

Social Firms UK Conference 2008

Workshop 3 notes

Managing the tension between being a business and achieving a social mission

Facilitators: David Whyte (Haven Products), Richard Marsh (Cae Post), John Bennett (Pack-IT)

Chair: Sarah Crawley (ISE)

A group exercise was used to seek the views of delegates re. what they feel the issues are regarding 'the tension'. Issues raised were:

- Absenteeism
- Meeting deadlines
- Continuity of work
- Productivity levels
- Quality (product/service)
- Motivation
- Training (specialist)
- Isolation
- Barriers
- Resistance to change
- Productivity
- Taken seriously by business
- Ghetto
- Business
- Confidence of service users
- Medication
- Health and Safety
- Employee progression
- Part of a larger organisation

Possible solutions:

- focus on quality of service
- measurement of social impact (SROI/social audit)
- sell on quality NOT price
- seek awards
- seek quality marks
- use staff from the private sector (with good business skills to develop business)
- need to deliver to the letter – get it right – then link to the CSR agenda
- don't make a major issue out of it (i.e. who's employed)
- "fly the plane"
- get the right people
- managing the melting pot, the diverse backgrounds
- tensions in business create innovation and growth
- when the systems fall down they have to be fixed
- business viability is crucial
- absenteeism – could take a yellow and red card approach

High quality looks like:

- good, fit-for-purpose ICT to run the company
- deliver it professionally and on time

- say what you do and do what you say

Normalise disability:

- treat it as a place of will, treat people the same in all respects, make adjustments as required under DDA
- get the balance between able bodied and non-able bodied in the business
- treat everyone the same
- create a positive working environment