



White Paper

Telecoms and Responsible Business Behaviours

Doing the right thing: Telecoms and Corporate Responsibility

‘Corporate Responsibility’ is a phrase that’s bandied around many a boardroom these days. But what does it actually mean? Is it just a lot of hot air, or is it something tangible, something achievable, and something that actually makes a difference to your bottom line as well as your conscience?

Corporate Responsibility (CR) is all about how a company behaves – internally and externally – and how this behaviour impacts the rest of the world. This includes social, environmental and ethical issues – from employment policies, to reducing carbon emissions. Having a working business continuity strategy, or even offering vegetarian options in the canteen.

In short, it’s about helping organisations make a profit, by making ethically sound decisions. And while all this may sound like an academic debate – there are many practical steps every organisation can take, right now, that can help.

Where does Telecoms come into it?

Technology plays a massive part in Corporate Responsibility, and specifically telecoms. Communications technology is fundamental to the way that business is done today. It affects everyone around your organisation – from your suppliers, to your customers, to your shareholders. In fact, your telecoms infrastructure affects anyone and everyone who comes into contact with your business.

It follows that choosing your telecoms provider is a significant business decision. Technical capability, while important, is no longer enough by itself. Increasingly, organisations are looking for providers that share the same ethics and attitudes that they do.

For example, if CR is on your agenda, you’ll want a technology partner that takes it as seriously as you do, as well as being flexible, customer-centric, and in tune with your business needs. One that will help you:

- Create a healthy work/life balance for staff, giving them the technology they need to be productive – not just during working hours, but on their way to and from work too.
- Develop a technology infrastructure that uses energy as efficiently as possible – cutting your costs and looking after the environment.
- Run a resilient business that can continue to function even if disaster strikes.

A 2007 study¹ found that more than half of the 1,000 UK commuters questioned said they believed that more home working would make them a 'greener' person. Nearly three quarters said it would enable them to spend more time with their families.

Modern workers deserve modern ways of working

Simply enabling people to do their jobs properly is a great starting point for any real-world CR policy. This includes giving them access to the tools and applications they need (including email and the internet) to work productively, regardless of where they're working.

In fact, the ability to access information from any location, on any device, is now more important than ever before. And in an era when legislation and workers' demands for flexible working are becoming significant drivers, businesses should also recognise the benefits of improving the work/life balance of staff.

So how can you help? Well, choosing a telecoms provider that can deliver a Next Generation Network (NGN) will help you adopt remote and flexible working practices quickly, easily and cost-effectively.

Then you can start using solutions like Internet Protocol (IP) Multimedia, which provides a suite of collaborative tools, including voice, data and video. Such as:

- Instant Messaging (IM) – offers a fast, easy way to get answers to questions, wherever people are working.
- Video conferencing – reduces the need to travel to meetings and helps staff reduce carbon emissions.
- Presence options – helps staff indicate if they are 'busy', 'away' or 'available', and how best to get in touch.

Not only will this help maintain a happy and healthy workforce. It also makes it easier to attract and retain the right people – those who will continue to build the success of your organisation in the future.

Disasters – and how to avoid them

It's scary, but true – 80% of small to medium sized businesses go out of business within 18 months of experiencing a major network problem². And 90% of businesses that lose data in a disaster are forced to shut within two years³.

The indisputable fact is that all organisations, regardless of size or industry, face the risk of disasters that could shut them down – whether natural or manmade. Corporate Responsibility includes the need to plan for such eventualities.

If disaster strikes, what happens to the staff, suppliers and customers who are depending on your systems or services? Could you keep their details and sensitive data safe? Without a responsible approach, and ways of ensuring business continuity, a one-off disaster can simply be the start of many catastrophes.

Budgets and the nature of the data in question will determine what sort of protection is needed. However, Next Generation Networks (NGNs) offer a simple way to 'bullet proof' your services, by storing data in different locations around the network. So, for example, if one part of the network fails, you can quickly get critical information from a live section – without interrupting day-to-day workflow.

Resilience in action

A County Council recently showed how effective a business continuity strategy can be. After suffering a power failure, the Council moved its people to an alternative location in the city. Because they had backed up data at a different site to the one with a power failure, staff were simply able to plug in at their new location and start working – minimising the impact on services for the community.

Low energy, high impact

Let's take a moment to look at how your telecoms provider can help contribute to your environmental targets. Take your energy consumption, for example. By its very nature, a communications network consumes a vast amount of power – from each street cabinet through to every part of the circuit. Where telecoms providers differ, is how they try and minimise this consumption.

In a typical commercial building, lighting plus heating and cooling represents some 66% of total electrical energy consumption, while IT represent between 25 and 30%. Within this, data centres draw 30% while networks represent 10% of consumption.

Legacy networks, built on older equipment, consume far more energy than their modern counterparts. They also generate much more heat, and so require even more power to cool things down again; for every watt utilised to power IT equipment, it takes two watts to cool.

NGNs however, are capable of carrying all data, voice and internet traffic over a single infrastructure. So they immediately use less energy than a network running on multiple platforms. The use of fibre-optic technology – as opposed to copper wires – has helped to dramatically improve energy efficiency too.

Plus, new cooling equipment for server rooms – which uses temperate air from outdoors to cool equipment, rather than power-hungry fans – can also help you reduce the amount of energy they use, not to mention cutting your energy bills too.

Next Generation Networks are part of the answer

The development of NGNs makes achieving CR targets much easier. By converging voice and data into a single platform, NGNs give you all the flexibility and functionality you need to:

- Meet employees demands for flexible and mobile working.
- Meet shareholders demands for business continuity capabilities.
- Meet government demands for reduced energy consumption.

Recent enhancements in service have also resulted in a move from the clumsy, processes of the past, to easy-to-use, easy-to-implement IP-based services.

For example, lumbering ISDN-based video-conferencing has now been replaced by an IP high-speed service that's easy to set up – and calls are viewed on HD-quality TVs. This means staff can communicate more effectively from desktop to desktop, without needing to drive between meetings (which helps reduce carbon footprints and expenses too).

Unified Communications is also helping to smooth business communications, by bringing all voice and data applications, including calls, texts, Instant Messaging and email, together on a single platform. Making it easier for your staff to get the right message across to the right people, using the right medium at that particular time.

Working with a telecoms company that offers you access to an NGN should be a consultative, collaborative process. So you can design the best solution to fit the needs of everyone your business touches – rather than having to adapt your systems to meet a standard 'one network fits all' solution.

1 GFK questioned 1,000 representative people aged 16-plus nationwide on behalf of Virgin Media Business via telephone during July 2007.

2, 3 <http://www.lanmic.org.uk/PDF/BCM/London%20Chamber%20of%20Commerce.pdf>



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Please view our award winning CR report at: <http://cr.virginmedia.com/wp-content/uploads/reports/VirginMedia-Responsibility-Report-2009.pdf>