

# GETTING SENIOR LEADERS ON BOARD

Your guide to getting senior support for your programme

Starting your responsible business journey is an exciting time, but without the support and buy-in from your senior leaders, progress can stall and it can become a challenging process! This tip sheet will give you some ideas to help get your senior team on board from the beginning

## STARTING OUT ON A RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS JOURNEY

Having buy-in and support from your senior leaders is important in making sure your responsible business programme:

- is authentic and links to your business goals and overall purpose
- becomes embedded throughout your business rather than being a stand-alone activity
- is visibly supported by senior leaders - their time, endorsement and participation makes sure activities are impactful and driven across the business
- has key resources and a dedicated budget
- gains momentum and appears in internal and external comms
- is recognised as valuable to the business



Every business can be a force for good

## WHY CAN SENIOR LEADERS BE SCEPTICAL ABOUT RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS?

- it's new
- it costs money / it's all about giving
- it's just a box ticking exercise
- are our competitors doing it?
- we don't have the time or resources for it
- isn't just a fluffy thing that's nice to have?

These are some of the most common challenges you might face from senior leaders or cynics at work. But by demonstrating how developing a responsible business programme creates value for your business, you're more likely to get senior people interested and be able to justify the money and time you need to support your programme!

## OUR TOP TIPS FOR GETTING SENIOR SUPPORT

### UNDERSTAND THE CHALLENGES FACING YOUR BUSINESS

Do you have a high turnover of employees? Are you struggling to win tenders? Does your reputation and brand need to improve?

Speak to people at work to find out what could be the key issues that need to be addressed. For example, have your sales colleagues/bid team noticed that they're being asked about social value and responsible business commitments when pitching for new work, and missing out? Or would your HR colleagues like to be able to offer more affordable learning and development opportunities but haven't considered the benefits of skilled volunteering?

By understanding these challenges, you can hook your senior leader in by selling them a solution through a responsible business programme.



## **DO SOME DIGGING ON YOUR COMPETITORS**

Find out how your top 3 competitors are performing on responsible business activities (especially in the areas you're interested in focusing on). Look at things like offering volunteering days and taking steps to reduce carbon emissions. Are they promoting a positive health and wellbeing environment for their employees? Do they work in partnership with clients or professional networks to do this?

Collecting this data to show how you compare to others in your industry could persuade your senior team to take notice!

## **UNDERSTAND HOW IT CREATES VALUE FOR THE BUSINESS**

You can use our template business case presentation which lays out 5 key business reasons for doing responsible business, how society (and your customers!) are increasingly looking to businesses to address challenges to people, places and planet - and it gives evidence to back this up.

Focus on the 3 business reasons that resonate with your business the most, change the slides as relevant and use it to show how responsible business could add value to the company.

## **BACK UP WITH FIGURES**

Senior leaders tend to like figures and evidence. Include relevant facts and figures to back up your case - it adds credibility to your argument.

For example, can your bid team share the number of times they've been asked about responsible business as part of a tender?

## **EXCITE THEM**

Winning hearts as well as minds is vital. Make sure they know they'll miss out if they aren't doing this!

It's not just for big businesses - SMEs can often improve practices faster, creating positive change and doing well by doing good. There are global calls to action from the UN which ask business leaders to step up and consider how their actions are contributing to global issues such as climate change.

Remember that your senior leaders are motivated by a wide range of things and some will be enthused by the philanthropic approach and doing the right thing - work out what resonates most with your leaders and inspire them to get behind your plan.



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## HAVE A CLEAR CALL TO ACTION

Before you pitch to your senior leaders think about what it is you want them to say yes to - do you have a board member in mind you'd like to be a champion for your programme? Are you looking for them to promote your activities internally and externally? Or do you want them to help bring in people from other departments to take part in your responsible business programme?

Our responsible business journey planner sets out the first steps you could take. You might want to set up a responsible business committee, consult employees and map existing activities.

## TRIAL IDEAS FIRST

Don't be disheartened if you still face opposition - take on board any feedback you've been given and see your responsible business journey as lots of small steps.

Take inspiration from tech companies who work in iterative processes and trial ideas fast rather than trying to perfect an entire programme before launching.

## SHOW THAT YOU'VE CONSIDERED THE RISKS & REWARDS

It's important that senior leaders know that you're aware of what the challenges could be and that you'll create policies and procedures when they're needed.

This could be around insurance, training, measuring inputs to impact or engaging with stakeholders - show you've thought each step through to inspire confidence.

## FINALLY, KEEP THEM ENGAGED

Once you've got your senior leaders on board, keep them updated with your progress. Maybe your responsible business committee could share a quarterly update?

Are there particular ways you want to involve the most supportive leaders? You could arrange for them to attend a talk on mental health at work, or you could ask them to launch your employee volunteering programme by taking part themselves? Having ongoing visible support from senior leaders can really add energy to getting other people involved.



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