

NEW GAME-PLAN CASE STUDY

DEVELOPING AN INTERNAL COMPANY CODE OF CONDUCT

This case study summarises how we supported a global biosciences company in developing their internal policies, in over 50 specific areas of business activity, for inclusion in a new Company Code of Conduct.

BACKGROUND

We designed, facilitated, analysed and reported a 'Brain-Pool Workshop' for a biosciences company which is a global leader with more than 20,000 employees in over 90 countries.

The company's products, services and operations are of interest to the public and campaigners concerned with corporate social responsibility, sustainability and economic development. The company wanted to extend and refresh its Code of Conduct, which sets out corporate expectations of all employees, and to align it with other corporate policies, including its well-developed Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policy.

THE PROCESS AND SPECIAL CHALLENGES

Our client faced the following challenges in developing an updated Code of Conduct. These drove the approach and tools that we selected for the project:

- How to co-create the Code by involving key people from across the company's businesses.
- How to develop a Code that would reflect values expressed in the company brand and its CSR policy.
- How to establish wording which would be consistently interpreted and applied across the company's range of operations in 90 countries, from the most-developed to the least-developed.
- How to make the Code not only aspirational, but also meaningful and enforceable.
- How to make the Code intelligible and impactful, supporting clear headline statements of company policy with sub-policies, guidelines and reference material, as necessary.

To tackle the first challenge, it was agreed early on that our Brain-Pool Workshop service would be used. The Workshop brought together representatives from a wide range of disciplines and countries from across the company. It involved a mix of stimulus presentations, group discussions and individual working. Participants' individual contributions were captured and shared through the use of mini-laptops linked by a wireless network (for details see www.new-game-plan.co.uk/Services/Brain-Pool.htm). This approach facilitated the discussion, development and assessment of the corporate policies considered in the Workshop.

We addressed the other challenges through substantial preparation beforehand, careful design, and the use of suitable tools. Our approach included:

- Developing a clear structure for policy statements guided by a template.
- Distinguishing carefully between policy, guidelines and reference material.
- Ensuring that participants had ready access to text from the previous Code, and to examples of statements from other corporate codes, to help them draft and hone new statements.
- Arranging the drafting activity so that each statement was co-created by mixed tables of company disciplines and country representatives.
- Getting different tables to review and further develop initial drafts developed by the first group.

WORKSHOP OUTCOMES

Our Workshop Report set out draft wording and substantive comments on over 50 specific policies, together with independent observations from New Game-Plan on how to take these forward. The detailed content represented a significant advance on the dozen or so areas covered by the existing Code. The Report also summarised Workshop sessions on the Code viewed as a whole, and on its application to non-employees.

Together, this information provided a very strong basis for finalising the Code, and placing it in the context of wider statements of the company's role in sustainable development, and as an employer. The Report also included, in an Annex, all the raw contributions on each element of the Code, for further reference.

The firm's updated Code of Conduct has now been published. The text clearly reflects the development work undertaken during the Workshop and New Game-Plan observations on the contributions recorded.

FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS

Comments from individual participants showed that they valued the 'chance to have so many experts collaborating for one cause. The opportunity to brainstorm and report through technology rather than note taking was very effective.' Another commented: 'it was a very efficient way of getting people to work through the issues efficiently and effectively. Also good to work with different people and see different viewpoints.' The mixture of presentations, table discussion and individual working was seen as important: 'combination of individual and team work - did not waste time trying to build consensus!' The 'flexibility of the facilitators to adapt to the needs of the group and openness to suggestions and change the process' was applauded. One participant summed up the experience with: 'use of the new technology very much appreciated. Good approach of the day. Result after the day is a document to be further worked on. Good facilitators. Last but not least: good working group!'

FURTHER INFORMATION

New Game-Plan is a specialist company which catalyses strategic change for leading global companies, public bodies and cross-sector groups. Our approach is innovative and distinctive, fusing Knowledge, Facilitation Services, a Practical Toolkit, and Supporting Technology. Our expertise and experience is broad, across many sectors. We have particular strengths in research and innovation. For further information, contact Dr Ray Smith: Telephone: 01428 661517. E-mail: info@new-game-plan.co.uk. Web: www.new-game-plan.co.uk.

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