



CommunityMark Survey – The Midcounties Co-operative

It is a requirement of those companies who attain the CommunityMark that they disclose part of their CommunityMark submission. This is important for two reasons:

- It gives extra confidence in the rigour of the company's submission
- It communicates to stakeholders exactly why a company has achieved the CommunityMark

Please see below for key information relating to the company's projects and employee engagement as at December 2008. The commitments relate to the three year CommunityMark period 2009 – 2012.

Key projects

<i>Project name</i>	<i>Inputs to this project.</i>	<i>The sustainable difference you are trying to make in the community.</i>	<i>What the project has contributed to the community so far.</i>	<i>The difference the project has made to the business.</i>
Community Village Shops and Local Harvest	From 2000 - 2007 we gave £425K cash for equipment costs and grants. In the same period a total of 3,536 volunteer hours were given providing expert retail advice. We also give preferential terms for village stores business accounts. We also support through	To support rural villages in having their own local shop. To increase awareness of the co-operative business model	Of the current 150 stores in the UK, over 20% have received support from Midcounties or the business Examples of how our Local Harvest programme and support for Community Village Shops are attached as evidence.	The financial benefits of community stores account for £75,000 in sales, and the success Midcounties enjoys in rural retailing is underpinned by the trust that this brings. This project also won a Big Tick for our business and was shortlisted as a national example of excellence.

	management time.			
Supporting Education	£36,694 Cash for particular elements of project work in 97 individual schools through our small grants scheme, production of resources, 3075 hours of colleague time and management costs	Engagement with schools throughout our core trading area.	During 2007 our colleagues supported a total of 95 schools giving 3075 hours in total. Nearly 500 hours were given to reading volunteering, 285 to mentoring, 1094 to challenge events such as playground transformations.	Through their work in schools our colleagues increase their awareness of education, understanding more clearly the issues facing schools, teachers and children on a daily basis. Our work in schools helps to increase our reputation with parents and teachers identifying our Society as a business that cares. Our work with Berrybrook Primary School won a Big Tick for our business. Total volunteer hours for work in schools were 3075 equating to £44,557 helping us to achieve our commitment to supporting education.
Healthy Hound	£30,000 for production of tool kit and educational resources, advertorials, colleague time and management costs.	To promote the scheme to primary schools across our trading area. To engage colleague volunteers from our pharmacy business	547 colleague hours were given in delivery engaging with 16 primary schools.	Promotion was achieved by the Pharmacy Colleague co-ordinating this programme. 13 media cuttings £28,800 in media value. Our community activity is very much linked back into our stores through promotional material and colleagues are often recognised by children visiting the branch with a parent. Figures taken from our Dudley Road Pharmacy (the nearest pharmacy site to our trial school) showed strong 2007 trading results. •The branch is 15.06% above budget on over the counter sales •It is also 16.69% above budget on prescriptions •Absenteeism within our business stands at 3.55%. For Pharmacy colleagues that figure drops to 2.84% •Staff turnover in our business is 35.09%. In our Pharmacy group this figure falls to 15.16% •Out of 340 Pharmacy colleagues

				96 have participated in volunteering. Which is approximately one third of colleagues
Charity of the Year	£5,000 for production of fundraising materials, colleague time and management costs	To raise a sum of £100,000	At the end of this reporting period we had raised £53,000 at the end of the charity year we had raised £150,000	2554 volunteer hours were given to support fundraising for this project engaging colleagues who had previously had no experience of volunteering. Involved our colleagues in decision making as they selected the charity to benefit. We gained excellent PR coverage throughout our partnership which raises our profile as a community retailer and enhances the reputation of our business.
Outward Bound	£10,000 bursary per annum - our Patrons membership runs over 5 years. In 2008 this amount increased to £15,000 per annum	In 2007 our target was to work with two partners in disadvantaged areas of our trading area. We engaged with 2 schools in the West Midlands and with Walsall EBP and a local regeneration project - New Deal. Our schools project buddies up pupils from Fallings Park Primary School with older students from the feeder school, Moreton Secondary with the aim of easing the transition process to secondary education and counts as one partner as they work collaboratively. In the New Deal area we help	To our two partners the benefits have been immense, increased independence and confidence and a better relationship with their teachers. A full report is provided for clarification and evidence.	Benefit comes through increased reputation through the delivery of our social goals. It helps us in our work with disadvantaged communities to raise skills and levels of aspiration. Some of the children had never been away from home before and our intervention made this possible. In the nearest supermarket to Moreton School, Wolverhampton school sales rose by 2.93%

		<p>support their citizenship agenda with young people taking a more active part in their community. Both partners managed to raise match funding for our bursary Walsall EBP £4,300 and Moreton/Fallings Park £6,040 Our target for 2008 is to increase the number of partners to three.</p>		
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How does the company enable employees to contribute to the community?

A: Systems and policies

We actively encourage all colleagues to participate in community volunteering. Our policy is to permit each colleague up to three days paid time each year to do this. Colleagues can choose to take part in company led activity or, by application, can take paid leave to participate in their own community programmes.

We inform colleagues about community volunteering during induction. All colleagues attend a day long induction on their first day. The induction not only informs colleagues about their working procedures but about our difference as a co-operative business and why community is embedded into our culture.

Information on volunteering is also contained in the colleague handbook and on our intranet site. Once a colleague has undertaken any volunteer activity they complete a form telling us what they did and this information is entered onto our database. We strongly believe that volunteering enriches not only the community organisation of benefit but also the individual volunteer and community activity is included in colleague performance reviews.

The Community Team sources volunteer opportunity across the whole of our trading area. We strive to make activity local and

relevant to each site encouraging colleagues also to identify their own areas of interest where possible.

We have seen considerable success in the number of colleagues volunteering and we attribute this success to the embedding of our CSR strategy into the business. At the end of 2007 volunteer hours totalled 3,213 in 2008 these hours rose significantly to 14,847. Our mantra is constant improvement and whilst our community strategy has progressed enormously we know that we will show improvement in 2009. We are committed to supporting colleagues in enabling us to make this difference.

B: Ways that employees are engaged

We engage colleagues to support community activity through a variety of means. We focus on making opportunities relevant and local meaning colleagues are making a difference to the community where they live and for causes that they identify with.

When we design new resources such as our Healthy Hound tool kit we involve our Pharmacy Group throughout. We understand that as they are doing the delivery that they should feel comfortable about all elements of the programme. We also feel that involvement enthuses colleagues and gives them ownership.

At Midcounties we have a very successful Colleague Council who provide a channel of communication directly from colleagues to our Executive, increasing communication directly to and from all workplaces. We utilise this Council for community purposes. An example of this is in selecting our Charity of the Year. We also have community representation within each of our trading groups through our Community Champions structure.

Volunteers are recognised and rewarded annually through a Community Colleague of the Year award. This is presented to the colleague that has participated in the most number of activities and has shown real passion for involvement. Awards are made by each of our trading groups.

Our approach to communicating projects to colleagues is through our Community Champions network, through our intranet and via the emailing of opportunities to sites. Colleagues can also contact us to identify and enlist support for projects that they have a particular desire to support.

Key commitments for the next three years

Commitment	Measurement
In 2009 we will launch a new environmental education resource for Primary School Children. The project will be known as 'Peter Penguin'	Measurement of financial inputs We have set a target of delivering this programme to a minimum of 20 schools each year. We will conduct a baseline awareness measure before and after the delivery of each lesson to determine learning outcomes and this information will be shared with our stakeholders.
Co-operative Trust Schools	In 2008 we partnered one Co-operative Trust School, in 2009 we will partner a further school and in 2010 we will increase this number to three. Our progress against this target will be reported to our Stakeholders.
Community Volunteering Database	In 2009 we will implement new systems to improve the way in which we record and report on our Colleague Volunteer Programme. This will allow us to target colleague who have not participated. Our target in 2009 is to increase the percentage of colleague volunteers from 23.5% to 26.5% progress will be reported to our Stakeholders.
Improve our Internal Communications	In 2009 we will improve our internal communications. Community Colleagues with functional responsibility will present and update the business on the impact of our community strategy at a minimum of 10 cross trading group meetings. Progress against this target will be reported to our stakeholders.