

Communications on Progress United Nations Global Compact

WHERE WERE WE?

Article 13 was formed in September 1998 by co-founding Directors, Neela Bettridge and Jane Fiona Cumming and latterly Dr Paul Toyne. Article 13's name was derived from the 13th article of the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio. The 13th article states,

“(a) Promote and encourage understanding of the importance of, and the measures required for, the conservation of biological diversity, as well as its propagation through media, and the inclusion of these topics in educational programmes; and

(b) Cooperate, as appropriate, with other States and international organizations in developing educational and public awareness programmes, with respect to conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity.” (<http://www.biodiv.org/convention/articles.asp?lg=0&a=cbd-13>)

Article 13 works with companies, governments and academic institutions to meet the growing pressure for better performance, whether it be social, environmental, ethical or economic. This pressure is based increasingly upon cold, commercial reality. Good governance is no longer optional. Article 13 helps organisations in these sectors identify and implement best social, ethical and environmental practice through business responsibility and governance programmes. Benefits from our involvement include bottom line benefit and greater risk management capability; transparency and shared understanding; and a culture of innovation.

Due to the scale of our operations and the industry that we are in, it was a natural progression to move forward and become a signatory to the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC).

In the past, Article 13 has covered all of the issues pertained to the 9 principles through its work with its clients. While being a strong advocate for these issues, Article 13 lacked the concrete policies in place to support the issues covered by the 9 principles. Information was processed through on an ad-hoc basis according to the client's needs and wants rather than a clear defined set of standards that we worked to and endorsed.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

A team brainstorm was conducted to identify current reality under the 9 principles both internally (within Article 13) and externally (with our clients and stakeholders). The brainstorm revealed some interesting findings. The top line was that while our advocacy in the areas of labour rights, human rights and the environment with our clients was very strong, this was not reflected in our actions internally. It became clear that we were not *'Practicing what we preached'*.

Upon a clear understanding of the UNGC principles we set aside a research team to conduct an internal audit on our current practices. The internal audit covered our entire supply chain from electricity consumption to pencils consumed in the office and internal policies and our

relationship to society on labour rights, human rights and environmental issues. Upon completion of the audit, recommendations were drawn on ways that Article 13 could ensure that we adhered to the UNGC principles.

The Internal Audit – Action Plan

(Please note that our changes as noted below refer and relate to ALL 9 principles)

The following actions have been developed from our internal audit and the changes will be implemented in the organisation over the next 12 months (in most cases they have been implemented already, see **bold**):

- Policies – Our internal policies have been revised to focus on the UNGC 9 principles. **We have developed a new Sustainable Development Policy along with changes to our Equal Opportunities policies.**
- Paper – **Our paper suppliers have been changed to ensure that only sustainable sourced paper and 100% recycled paper is used in the office.**
- Stationery - **Now ordered from a select group of suppliers chosen on their labour rights, human rights and environmental policies. When given the option, products are purchased which use recycled materials and are made in the United Kingdom to reduce air miles travelled.**
- Food – **Where possible only fair-trade goods such as coffee, tea, biscuits and fruit are purchased for the office. To encourage and support local business we now receive our milk from the local dairy.** We are currently investigating a new water cooler that is more environmentally friendly and does not release HFC's.
- Recycling – **All our paper products are recycled. We now recycle all tin, plastic and glass bi-products through the Borough of Lambeth.**
- Energy – Currently our energy is controlled by our landlord. We aim to hold a consultation with the landlords and tenants to discuss the possibility of converting to 'Green Energy'.
- Banking and Finance – **An investigation into the conduct of our current banking institutions has been conducted to ensure that their dealings are in compliance with the UNGC principles.**
- Consumption and tracking systems – **We have developed tracking systems to monitor our energy consumption, air and vehicle travel. Through this tracking system we can determine the cost of our Carbon Dioxide to the environment and contribute this cost to a Carbon Dioxide offset programme. We are also actively promoting public transport use where possible.**
- Incentive Systems – At our 2 monthly status meetings each member of staff is to bring a brief anecdote on how they have contributed to improve our work towards the UNGC principles. The group is rewarded with social activities upon continued work towards the 9 principles.
- Charities/Societal Contributions – **We currently collect postage stamps and donate them to a local charity and also work in conjunction with Future Forest on their tree planting programme.**
- Advocacy – Designs are currently being drawn up for a new website section which will incorporate a series of pages dedicated to the work that we are doing in support of the UNGC. To ensure our support for the UNGC is publicised through our communication channels we are amending our email signatures to incorporate this. In December we shall be sending out our e-Christmas Cards mentioning our ongoing support to the cause of the UNGC 9 principles. We also plan to encourage tenants of our shared office building, local community organisations and our clients to adopt the UNGC principles and even become signatories in the future.

WHERE WE HOPE TO BE?

Through our change internally we aim to be more focused in becoming a true advocate for the UNGC and its 9 principles. Upon implementation of all of our actions we strive to continually look for ways to improve our contribution to the UNGC and its members becoming a strong role model for SME's alike.

Our aim is to become our own best practice case study where we can share our experiences with other organisations to prove that change on a small scale really can help. We will also continue to advocate and push for the implementation of practices that promote the UNGC principles through our work with our clients.