



VIEWPOINT

Neil Shaw continues our series on the Business Charter by describing how leading companies are forming partnerships with community groups

Reaching the high notes in harmony

LONDONERS are linked together by a common set of interests. The state of the transport system, the cleanliness of the environment, the levels of crime and the health of the economy are vital concerns for all.

A growing number of London companies and their employees are working in partnership with other organisations to improve the quality of life in and around the capital.

Partnership is a familiar business principle which is being applied in a new way. Companies and their employees are working with local and central government, community and voluntary organisations to tackle social rather than purely commercial projects.

Business in the Community (BITC), the non-profit national organisation I chair, has been promoting partnerships between business and the public, voluntary and community sectors for a decade.

Membership has grown to some 500 of the UK's top companies including British Gas, B.T., Unilever, John Laing and my own company, Tate & Lyle.

BITC has developed a variety of national and local partnerships addressing a variety of issues. The East London Partnership, for example, is working to regenerate a particular part of the capital with local councils and companies such as Tate & Lyle, GrandMet, NatWest, Barclays Bank and Sedgwick focusing on improving training and employment opportunities and improving the physical environment.

Across town in west London, a partnership of three London boroughs and 23 companies is working with government departments and the voluntary sector at WELL — West London Leadership — to tackle economic, transport and education needs.

Two of those boroughs — Brent and Ealing — have joined with WELL in a bid for funds from City Challenge, the Government's competitive urban regeneration programme based on private/public-sector partnerships.

Companies can contribute much to the success of partnerships: credibility with the public sector, management skills, equipment or access to legal or financial advice.

Through the Professional Firms Group a number of BITC member firms

practising law, accountancy, quantity surveying and architecture have each agreed to donate about £5,000 of professional time to local partnerships.

Business interest in educational institutions has increased as the demand has grown for employees with higher-level intellectual skills.

The delegation of responsibility, including that for finances, to local schools and colleges has also created a need in educational institutions for business expertise. This has led to the formation of more than 100 Education-Business Partnerships, 25 of them in London.

The important feature common to all these partnerships is that both business and the community benefit from them.

Philanthropic motives remain strong in many businesses, but companies are also discovering that they can use their involvement to build their corporate reputation, markets and people.

Building reputation: involvement in community partnerships and campaigns can help enhance corporate reputation, increase awareness of branded products, establish contact networks and create goodwill with customers, shareholders, employees, legislators, the media, community and voluntary organisations.

Building people: A company, by establishing a positive reputation as a caring, socially committed business, can attract and retain better-educated, more highly motivated employees.

Supporting education and training projects enables companies to expand the skills and experience of the local workforce. Encouraging staff to undertake voluntary work and temporary assignments to community projects increases leadership abilities and the breadth and depth of their skills.

Building markets: Through support for enterprise and community development projects, companies help to improve the environment, stimulate the growth of new businesses, attract new financial investment and expand the local economy.

In short, community involvement helps build quality in all aspects of business operation. This is the reason that many companies are continuing and even expanding their community programmes in the midst of recession. Participation is not

confined to big companies. Small and medium-sized businesses, and even individuals, can make important contributions.

The approaching general election is raising the profile of social issues at a national as well as a local level.

Education, environmental protection, enterprise development, homelessness and health care can have a profound impact on the long-term profitability of London's businesses. But now business can make an impact on social problems.



Urban decay: a target for action

TAX RELIEF ON GIFTS TO SCHOOLS

A GIFT FOR A SCHOOL,

A GAIN FOR YOUR BUSINESS.

A lesson in tax efficiency.

Making a business donation to a school, college or university in England or Wales isn't just worthwhile educationally. Nor is it purely altruistic.

It also makes sense commercially.

First of all, from a tax point of view. A gift of equipment, which could be anything from a mini-computer to a mini-bus, from sports kit to industrial technology, entitles you to tax relief. The same goes for a gift of cash, if the school has charitable status.

Secondly, the partnership between your business and chosen school will enhance your standing in the local community.

You'll generate a high profile among students and young people who are, after all, your potential customers and employees of tomorrow. And you'll be helping to give them the skills your company will need in the future.

If you'd like to find out more about how your business and a school, college or university can benefit from these tax initiatives, please write for our free booklet *Support for Schools*, to Schools Literature Service, Springfield House, West St., Bristol BS3 3NX.

Alternatively call ☎ (0345) 214214 (charged at local rate).

To: Schools Literature Service, Springfield House, West St., Bristol BS3 3NX.
Please send me a copy of *Support for Schools*. (This leaflet covers England and Wales only.)

Name (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms.)

BLOCK CAPITALS

Position

Address

Postal Code

THE DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION & SCIENCE

DES

• Neil Shaw is chairman and chief executive of Tate & Lyle, and chairman of Business in the Community.