

# The Festival Organiser's Guide To Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Part 1 of 3

DETAILING WHAT CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IS, HOW FESTIVALS ARE USING IT AND HOW YOU CAN IMPLEMENT A SUCCESSFUL CSR STRATEGY WHEN PLANNING A FESTIVAL

By Dan Rose

TOP TIPS FOR CREATING A SUCCESSFUL CSR STRATEGY

WHAT IS CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY?

THE BENEFITS OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND YOUR BOTTOM LINE

HOW FESTIVALS AND SHOWS USE CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

**Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is becoming an increasingly important factor for anyone organising a festival or show, particularly in terms of environmental protection and community/ stakeholder engagement.**

**With rising concerns regarding the negative effects of various festivals and shows on the environment potentially casting the industry in a bad light, we are seeing a rise in the number of ‘green festivals’, with some of the biggest festivals taking a strong stance on corporate social responsibility.**

Read on to discover exactly what corporate social responsibility is, how it is already being used within the festival industry, how it can be a benefit to your festival or show and how to create a successful CSR strategy going forward.



### **WHAT IS CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY?**

Corporate social responsibility is an initiative or strategy a company adopts in order to assess and positively improve their effect on the environment and social wellbeing of the wider community.

Companies or corporations adopting CSR strategies are seen to be making a conscious effort to go above and beyond what is required of them by regulators and environmental protection groups in order to take responsibility for their impact on the environment and community.

### **The ISO 26000 Csr Guidelines**

The International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) released corporate social responsibility guidelines, named ‘ISO 26000’, in 2010 which offers information on socially responsible behaviour and how it can be implemented within a company.

The ISO 26000 guidance on social responsibility is a voluntary guidance standard, meaning that there are no specific requirements detailed as there is no certification offered to those using the ISO 26000 standards.

It should be used to improve a company’s social responsibility activities voluntarily and ISO suggests that those using these guidelines should promote the fact they have used the ISO 26000 guidelines to help validate their CSR activities.

CSR activities usually do not have a direct financial benefit, however they do promote the company’s positive social and environmental standing, which in turn can encourage a loyal following and subsequent financial gain.

Common issues companies confront with CSR activities include:

- Protecting the environment
- Encouraging fair operating practices
- Community involvement

Your festival may also want to consider contributing to local projects, such as supporting youth activities or local community clubs. These types of activities spread positive sentiment throughout the community and give tangible and visible evidence of the positive effect your festival has within the area.

These three main areas can be categorised into 'Community', 'Environment' and 'Economy' CSR. Which activities a company chooses to focus could be due to the cause fitting their brand or values, or simply personal preference.

### CSR AND THE COMMUNITY

Community engagement and development within the community is a particularly important area of corporate social responsibility in the festival industry. Festivals & shows draw masses of people to certain areas, such as the 135,000 people who experience Glastonbury each year.

This can cause a real disruption to the local community, with noise pollution, littering and gridlocked roads being just a handful of issues the local community have to face each summer. Festivals need to ensure they are keeping local residents happy and giving something back in return for their tolerance.

Glastonbury Festival works hard with the local community, particularly with the residents of Pilton, Pylle and Sticklynch who are offered free tickets to the festival as a sign of goodwill for their tolerance to the disruptions caused.

### Caring For the Local Community

'Helping the community' is quite a broad term, and your festival needs to decide which area of the community it should focus on. Following in Glastonbury, Reading Festival and Radio 1's Big Weekend's footsteps, it is a great idea to offer free tickets to your festival for anyone living within a certain distance of your festival that may be negatively affected by it.

However, it's not just about the local community, but the wider community too, therefore charitable donations are often used in order to show support to specific causes.

It's also important to care for your festival's internal community: employees, volunteers and helpers. Corporate social responsibility from an internal standpoint means considering the human rights of those under your employment and ensuring they have a safe and fair working environment. It's about resolving grievances, being culturally sensitive and avoiding discrimination whilst providing a good standard of living for everyone involved.

### CSR AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The environmental impact of festivals is an issue all organisers need to be aware of. Festivals in the UK are collectively responsible for 14 kilo-tonnes of

carbon dioxide each year, therefore the responsibility to reduce this figure and give back to the environment lies with the festival organisers themselves.

### Carbon Emissions From Festivals

However, with 70% of those carbon emissions coming from the attendees travelling to each festival, the success of any environmental campaign relies on the involvement of the attendees as well as the festival organisers.

Camp Bestival and many other environmentally conscious and eco-friendly festivals are taking steps to reduce their carbon footprint by signing up with 'Energy Revolution', a registered festival charity investing in clean energy and tackling climate change. Camp Bestival is working with Energy Revolution and their partner, The Converging World charity, in order to fund a 1-megawatt wind turbine in the Tamil Nadu area of India within the next 5 years. They also work with 'Big Green Coach' to try and reduce emissions from attendees travelling to the festival by lowering the number of vehicles being used, while Big Green Coach commit to protecting 5 square feet of Amazonian rainforest for every customer they transport to Camp Bestival.

### Littering At Festivals

Carbon dioxide is not the only environmental threat caused by festivals; the amount of litter left behind by festival attendees can be substantial. It is the responsibility of festival organisers to encourage attendees to clean up after themselves and to deal with any waste issues after the festival is over.

One of the main issues is attendees leaving their tents behind, for example, around 20 tonnes worth of tents are left behind at Reading Festival each year. In 2015, Reading Festival introduced a new tent cleaning and packing service

Any festival's corporate social responsibility activities should concentrate on reducing their negative impact on the environment in order to protect the planet and show a real commitment to environmental recovery.

in an attempt to encourage attendees to take their tent with them and reduce the level of waste. This shows that Reading Festival are trying to tackle a big issue and are facing up to their environmental responsibility.

### Environmental Solutions For Festivals

There are many options available to festivals looking to include environmental protection within their corporate social responsibility strategy. With emissions from attendees travelling to the festival having the most detrimental impact on the environment, implementing and encouraging greener ways to travel to and from the festival is a great place to start.

Strategies include signing up with Big Green Coach, encouraging car sharing networks and rewarding attendees who display environmentally friendly behaviours. Any festival can also sign up with Energy Revolution and commit to raising money for the charity through ticket sales and fundraisers, or follow Camp Bestival's lead and commit to a specific environmental project.

### CSR AND THE ECONOMY

Depending on the size of the festival, the turnover can be breathtakingly high, however the cost of putting on the festival decreases profits substantially. For example, Glastonbury Festival 2015 reportedly sold £35 million worth of tickets, however only saw a profit of £764,000 after all costs were covered. This is in part due to the fact that Glastonbury takes its economic responsibilities very seriously, ensuring fair payment across all areas of the festival and giving back to the community financially.

### Annual Festival Spend In the UK

Festivals are great for the wider economy, with music tourism reportedly generating £3.1 billion worth of direct and indirect spend in the UK in 2014 by 9.5 million music tourists. The Association of Independent Festivals (AIF) reports that AIF member festivals themselves added £1 billion to the UK economy between 2010 and 2014. While these figures prove festivals to be healthy for the economy, there are several economic factors which festivals may still want to consider within their corporate social responsibility activities. As previously mentioned, the costs involved with organising a festival can be staggeringly high, therefore the festival organiser has a responsibility to ensure the festival

As part of their corporate social responsibility strategy, organisers should ensure that local businesses are benefitting from the festival and that profits are being used to support charities. It can be of huge benefit to the festival to partner up with a charity, promoting their activity through specific campaigns.

is profitable enough to support its employees financially and provide them with a good standard of living. The festival organiser is also accountable for ensuring all costs are covered appropriately, such as paying for the rental of venue/land, any equipment used and entertainment hired.

### Supporting Festival Performers

The Guardian recently reported on literary festivals refusing to pay authors appearing at their events and expecting them to appear for free. This has caused quite a stir in the industry, with Paul Pullman resigning as patron of the Oxford literary festival and a negative light being shone upon certain festivals which have refused to pay.

### Supporting the Local Community

Festivals also have a responsibility to support the economy of the wider community. According to AIF, over £80 million was spent in local UK businesses between 2010 and 2014 due to there being a festival in the area. This is a fantastic way for festivals to prove their economic worth and showcase their corporate social responsibility accomplishments.

Glastonbury is a notable example of this, with festival organiser Michael Eavis donating the vast majority of the festivals profits to different charities and only taking home a modest salary himself. While this may not be realistic for all festivals, this a great example of economic CSR in action.

In Part 2 of this article, you will learn about how festivals and shows use corporate social responsibility to their advantage including a case study on how Glastonbury, a leading UK festival implements CSR.

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