

## ***DOS AND DON'TS FOR HELPING SMALLER BUSINESSES TO RUN YOUR BUSINESS FOR PROFIT, PEOPLE AND PLANET***

(what some call “Corporate Social Responsibility” {CSR} or Sustainability & Business – or, just Good Business!) Presented by David Grayson

<b>Don't</b>	<b>Do</b>
talk about Corporate Social Responsibility / CSR <sup>1</sup>	Try and use descriptive language & business topics like “How you treat your staff and customers and suppliers as well as what impact you have on your local community and the environment” / “way we do business around here”
Make it over-theoretical	Provide lots of case-studies of “businesses like us” <sup>2</sup> who are already doing it successfully, making them as relevant as possible through filtering by location, size, sector.
Create new, separate organisations to promote these issues to small firms	Work through the variety of existing organisations <sup>3</sup> and channels that small firms are used to working with / belonging to
Train Business Advisers just to treat these topics as a strand-alone topic	Help Business Advisers to see how to integrate into their “day jobs” <sup>4</sup> and into their existing diagnostic tools
Suggest that everyone can / should make a business case for doing this <sup>5</sup>	Recognise that some do it because they think it is the right thing to do; others because they see a business benefit – and some for a mix of values + value-added. Never underestimate the passion that drives many owner managers & staff to get involved, by focusing too exclusively on the business case.
Assume most small firms are not doing anything	Recognise that lots of small firms are already things – but don't describe as CSR etc or think of it in those terms
Assume that information on the web will	Empower & keep on capacity-building <sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Except where businesses themselves are using the phrase – perhaps because a big business customer has asked for evidence of “CSR policy and practice” from their suppliers

<sup>2</sup> “businesses like us” might be by sector, geography, size, age or issue

<sup>3</sup> trade associations, chambers, business clubs, business advice organisations, small business representative organisations etc

<sup>4</sup> eg how cutting energy and water consumption will save money; how emphasising track-record on sustainability etc can differentiate a business for staff recruitment or attracting/retaining customers

<sup>5</sup> some owner managers do some / all that they do because they believe that it is simply the “right thing to do – and get offended if you suggest that they are doing it for business benefit! Be sensitive to a variety of motives!

be sufficient on its own to get small businesses started	local organisations that can raise awareness, link to websites, & “broker” <sup>7</sup> to appropriate help and actions. Provide local, regional & national signposting to practical tools/support measures.
Leave small firms once motivated, on their own to get on with it	Encourage small firms to learn from their peers <sup>8</sup> & to shout about what they are doing through providing useful platforms.
Make it too complex or imply that have to do everything straight away <sup>9</sup>	Give lots of practical examples of simple ways to get started and then encourage owner-managers to evaluate later <sup>10</sup>
Assume it is a one-way street of big business sharing their expertise with smaller firms eg through supply chain or a case of adapting larger business tools to small business.	Emphasise that is two-way street – much innovation will occur in small firms and they have much to teach large firms too
Design campaigns to small firms	involve smes throughout <sup>11</sup> and - keep connected to credible sme voices & entrepreneurial champions.
Assume a “one-size fits all”	Segment the small business market by aspiration and attitude to responsible business issues – and be prepared to show most important topics for individual business sectors
Present as only being about “responsibility” and risk reduction	Emphasise “opportunities” too!

<sup>6</sup> brokers need to be regularly updated and have their own horizons expanded with new links / expertise – drip feed through intranets, business adviser media etc

<sup>7</sup> brokers typically will be local, business-led partnerships

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, BLU SAT Report “learning networks for SMEs” –Sept. 2005: [www.blu-horizons](http://www.blu-horizons)

<sup>9</sup> There was also a fear amongst small firms that if you could not immediately do everything on the “CSR agenda” it was not worth doing anything at all – hence the need to present the agenda in such a way as to make it easy to pick and choose particular aspects which responded to where the small firm is at; and which match its interests and needs.

<sup>10</sup> MORI research for Small Business Consortium found that Small firms who were not yet doing something were worried about the costs, the time involved; and that it would be more bureaucracy - and hard to do; This was not the reported experience of small firms already doing it – hence the importance of encouraging small firms to dip their toe in the water, so that exaggerated and misplaced fears could be dispelled by experience

<sup>11</sup> (owner-managers have regularly spoken to Consortium meetings and a virtual reference group have advised throughout on the design of Consortium strategy and on the Small Business Journey