us.

Mentoring social entrepreneurs at the SSE

As part of a broad, strategic partnership with the School for Social Entrepreneurs², we provide bursaries and mentoring support for a number of its students.

Last year PwC and the SSE paired up sixteen students (mentees) with PwC staff (mentors) who wanted to volunteer their time. The mentors represented a variety of grades and came from different areas of the firm.

Mentors and mentees arranged their own meetings and met at a frequency that suited them.

There was no set agenda, so meetings covered whatever was relevant at the time. Common areas discussed were:

- business plans
- fundraising and revenue generation
- growth and expansion
- strategy development.

¹ Social entrepreneurs use entrepreneurial principles to create ventures that will achieve social change. They are often associated with the voluntary and not for profit sector, but can produce profits – which are reinvested to maximise environmental or social capital.

Other topics included dealing with uncertainty, company formation/charitable status and interviewing advice.

The mentors gave additional support through activities like facilitating introductions to other entrepreneurs, and providing information and reports to help build general business knowledge.

From 2011, the mentors and mentees also attended social impact measurement training and workshops, run by three of our senior economists.

Measuring the business benefits to PwC

In line with good practice, we asked mentors to complete feedback forms at the end of the year, asking about their experience, in a mix of quantitative and qualitative questions.

The survey covered what worked and what didn't. It gauged how their understanding of social entrepreneurship and social impact measurement had changed as a result of the programme. It asked whether it had been a positive experience for them, enhancing their work satisfaction. It also asked them about skills and competencies gained: as a people business, talent is the lifeblood of our organisation and we were keen to understand how this experience impacted the development of the individuals taking part.

The results we present are not intended to be statistically robust, given the numbers involved, but they do provide some interesting initial insights.

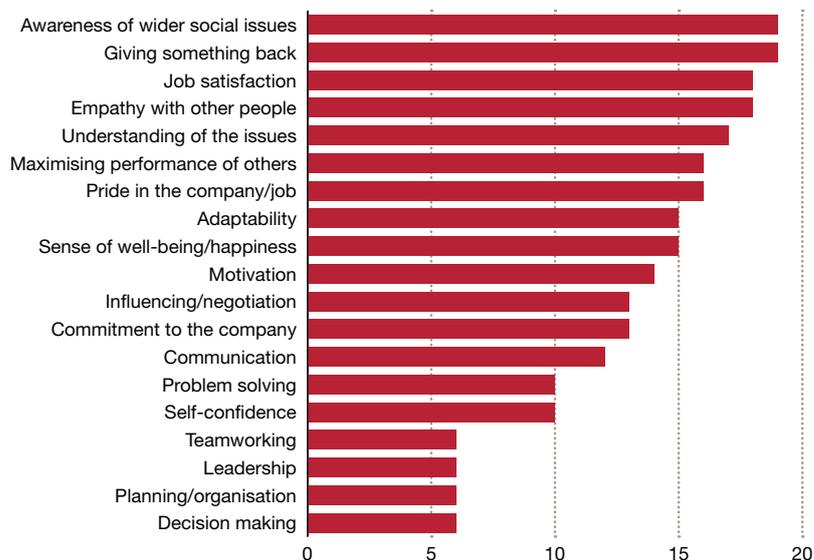
Lessons learned

1. Mentoring social entrepreneurs is a hugely rewarding experience

We asked mentors if they enjoyed the experience and why. Feedback shows that they thoroughly enjoyed working with people from different backgrounds and using their business training in a new context. People enjoyed seeing an idea develop and felt pride and satisfaction at having played a part in that growth.

So for many mentors this was a two-way learning relationship. Just as the social entrepreneurs were able to learn more

Areas of personal development impacted by mentoring social entrepreneurs



about business, so the mentors benefited from learning more about social issues and from meeting people who approach issues from a different perspective.

“I loved seeing a social idea grow into action, knowing that I played a small part in it”

Over 90% of mentors would recommend the programme to colleagues.

2. Most mentors wanted to continue mentoring, where time permitted

We asked mentors if they wanted to continue for a second year.

Around 70% indicated they were happy to continue, but others cited issues such as family commitments, overseas secondments and the general pressure of work as factors in their decisions not to renew at the end of the year.

3. Mentoring social entrepreneurs increases horizons, empathy and job satisfaction

We gave our volunteers a list of nineteen personal development areas and asked them if mentoring a social entrepreneur had helped them to develop those skills a little, quite a bit, significantly or if it had made no difference. By weighting the responses received on a scale of 0 (no difference) to 3 (significant difference), we scored each development area out of a maximum total score of 21.

The graph shows that mentoring contributes to a wide range of personal development areas. The highest were an increased awareness of wider social issues, a feeling of giving something back to the community and increased empathy with others.

“It’s been an excellent learning experience”

Many mentors found themselves working with people they would not normally come across and found it both energising, and challenging. Job satisfaction and pride in working for PwC also increased as a result of their volunteering.

“I enjoyed the interaction with someone from a different background and in a different situation to me”

The development areas least impacted were team-working, decision making, planning, and leadership. One explanation is that they were coaching the social entrepreneurs, rather than directly leading projects.

2 The School for Social Entrepreneurs offers practical learning programmes for individuals who want to establish new charities, social enterprises and social businesses. The learning consists of a combination of expert witness sessions, project visits, action learning sets and individual mentoring.

4. The programme contributes to our core competences via soft skills, which are harder to nurture in the workplace

As part of our business and people strategy, we require everyone to develop and demonstrate ten behavioural competencies. These are core to our business and used for recruitment, objective setting and performance evaluation.

So we asked the mentors if the programme had impacted upon any of these, and if so, which.

As the diagram illustrates, the competencies that mentors felt had been most affected were softer skills – largely related to agility, self-development, coaching of others, building relationships, curiosity and communications.

It's no surprise. Many of the social entrepreneurs we worked with have less formality than larger, more established organisations. So mentoring them gave mentors a chance to see how they react in the face of ambiguity.

On the other hand, due to the fact that the mentoring was set up on an informal, one-to-one basis, the programme had less impact in areas such as team success and project management.

5. It's important to match mentors and mentees carefully

Feedback shows that the social entrepreneurs were all at different stages in the development of their business ideas, needing varying amounts and levels of advice on a wide range of subjects.

This meant that the mentors sometimes found themselves being asked about areas where they were not necessarily deep experts, and on topics where they were a little out of their comfort zone.

Whilst “stretch” is part of the experience, we also saw that mentors derived great satisfaction in applying their core skills to new situations, suggesting that tighter matching of mentee needs and mentor skills would be beneficial to both sets of participants.

Applying the lessons

There are several useful lessons stemming from this analysis. First, we are delighted with the overall level of staff engagement from this programme of mentoring social entrepreneurs. It has given us the confidence to extend it more widely across the UK.

“We hope that by sharing what we've learned we can help other social entrepreneurs, or organisations supporting them, to build a strong business case for meaningful involvement from corporate organisations.”

Bridget Jackson, Director of Corporate Sustainability, PwC

Second, we're enhancing our mentor-mentee matching process to ensure alignment of specific need and skill, enhancing the experience for PwC and SSE participants.

And it has given us valuable insight into the contribution of volunteering to our core competencies, allowing us to refine our objectives and surveys for future programmes.

We're also combining the results of this analysis with evaluation of our other volunteering initiatives, to build an aggregate picture of the business benefits of volunteering, and its long term contribution to our sustainability.

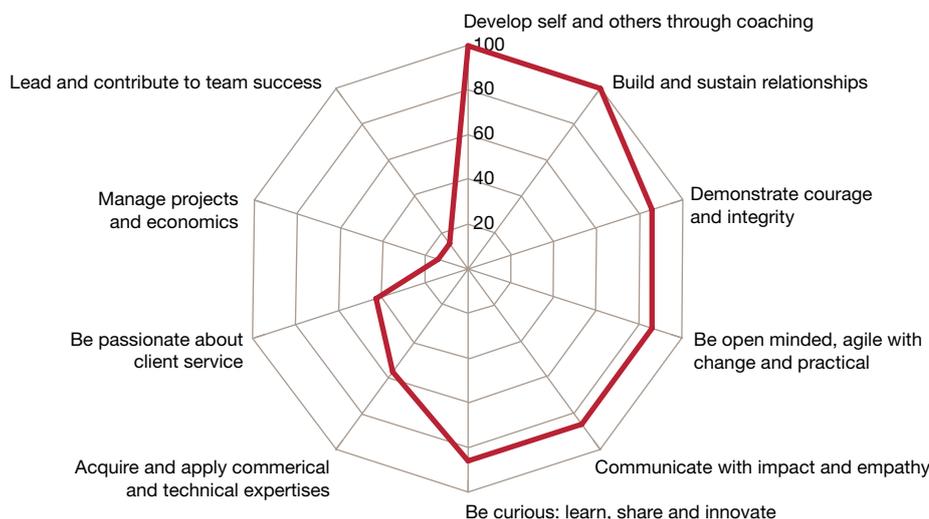
Finally, the mentoring programme also included social impact measurement training. And we measured the benefits of this for the social entrepreneurs, too. The results are in a separate Corporate Sustainability Lessons Learned report – “Impact measurement: getting started,” available on www.firestation.pwc.co.uk/csi.

For more information on our corporate sustainability programme visit www.pwc.co.uk/corporatesustainability or contact Bridget.H.Jackson@uk.pwc.com.



www.pwc.co.uk/corporatesustainability
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How mentoring impacted upon the PwC core competencies



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