

COUNTERCULTURE

CORPORATE

RESPONSIBILITY -

CHANGING THE

RETAIL LANDSCAPE

CREATING
MOMENTUM

CONRAN
DESIGN
GROUP



INSIDE ISSUE 3 September 2010

Influencing the customer mindset
to create brand impact.

Pages 4 – 5

How a responsible corporate approach
can create a potential driver for growth.

Pages 6 – 7

in association with

VERDICT

How CR can help address risks,
opportunities, build trust and brands.

Pages 16 – 17

Contents

A growing retail influence	01
Causes for concern	03
Influencing the customer mindset	04
The price of losing the PR battle	05
Driving home the benefits	06
Lessons from the shop floor	08
The role of government	09
Keep it positive	10
High profile	12
Low profile	14
Seven steps to more progressive CR communications	16

COUNTER CULTURE IS OUR QUARTERLY UPDATE FOR ANYONE IN THE RETAIL SECTOR – IDENTIFYING TRENDS IN CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR.

IN EACH PUBLICATION WE WILL REVIEW CURRENT TRENDS AND ISSUES IN THE RETAIL SECTOR, OFFERING COMMENT SUPPORTED BY RELEVANT RETAIL DATA AND EXAMPLES.

WE ALSO WANT TO STIMULATE ONGOING DEBATE, TO INSPIRE CHANGE AND HELP WITH FUTURE SECTOR DEVELOPMENT. WE'D LIKE YOU TO BECOME PART OF THAT PROCESS, TO COMMENT ON TRENDS AND ISSUES AND QUESTION OUR VIEWS.



...at www.cculture.co.uk

We look forward to hearing from you.

Counter Culture is produced by Conran Design Group with the support of Verdict Research. Conran Design Group is a leader in consumer branding and design – from naming and brand creation, through marketing communications to the customer experience. Verdict is the UK leader in retail research and analysis, and brings additional understanding and observations on the sector.

COUNTERCULTURE

A GROWING RETAIL INFLUENCE

The third issue of Counter Culture focuses on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR or, more commonly, CR) in the retail environment. CR is one of the most topical issues in retail and one that continues to grow in importance.

Over the past few years, CR has evolved from merely being a minor obligation, fleetingly acknowledged, into a key consideration, frequently placed at the centre of business strategies.

There has been a huge positive change in the numbers of retailers acknowledging the importance of CR. Moreover, looking to the future, there is no doubt that CR will increasingly become an integral component of business practices as retailers look at the challenges facing them in the post-recessionary environment.

As a basis for this article, Counter Culture has looked at consumer trends regarding CR, and how retailers can become better at responding to consumer expectations. We have also looked at which retailers are most effectively employing CR strategies and how they are communicating this to their customers.

We hope you enjoy this issue of Counter Culture and please do contact us with your thoughts.

Many thanks

Thom Newton
Managing Partner
Conran Design Group





There are numerous terms applied to the discipline from Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to Sustainability, to Environment and Society... but what exactly does it cover?

Self-regulation:

CR is a form of corporate self-regulation integrated into a business model. It involves a retailer managing the extent to which their values and behaviour demonstrate accountability to their stakeholders for the environmental and social impacts of their operations. It also encompasses a commitment to improve performance regarding these issues.

Points to address:

The key issues which retailers look to address as part of their CR strategies include:

- Climate change
- Resource sustainability
- Employee welfare
- Ethical product sourcing
- Transparent governance

Considerations:

The factors which help to shape retailer strategies on CR and influence their approach to the issues outlined above should include:

- Employee impetus
- Supplier demands
- Pressure from action groups

However, by far the most significant factors come from a desire to:

- Meet consumer wants/needs
- Comply with government legislation and initiatives



CORPORATE
SOCIAL
RESPONSIBILITY
IS A HARD-EDGED
BUSINESS
DECISION. NOT
BECAUSE IT IS
A NICE THING TO
DO OR BECAUSE
PEOPLE ARE
FORCING US
TO DO IT ...
BECAUSE IT IS
GOOD FOR OUR
BUSINESS.”

Niall FitzGerald
Former CEO, Unilever

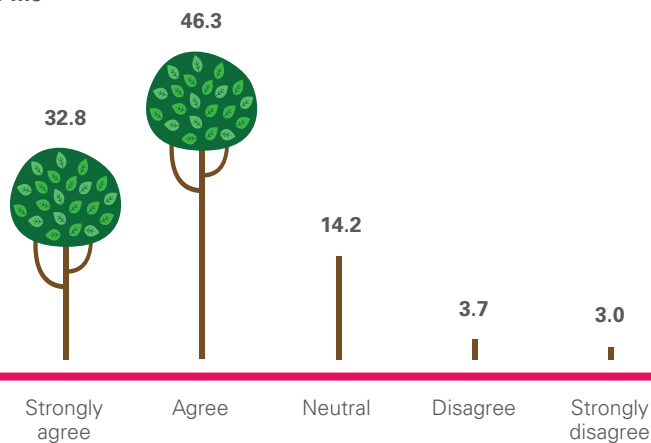
CAUSES FOR CONCERN

Any CR strategy should acknowledge that companies have an impact on society and the environment through their operations, products and services as well as through their interactions with key stakeholders. CR means managing this impact to add value to the company and brand, and increase wider economic and social well-being now and in the future.

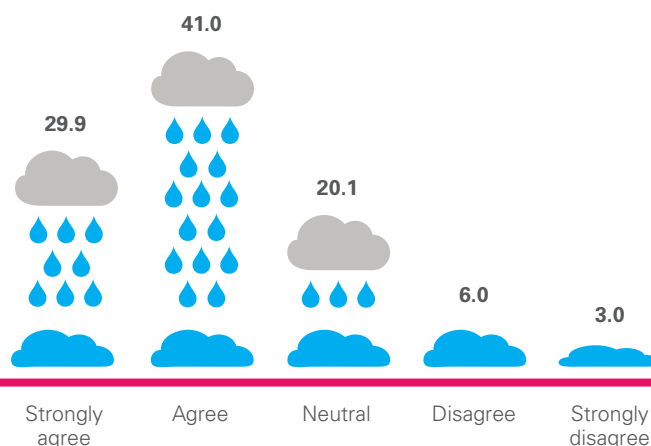
Some leeway should be given when considering the difference in consumer attitude versus actual purchasing behaviour. Consumers do not always act on their initial stated intent when it comes to all things ethical and sustainable.

However, even after taking this into account, it is clear that a significant number of shoppers are deeply concerned by environmental and social issues. The issue that really concerns consumers is the sustainability of natural resources – affecting more than 75% to some degree. Climate change and the fairness of sourcing arrangements are also topics which consumers are troubled by.

Dwindling natural resources is a matter of concern to me (%)

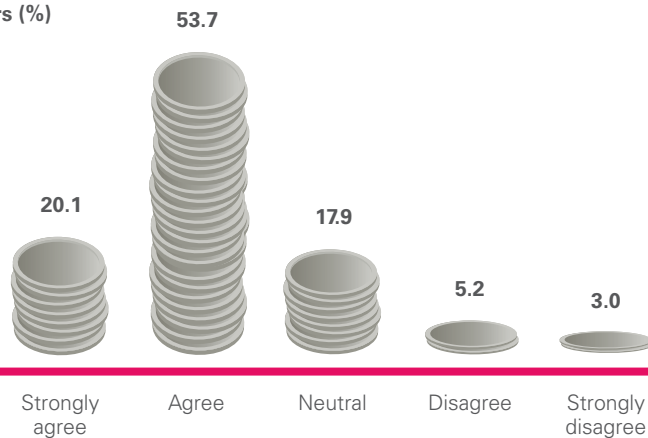


Climate change is a matter of concern to me (%)



ALTRUISTIC TENDENCIES

I am willing to pay higher prices for retail products in order to improve wages and conditions for impoverished workers (%)



Consumers are willing to pay a premium for products that benefit the environment. Even though products which contribute to animal welfare are less popular, research shows that consumers are willing to spend more on products with demonstrable benefits to wider society.



INFLUENCING THE CUSTOMER MINDSET

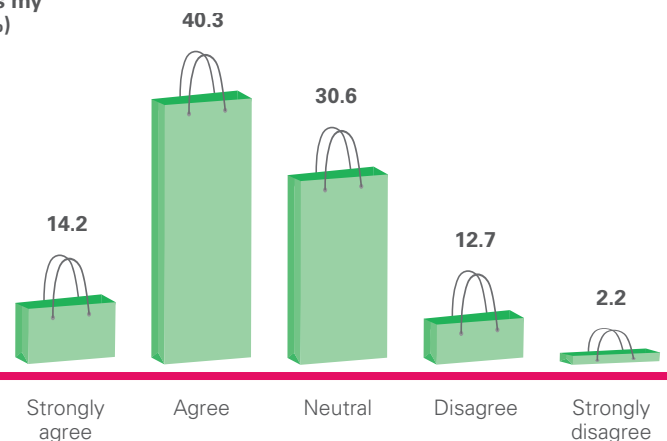
Consumer opinion seems to be influenced firstly by reports in the media and secondly by what is coming from close peer groups, such as family and friends, as opposed to more public messages from official government sources. Messages via retailer marketing can also be reasonably effective.

THE PRICE OF LOSING THE PR BATTLE

More than half of consumers claim that their perception of a retailer's responsibility influences their purchasing decisions to some extent. Even taking into consideration the difference between consumers' stated beliefs and their actual behaviour, this is still a very powerful message.

However, when it comes to avoiding socially irresponsible retailers, consumers are not quite so resolute in their behaviour. A significant number declare themselves prepared to avoid a business that they feel is not acting responsibly. However, when examining the data for those who claim it will influence their purchasing and those who actually act on it, it suggests that the majority of shoppers would rather reward conscientious retailers than avoid and punish the negligent ones.

My perception of a retailer's responsibility influences my purchasing decisions (%)



Brand impact:

The success of your CR activities should be measured against their impact on your overall brand reputation. A sustained CR programme that reflects the core values of your brand and contributes to delivering your brand promise will ultimately lead to an improved brand perception amongst your brand's key stakeholders, increasing and protecting your brand's value.



IT TAKES 20 YEARS TO
BUILD A REPUTATION
AND 5 MINUTES
TO RUIN IT.”

Warren Buffett CEO, Berkshire Hathaway



DRIVING HOME THE BENEFITS

Retailers who adopt a 'responsible' corporate approach can create a potential driver for growth. However, many retailers are not clearly communicating their ethical cultures to their consumers. There are various labels and products which retailers attempt to sell at higher prices – in return for some level of investment in improving the environment, society, or personal health. However, there remains significant difference with regard to consumer understanding of what exactly the rationale of these initiatives are.

Consumers are unable to comprehend why they are expected to pay more for these products and increasingly find the use of different terminologies to promote products, such as 'organic', 'green' and 'environmentally friendly', confusing.

These areas of the 'responsible' approach have become an even more significant factor during the current recession. When consumer confidence is low, shoppers place more importance on value and generally become more critical

of the goods and services they can get for their money. Consequently, ethically led product propositions have come under particular scrutiny because of the price premiums associated with them. Consumers want to understand why a price premium exists so they can make an informed choice on which products best fit their emotional, ethical and functional needs. However, retailers have generally failed to communicate the reasons for these higher prices effectively. As a result sales of 'responsible' products have decreased after several years of strong growth.

Consumer cynicism

In addition, many consumers are deeply sceptical about large corporations claiming that they are acting responsibly. Instead of claims of ethics being taken at face value, many companies face accusations of jumping on the 'ethical/environmental bandwagon'. The proliferation of such companies and brands touting green credentials has not only threatened to dilute the value of such claims, it has left consumers contemplating how

many brands are really telling the truth. Paradoxically, the growth of environmentalism and ethics has also led to heightened ethical scepticism. If the retailers want to restore their 'responsible' product lines to growth, the key lies in ensuring much clearer representation of the benefits, key characteristics and differences of the major schemes they have in place, as well as the overall strategy behind them. They must approach this goal through direct routes, but also be aware of less public methods, ensuring that there is a clear representation of their responsibility in the media and in the public knowledge, as many of the major influences which appear to shape consumer opinion generally seem to be less obvious.

Influencing the influential

The best strategy for retailers who want to succeed as a responsible retailer, is excellent media and public relations. They need to ensure they are reported positively in the public eye. Equally important is a good overall reputation. Increasingly this is something that can be addressed with technology, using for example social media to 'influence the influential'. If retailers can get consumers 'tweeting' or 'Facebooking' about their corporate credentials, it is worth much more than a message coming directly from them.

The use of 'Twitter' by UK retailers is a fairly new communications channel, but the larger grocery retailers and several fashion and clothing retailers are all active in communicating specific store offers and sub-brands this way. Marks & Spencer (M&S) currently has the largest amount of Twitter followers, reaching over 9,000 people on a daily basis, followed by Sainsbury's. However, there is no evidence that any aspects of the retailers' CR commitment or strategies are being actively communicated on the Twitter platform.

The 'Facebook' social media site is far more sophisticated in terms of offering interactive communications between the retailers and their consumers. It offers more in-depth options in terms of promoting parent brand and sub-brands, incorporating communications via corporate, community and product microsites. Tesco Clothing is followed by over 42,000 consumers and Sainsbury's 'Freefrom' food line is followed by over 47,000 active consumers.

M&S again scores by far the highest number of followers on its Facebook corporate microsite, with almost 120,000 consumers actively following them. Apart from these successful companies, UK retailers generally need to be much more active in using social media channels to communicate their brands and CR messages. Retailers should take inspiration from the US where over one million consumers follow Walmart on Facebook. This clearly demonstrates how mature this communication medium has become outside the UK.

Another communication channel where consumers are showing their affection – or the opposite – for retailers and their products is 'YouTube'. The site is full of examples of consumers making their viewpoints known to others and is used extensively by retailers to stream their TV commercials in an online environment or launch new products.

Brand ambassadors

The big opportunity for brand owners is to lead consumers who are willing to talk about their brand experiences via microsites on Facebook or via Twitter towards communities they develop themselves. These consumers will then act as brand ambassadors, attracting those who are looking to share their brand experiences. Research clearly shows that consumers are more likely to accept the opinions and recommendations of their friends, family and retailer communications than public government communications.



PREMIUM WILL INCREASINGLY BE DEFINED IN TERMS OF SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMPATIBILITY.”

Dr Norbert Rathofer

Chairman, BMW board, announcing that BMW would pull out of Formula 1

Retailers need to be more active in trying to meet consumers where they spend time when they're not shopping, and social media and other online forums are the obvious gathering points. The social media channels are 'up for grabs' when it comes to communicating key CR messages to the public.

Such initiatives can be supported with more direct marketing, in-store points of sale and explanatory labelling. It is the high-profile presence of a retailer's responsibility strategy in advertising campaigns, product labelling, store signage and so on that makes Marks & Spencer one of the best performing retailers in terms of CR perceptions.

LESSONS FROM THE SHOP FLOOR

The strongest performance in demonstrating ethical values comes from Fairtrade and free range products. Fairtrade benefits from a widely recognised certification mark and message consistency in what it stands for. A strong marketing campaign and widespread media coverage communicates to consumers exactly what the certification represents and the benefits of Fairtrade to society in particular. That said, there is less recognition of the environmental side of Fairtrade and the brand would benefit from more promotion of its role in encouraging sustainability.

The free range 'brand' is clearly the benchmark for responsible products looking to achieve a premium position in price and consumer awareness. It has the advantage of being long established, but primarily its success lies in the clear message that paying a small amount more for products will ensure better welfare for the animals. This has created widespread understanding of the advantages that the products have for personal health and for the animals themselves. Such levels of understanding could be used by other retailers to target and persuade consumers of the logic of paying more.

Which 'brands' can emulate the success of free range and Fairtrade?



...at www.cculture.co.uk



THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

As well as meeting stakeholder expectations and demands, the other major factor which shapes retailers' CR programmes is government legislation and initiatives. There are a considerable number of schemes currently in place at both a UK and European level, ranging from the voluntary to the legally binding. The majority of laws governing 'responsibility' tend to cover environmental and domestic social issues, with areas such as ethical sourcing largely left to the retailers' own judgement and the local laws of the countries in which they operate.

However, when it comes to consumers, the evidence we found suggests that the government is generally lagging behind retailers when it comes to educating on environmental and ethical issues. Less than a quarter of consumers have their views of retailers shaped by official information, despite the vast number of government schemes currently in operation. Moreover, comprehension of schemes such as carbon labelling remains relatively poor.



How does a government under public spending pressure best communicate CR issues?



...at www.cculture.co.uk

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL CR PROGRAMME

To achieve a truly responsible culture, CR must be central to:

- > **Strategy:** integrating long-term economic, environmental and social aspects into business strategies, while maintaining global competitiveness and brand reputation.
- > **Operations:** e.g. the efficiency of transport systems, the use and disposal of packaging, and store energy usage.
- > **Product range:** continually collect customer information to detect buying patterns and become more agile in terms of responsiveness.
- > **Public image:** ensuring strategy and its specific aspects are clearly communicated and understood in the public domain.
- > **Governance:** transparency and high standards which will pass scrutiny from stakeholders and consumers alike.
- > **Stakeholder relations:** engaging in understanding and meeting demands.
- > **Human resource management:** maintain workforce capabilities and employee satisfaction through learning and knowledge management practices and remuneration and benefit programmes.

KEEP IT POSITIVE

Honesty and integrity are key desirables for consumers when it comes to ethicality, so transparent business practices are also increasingly important and even issues such as the salaries of retail executives are now coming under scrutiny. Brands whose entire organisational purpose, vision and values are driven by a solid ethical blueprint and a commitment to integrity and fairness in all aspects of the business can flourish, whereas those simply promoting an ethical veneer will quickly be rejected and lose share. Retailers should look to emphasise the importance of their roles as 'choice editors', in filtering out products incompatible with their ethical stance. Consumers perceive this to be fair and are comfortable that retailers are entitled to promote the matter.



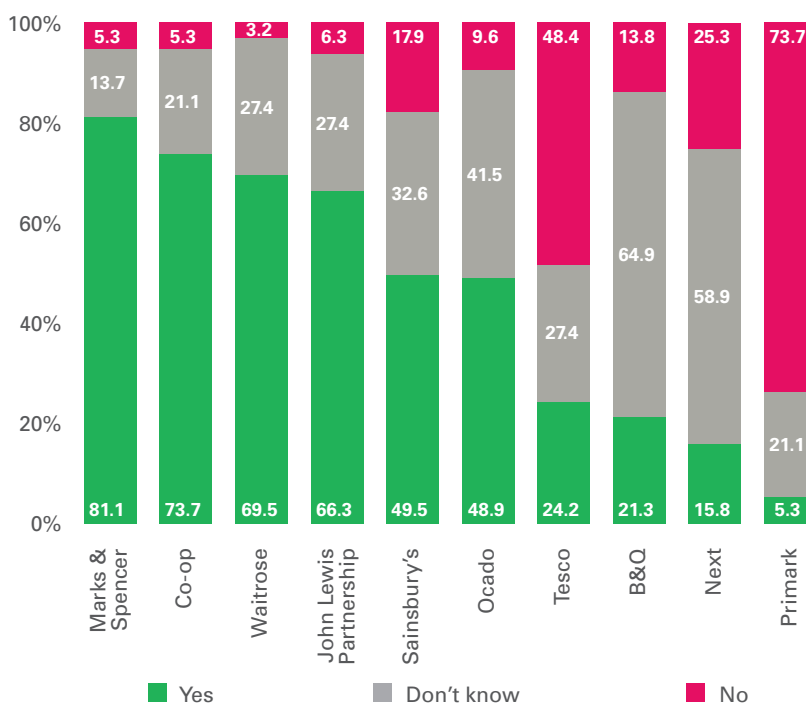
YOU CAN NEVER HAVE AN
IMPACT ON SOCIETY IF YOU
HAVEN'T CHANGED YOURSELF."

Nelson Mandela

More retailers need to adopt a positive approach to ethical consumerism and avoid falling into the trap of using guilt and fear as a persuasion technique. While consumers are sometimes driven to ethical consumption for these reasons, it is in a company's best interests to promote the purchase of their product as a positive experience and reflect the positive impact the purchase creates.

At present there are significant variations in how effectively retailers are meeting and communicating these targets. When looking at consumer perceptions of retailers, it is clear that there are some characteristics which make it more difficult for retailers to achieve a positive ethical image. It is hard for consumers to believe that lower price points and aggressive expansion can be achieved ethically. Conversely, if the retailer has higher price points, or an ownership model which is not so profit driven, consumers find it easier to believe that the retailer is investing more in managing its environmental and social impact.

Which of the following do you regard as socially responsible retailers?



Who do you regard as socially responsible retailers?



...at www.culture.co.uk

	Retailers	Characteristics	
Perception of a retailer's responsibility	High	Marks & Spencer	Upper mid-market, long-established market leader, responsibility at heart of marketing and brand
		Co-op, Waitrose, John Lewis, Ocado	Higher price points, stronger customer service, unconventional ownership structures
		Sainsbury's	Upper mid-market, long-established brand
		B&Q, Next	Relatively less prominent in media, mid-market
	Low	Tesco, Primark	Lower price points, recent rapid growth, high profile, aggressive space expansion

HIGH PROFILE

COMPANIES WHO
ARE MAKING
THE EFFORT AND
GETTING IT RIGHT.



Marks & Spencer

Marks & Spencer has the highest proportion of consumers believing it to be a responsible retailer and this can largely be attributed to the success of its 'Plan A', a £200m, 100-point plan launched in 2007, with five areas of focus: climate change; waste; sustainable raw materials; fair partnership; and health.

In the last few years, initiatives launched under the 'Plan A' banner include launching its first 'eco' store, encouraging suppliers to set up 'eco factories', removing hydrogenated fats from its ready meals, increasing its proportion of organic food, reducing the salt content of its produce, certifying a larger percentage of its fish as originating from sustainable populations and beginning to sell recycling and composting bins.

Perhaps more importantly, it has publicised all of these initiatives extensively. For example, in April 2008 Marks & Spencer launched a TV advertising campaign focusing on its ethical, environmental and health-conscious credentials, highlighting that it only uses free range eggs and that its products are now free from artificial colours and flavourings. Other, more innovative ideas have included a joint venture with Oxfam to promote the recycling of old clothes. In addition, more controversially, the retailer introduced a 5p charge for carrier bags in all of its food departments, in May 2008. Although many consumers resented this charge, it has undoubtedly helped to boost Marks & Spencer's reputation as being an ethical retailer.

Overall, sculpting its CR strategy into such a high-publicity campaign divided into clear action points and highly visible benefits, has seen Marks & Spencer move to the forefront of responsible retailing. 'Plan A' has seen CR become core to Marks & Spencer's principles in the eyes of the consumer and it has reaped the benefits of this, gaining shoppers and reportedly saving £50m in efficiencies.

The Co-op

The Co-op is another retailer to benefit from having an ethical approach inherent in its business model. Its mutual structure of ownership has given it a significant point of difference from the corporately run UK businesses which have attracted such a negative reputation for their greed and profiteering in recent years. This has aided the Co-op not just in financial services, but also in retail, where it benefits from both having its roots in farming, and the way in which it is perceived as being owned by members that are motivated by running the company ethically, rather than purely to make money.

However, this is not a temporary position for the retailer. Because acting responsibly is so interwoven with the way the Co-op is run, the company has long been at the forefront of ethical consumerism and it is this proud tradition and consistent position over many years which has helped the retailer build such a strong level of trust with consumers.

In recent years the Co-op has continued to support its claim to be the UK's most ethical retailer with a wide range of initiatives. In 2006 it became the first major retailer in the UK to switch all its outlets to green electricity. In 2007 the group clad its landmark CIS headquarters building in Manchester with solar panels, producing 180,000 units of renewable electricity each year – the largest project of its type in Europe. And in 2008 the Co-op switched all of its own-brand teas to Fairtrade and removed all non-free range eggs from its stores.

The Co-op has also done much to promote its ethical credentials to consumers. A major advertising campaign launched in 2009 and set to Bob Dylan's "Blowin' in the Wind", showcased some of the Co-op's work on climate change, working with young people in local communities and battling global poverty.

John Lewis Partnership

The three brands that make up the John Lewis Partnership – John Lewis itself, Waitrose and the partially owned Ocado – have similarly strong reputations for responsibility. Again, the Partnership benefits from having an ethical approach at the heart of its strategy, with a set of corporate values and principles which govern and guide the business written in the John Lewis Constitution. These rules set out the company's responsibilities in terms of community investment, environmental protection, responsible sourcing and trading, and workplace dignity, diversity and equality.

The brands have worked hard to build an image of quality, service and ethical concerns which are used to justify its slightly higher price points. John Lewis itself only sources timber from sustainable sources. Waitrose has a commitment to only source fish from sustainable wild sources and responsibly farmed aquaculture. Ocado uses electric delivery vans. By making clear the responsible nature of the products they are offering and how that translates to benefits in quality for the consumer and the environment, these retailers have successfully built loyal relationships with their customers.

Sainsbury's

Like the John Lewis brands, Sainsbury's is an example of a retailer that has leveraged the fact that its traditional customer base is willing to pay slightly more in return for superior quality, to provide an extensive ethical offer. For example the retailer promotes itself as "the world's largest Fairtrade retailer" and only sells Fairtrade bananas. Again, it has put much focus on communicating to customers the 'why' of ethical products, for example launching its 'Different Values' initiative in September 2007, which sets out to promote its 'green' credentials through a new advertising campaign featuring celebrity chef Jamie Oliver.

Who do you think the high profilers are and why?



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Tesco

Tesco actually has a comprehensive CR plan in place, but its image as a massive, profiteering corporation, exploiting smaller businesses and stakeholders sees opinion of the retailer severely polarised. CR actions the retailer has introduced include carbon labelling across a large number of own-brand products, opening environmentally friendly stores with smaller carbon footprints and removing vast amounts of saturated fat and salt from their foods.

However, despite having an approach that is generally fairly proactive, there are a number of reasons why the retailer performs poorly in terms of consumer perceptions. Tesco engages in much less promotion of its ethical credentials than rivals such as Sainsbury's and Marks & Spencer, instead focusing heavily on value – which many consumers automatically assume can only be achieved by some form of exploitation at some stage in the production line. Moreover, the retailer frequently receives negative coverage for its aggressive competitiveness and is frequently blamed for driving smaller rivals, in particular, out of business.

Going forward, as the UK moves out of recession and value becomes slightly less prominent, we would expect Tesco to do more to publicise the extensive work it does on CR.



LOW PROFILE

COMPANIES WHO
ARE MISSING THE MARK
AS FAR AS CONSUMERS
ARE CONCERNED.

B&Q

B&Q is an example of how a comprehensive CR plan means little to consumers if they don't get to hear about it. The retailer has an extremely forward-looking CR strategy which has seen it introduce a range of innovative initiatives over the last few years. For example, in February 2009 the retailer opened an 'eco' store, complete with wind turbine, verdant roof and ground-source heat pump. It has rolled out eco shop-in-shops in a number of its stores, allowing customers to buy all of B&Q's environmentally friendly products in one place. It has trained eco advisers to offer in-store guidance. It now offers home audits to help homeowners reduce their environmental impact.

However, the lack of a marketing or advertising campaign to raise the profile of these strategies has left the majority of consumers unsure about the retailer's ethical credentials. Nevertheless, we would expect the retailer's image to improve over the coming years, as awareness of its progressive approach spreads.

Next

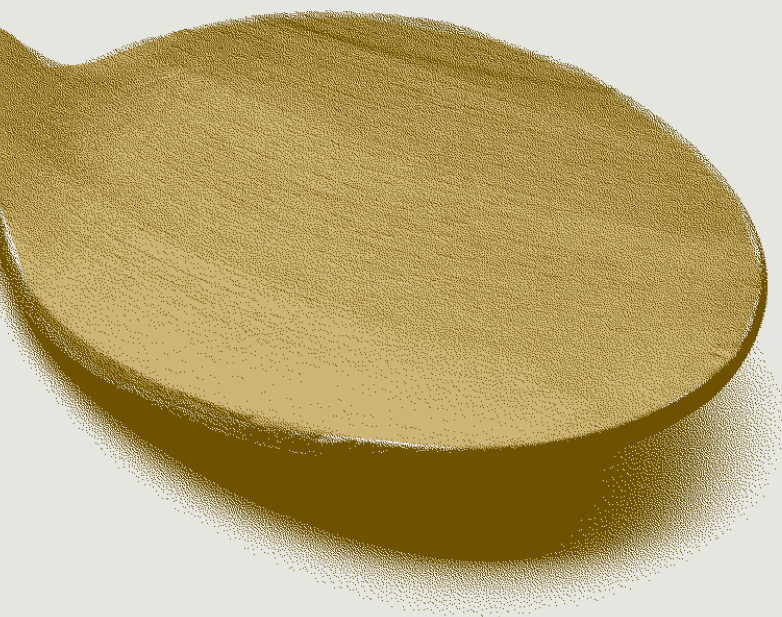
Although Next does have a CR strategy, it is relatively low key for such a large retailer and, like B&Q, there is little recognition from consumers of the work the retailer has done. The retailer's strategy consists of addressing the responsibilities it has to its suppliers, customers, employees, local communities and the environment.

However, there is very little promotion of this in stores, in the retailer's advertising or the wider media. Hence a considerable majority of consumers consider themselves uncertain over whether Next is a responsible retailer or not.

Primark

Primark has repeatedly suffered over the past few years with periodic, very public, allegations about its treatment of workers in developing countries. The most significant of these came in June 2008, when Primark was criticised in a BBC Panorama investigation, which revealed that some of its Indian suppliers were using child labour. The retailer has made improvements in the past year, increasing its audits of suppliers, and appointing an ethical trade director.

However, Primark is discovering that, once made, these types of allegations are difficult to leave behind. Moreover, its publicising of the improvements it has made and the new systems it has put in place have in no way equalled the amount of negative coverage it received. It will require a major concerted effort and a significant amount of investment if the retailer is to improve its reputation.



Who do you think the low profilers are and why?



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SEVEN STEPS TO MORE PROGRESSIVE CR COMMUNICATIONS

We believe that exceptional CR can help businesses address their risks, realise opportunities, build trust and enhance brands. So we have defined seven core principles for more progressive CR communications.

01

THIS IS ABOUT BUSINESS, NOT TREE HUGGING

Let's be straight: good CR is about making business-critical decisions – preparing for a low-carbon economy, cutting energy costs, not getting caught out by legislation, motivating staff, minimising reputational risk, building trust and getting ahead of competitors.

So CR strategy should be integrated with business strategy. From how you deal with risks to the way you grab opportunities, your CR communications should be central to what your company says about itself.

02

BE HONEST ABOUT RISK, AND BOLD IN RESPONSE

Business risks are business costs. You need to be as straightforward about what you say on non-financial issues – like carbon and water use – as you are about financial reporting.

Investors and NGOs don't want bland promises, irrelevant case studies or anodyne statements from the chief executive. They know what challenges you face, so don't pretend they're not there: they'll credit an honest account of the risks to your business. And if you're upfront about risks, you won't need to produce an identikit response: people are more likely to respect an individual strategy that is right for your business.

03

CLEAR TARGETS, CLEAR MEASUREMENT

This is a new world. You will not be judged by your past achievements nor by your good intentions, but by your firm commitments and the actions you take now. Your performance must be easily checked against clear and relevant targets that both match your aims and other people's expectations of your business.

And the days of only advertising success are now well and truly over: not only is it better to admit failure before someone else finds you out, an honest explanation is more likely to enhance your standing than an attempt to gloss over shortcomings.

04

DIFFERENT AUDIENCES, DIFFERENT CHANNELS

Your business has different audiences – they require different means of address. That doesn't mean saying different things to different people. It's just recognising that the same story can be told in different ways – using channels of communication that are best suited to the user. Trying to talk to CR analysts, commentators, customers, NGOs, employees and investors as if they are the same group of people will not work any more. If that means several different CR channels, so be it: it's better than wasting money on something no one reads.

05

MAKE IT INTERESTING, MAKE IT CREDIBLE

People don't want to hear a boring story – and you'll soon get bored telling it. That's why good communications should always aim to entertain in order to inform. The same principle must apply to your CR communications: your message must be clear, accurate and compelling.

Arrest, fascinate, excite: anything to get your audiences paying attention to what you want to say. Otherwise, why bother at all? Nonetheless, your communications must remain credible: by all means stretch the imagination, but not the truth.

06

HIGH COMMUNICATIONS EFFECT, LOW ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

It sounds obvious, but communicating CR should be done, well, responsibly. Take the good old CR report: even if it's printed on rainforest-free paper, with eco-friendly ink, it still has an unwarranted environmental impact. Sure – there's always going to be a place for the customer leaflet, an employee brochure or a PDF that can be printed out, but why the thousands of bound CR reports, read only by a handful of people?

Be bold: use print and the web intelligently to engage all your diverse audiences whilst minimising your environmental impact.

07

MORE COMPETITION, LESS COLLABORATION

Let's return to the beginning. Your CR strategy is part of your business strategy – use it to win. By all means join alliances and reporting initiatives, but copying others will not help you win market share.

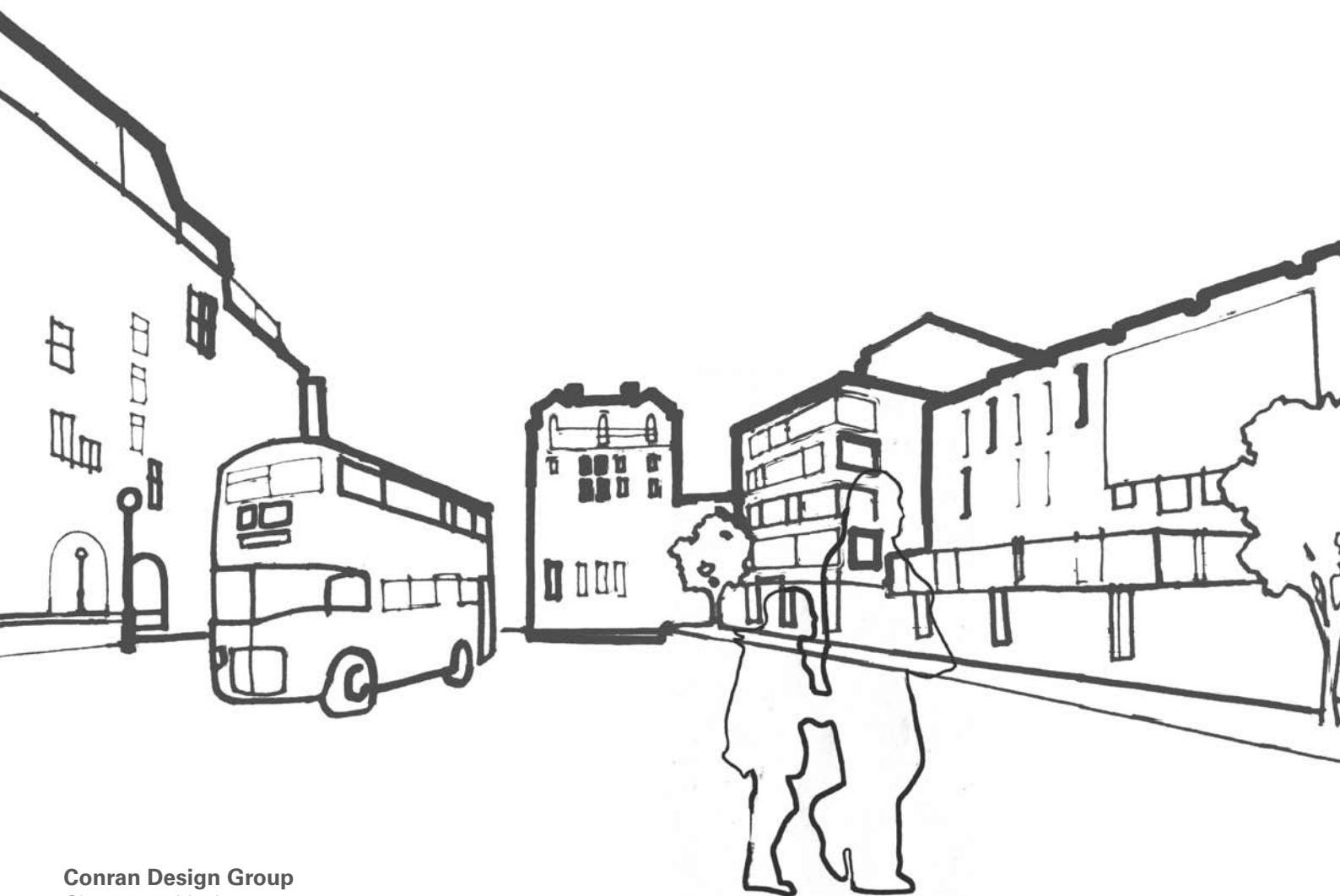
This is not a love-in with your competitors: you must use your CR communications to win customers and win over your critics.

GET IN TOUCH FOR AN APPRAISAL OF YOUR CURRENT CR COMMUNICATIONS AT RECREATECR.COM

WE HOPE YOU'VE FOUND THE THIRD ISSUE OF COUNTER CULTURE INTERESTING.

We look forward to your comments and feedback and if you have any specific points that you would like us to consider in the next issue, please do contact us at editor@cculture.co.uk.

Thanks again.



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