



SOCIAL JUSTICE FOR SMES





What is social justice?

Social justice means the fair distribution of, and access to, opportunities, privileges, and wealth within a society.

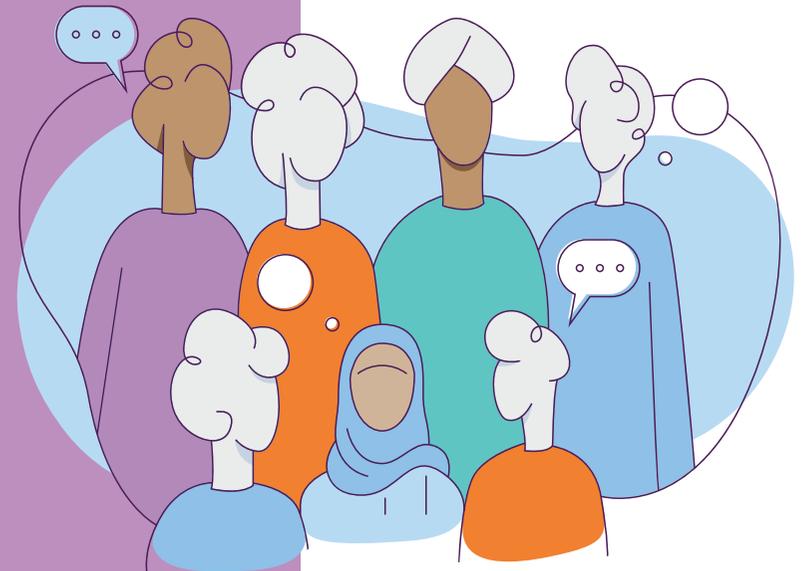
Over recent years it's become clear that businesses, including SMEs, have an important role to play in working towards social justice. Businesses are beginning to shift from 'Corporate Social Responsibility' to 'Corporate Social Justice' which centres the initiative or programme around groups disadvantaged by society. Corporate Social Justice integrates social justice into all aspects of the company functions.

Social justice isn't a new concept. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Industrial Revolution forced society to turn its attention to inequalities such as women's rights, the rights of workers and the exploitation of children. In the mid-20th century, racial discrimination and civil rights movements fought for a just society that valued fairness and equity for all. These movements have influenced how social justice is viewed today.

Today's concept of social justice has a strong emphasis on human rights and seeks to improve the lives of underserved and marginalised groups that have historically faced discrimination in society. Many of these groups have been discriminated against based on factors such as sex, age, wealth, ethnicity, heritage, social status, religion, disability and others. Women's rights, poverty,

racism, and climate change are all examples of global social justice issues.

International movements such as 'Black Lives Matter' and '#MeToo' have forced society to consider how we as individuals support or dismantle the status quo on racism and women's rights. Rather than seeing these injustices as a one off, people are highlighting how history and systemic structures have led to how our society functions today.





Why do businesses play a role in social justice?

We believe that businesses can no longer profit from the world without engaging with these issues. Customers, employees and governments also expect more from today's businesses. We know that social, environmental and economic issues are all interconnected. When social justice is deeply embedded with every aspect of the way a company functions, more value is gained for people, planet and profit.

But how does this apply to you as a business?

The systems that businesses create and the decisions they make impact how and where wealth, opportunities and resources are distributed. Where your business is located will impact the local community. Who you employ, and how you treat your employees impacts their quality of life. How you charge clients or who you choose as suppliers impacts fair economic prosperity.

And why should it matter to SMEs?

In 2022, SMEs accounted for 99.9% of the UK's business population. Collectively, the power of SMEs is highly influential and impactful.

We all want a thriving, healthy future for ourselves and generations

to come, so it's vital that we build fair systems into our businesses.

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Things for SMEs to consider

Often businesses have been reluctant to work on social justice issues, out of fear of doing or saying the wrong thing. We encourage you to think beyond that and see this as a moment for you to make a positive change within society and planet. Here are some things you could think about to get started:

1. Sign up to the Social Justice Charter

The [Social Justice Charter](#) was set up to support organisations to improve social justice in the world through engaging stakeholders, understanding their priorities and barriers, and creating fair systems that meet their needs. By becoming a signatory, you'll get support on what meaningful actions you can take. You'll also be expected to be active in championing both for fairness but also against systemic unfairness.

Organisations who sign up are therefore required to be anti-racist and anti-patriarchy. It's not sufficient to presume a passive "not-racist" or "not-sexist" position. The Charter helps organisations to become more active rather than passive, and share knowledge to continually improve.

2. Provide safe spaces to discuss social issues at work

Take a look at your organisation and see whether there's a business wide group or a physical space for employees to discuss and raise their concerns and issues. Examples are Listening network, Multi-Faith network, Women's Inclusive Network and Ethnicity and Race network. Creating a culture of honesty, where people can discuss openly and safely is something that all businesses should strive for, as it means you'll better understand your employees and how your business can improve.

3. Think about the actions you can take to support a community

Look at your business and identify what levers you have to support underserved groups. Could you invest in the education of underserved groups of society by offering work experience, shadowing or talking to schools in certain areas? Could you lend space to a community action group? Could you give funding to an organisation that supports underserved groups? Could you purchase products and services from companies with a social mission?

4. Educate yourself about social justice issues

There are many social justice issues to better understand. One of the ways to support social justice is to research what's being done about them. The sustainable development goals and the targets underpinning them are all examples of social justice. Whether it's access to healthcare, global hunger, violence against women and girls, repression of certain ethnic groups, you'll be a better ally and advocate of the issue if you learn more about the history.



To consider: It's important that businesses take real action before making a public stance on a social justice issue. Consumers want brands to take a stand and help in healing a divisive society. But to be an authentic and trustworthy business, it's important that you do the work first, can articulate why you're supporting an issue, and can talk about what you're doing about it.

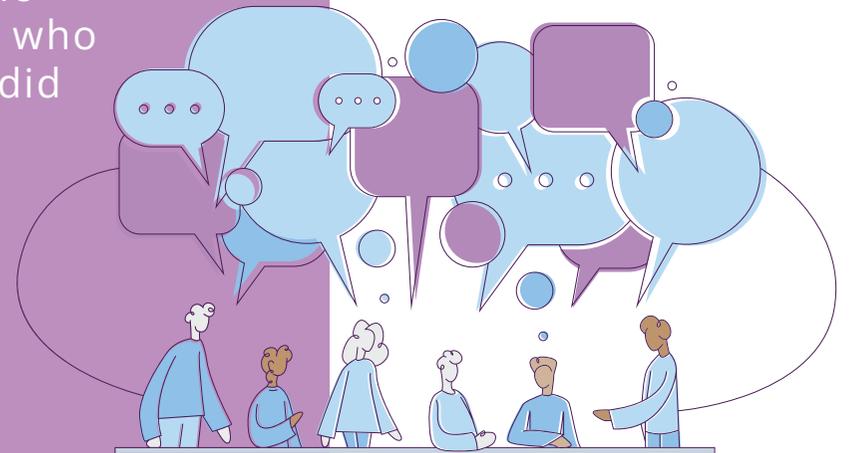


Case study: Sanderson Design Group

Sanderson Design Group is an interior design company with around 200 employees. By working with JustOne.UK it became clear through stakeholder engagement on their sustainability strategy that there were diversity and inclusion issues that were affecting their people and sector.

They developed the design for diversity pledge, committing to increase opportunities for ethnically diverse candidates and current employees, and making sure that their channels include people of every colour, gender and sexuality.

The business committed to becoming more equitable. Since their work with JustOne.UK, they've improved their demographic diversity by actively seeking out people to join Sanderson who may not have normally had a chance to work there. They did that through design competitions and innovative apprenticeship schemes. Importantly, they also showcase the success of people from all backgrounds, by committing to having diverse speakers and leaders at every event.





Case study: So Just Shop

Online platform [So Just Shop](#) enables female artisans from vulnerable communities to access international markets, and teaches them 'male-dominated' skills, such as silver-smithing and gold-smithing. The women are paid a living wage, have just working conditions and hours and use ethical and sustainable materials to promote recycled and upcycled products.

By focusing on women in vulnerable countries, it improves the financial independence of these women who have often been marginalised by society.

So Just Shop also educates their consumers on the importance of embedded 'just' practices throughout the business, whilst making sustainable products accessible and wearable.

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This resource was developed in partnership with the [Social Justice Charter](#)