Echo Research Communication of Progress 2008-9

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Country	UK	Sector	Market research

Brief description of nature of business
Echo Research is a leading independent specialist provider of reputation analysis, established in 1989, celebrating its 20th anniversary this year. The company has offices in London, Paris, New York, and Delaware (US). With 200 research managers and analysts, the Echo group supports many FTSE100 and Fortune 500 companies, as well as public sector clients (UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office), regulatory bodies (UK Health and Safety Executive) and non-governmental organisations (WWF).

Echo's practice sectors span financial and professional services, higher education, healthcare, consumer, telecommunications, media and technology, utilities, energy, public sector and NGOs.

Providing impartial and in-depth stakeholder studies and media analysis including new social media, Echo Research is on the *UK Register of Expert Witnesses*. The company delivers communications intelligence to enable its clients to measure and improve their communications effectiveness and relationships, and to identify emerging issues and risks to reputation. Its media content reports have been used by the Press Complaints Commission in Britain; its stakeholder and focus group research has been tabled to Government Ministers to drive regulatory change; and its senior management facilitation programmes and internal surveys have supported change management and brand development.

Evidence of the company's sector-leading excellence is that, compared with other research and evaluation organisations, Echo's clients have gained a record number of the industry's Association of Measurement and Evaluation of Communications (AMEC) awards for measurement and integrated research, including a number of top Platinum Awards.
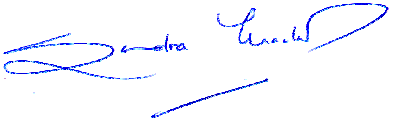
ISO-accredited for its quality procedures, and an adherent to the United Nations Global Compact for business, Echo has increasingly focused on the challenges of corporate social responsibility and corporate governance, with an emphasis on enabling its client base to understand the views and impact of their stakeholders in this area. |

Statement of support for UNGC by Chief Executive

In 2008-9, Echo maintained its full commitment to the UN Global Compact.

   A proactive demonstration of our commitment was the *pro bono* research we undertook into the content and targeting of 100 UNGC Communications of Progress (COPs), presenting our findings to the UK Network and sharing them with UNGC's New York office, with the overall aim of supporting COP best practice and capacity building. (Link to PPT)

   As the global recession has taken hold, we have maintained in its entirety our engagement with UNGC and driven forward our own corporate responsibility activities. We propose to continue doing so.

Signature		Position	**Chief Executive**

Principle 1	Business should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights

Our commitment / policy & management system

We support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights, including the and the right to safe and healthy working conditions, and the right to freedom of speech without distinction of gender, creed, national origin or other differentiator,

Actions implemented in the last year and outcomes

- We reviewed our earlier commitment not to work for tobacco companies based on the negative health effects of smoking, and took the view that, if our engagement with them was to supply research into their CSR, and was therefore to lead to a higher standard of social responsibility on their part, the net effect would be positive. Accordingly we decided we would as a principle work with these companies on the CSR side.
- However, Echo is itself a no-smoking company. We again conducted a Country Walk lasting half a working day as a health booster for all staff.

Principle 2	Business should ensure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses

Our commitment / policy & management system

- We aim to ensure that we are not complicit in human rights abuses

Actions implemented in the last year and outcomes

- Our research programme as independent Expert Witnesses on the balance of pre-election news coverage in Armenia, an ex-dictatorship, was recognised with a Gold Award from the Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communications. This was a strong endorsement of our engagement with this pro-democracy project.

Principle 3	Business should uphold the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining

Our commitment or policy & management system

- Conformity with the UK's Information and Consultation of Employees Regulations 2004.

Actions implemented in the last year and outcomes

- Regular meetings were held to inform /consult with employees: 2-way monthly debriefs with all staff, monthly Operations Team meetings, and twice-monthly Sector / Practice meetings.

Principle 4	Business should support the elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour

Our commitment or policy & management system

- We support the elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour.

Actions implemented in the last year and outcomes

- We have received confirmation of adherence to this Principle by our (in 2008-9 major) non-UK suppliers Feedback Market Research Ltd, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates.

Principle 5	Business should support the effective abolition of child labour

Our commitment or policy & management system

- Our business is based on 'intellectual capital' whereby in practice 90% of Echo staff are in possession of a University degree or tertiary education equivalent. This alone minimises the likelihood of child labour within Echo. All our non-First World partners are essentially providers of intellectual property which *de facto* debars the employment of children.
- We have received confirmation of adherence to this Principle by our (in 2008-9 major) non-UK suppliers Feedback Market Research Ltd, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates.
- We believe strongly in supporting organisations that can extend beneficial social influence beyond what we could achieve on our own (the "proxy" approach) and we apply the approach to this Principle 5 (see below)

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Actions implemented in the last year and outcomes

- *Indirect / proxy action:* As a company Echo provided financial support for the international charity WaterAid, which indirectly reduced the requirement on children in, for example, Africa to find and carry water over long distances to their villages (effectively unpaid child labour), and instead to be with their families, to study or play. **Link:** http://www.wateraid.org.uk/. For the third year, the sum donated by Echo enabled the provision (or equivalent) of a village hand-dug well with hand pump to serve 250 people on a sustainable basis with an associated hygiene education package.

Principle 6	Business should support the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation

Our commitment or policy & management system

- Applications for employment are welcomed from all sections of the community. Policy is to ensure that no job application or employee should receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of gender, race, caring responsibilities, marital status, sexuality, disability or age.

Measurable results or outcomes

Our drive to minimise discrimination and enhance its opposite were divided into two types: 1. direct action by Echo, and 2. indirect / proxy action through a third party in order to extend our positive 'footprint', as follows:

- *Direct action*: Across Echo we employ a broad range of people with diverse ethnic backgrounds including Asian and Indian. In our US offices we employ Americans as well as immigrants to the United States and actively promote their capabilities. In our French offices we directly employ people with diverse nationalities based in France and in Europe and fully support their development.
- *Direct action:* We consider that 'caring responsibilities' can imply greater work-life balance for employees with young children, older relatives, and neighbours / friends / family needing help. This definition is potentially relevant to all members of staff. Flexitime working to permit a better work-life balance was taken up by some 45 % of Echo staff, maintaining the levels of the previous year.
- *Indirect / proxy action*: Again under 'caring responsibilities', we continued to work in partnership with the charity Working Families, which supports working parents and carers and helps employers create workplaces that foster family-friendly working practices and work-life balance. **Link to** http://www.workingfamilies.org.uk. A large part of our staff charity fund-raising, with monthly themed dress down days (colours, seasons, fashion, ethnic dress, fictional characters) and weekly non-themed ones, as well as a film society, cake sales etc have gone towards the Working Families charity.
- *Direct action:* Under 'race', our multi-lingual analysts again included a number from ethnic minority backgrounds: Arabic, Bengali, Hindi, Nepalese, Punjabi, Urdu, and Wolof (up to 10% of Echo's total language capability).
- *Indirect / proxy action*: Under 'gender', an important Echo project concluded in 2008-9 was a report for the NGO Women In Journalism on how young males are stereotyped in the media, which gained high-profile coverage in the national and specialist media **(Link to PPT).**
- *Indirect / proxy action:* Staff in the French office engaged in *pro bono* activity to make children aware of cultural differences (exhibitions, reading workshops, world dances).

Principle 7	Business should support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges

Our commitment / policy & management system

- Our interpretation of this Principle focuses on climate change, with the precautionary aspect consisting of present action despite the uncertainty of future impact.
- We believe it is important to support organisations who can extend our beneficial environmental influence beyond what we could achieve in our own right i.e. we support the proxy principle as a multiplier of positive impact.

Actions implemented in the last year and outcomes

- Practical support was given to the planting of trees at the ancient Mottisbury site in Surrey, providing a carbon dioxide sink and thus an offset to global warming.
- We kept up to date on EU Directives through SuPeRB and Business EcoLogic.
- The safe use of non-greenhouse-gas-producing technology was supported through service provision for the UK's nuclear energy safety regulator.

Principle 8	Business should undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility

Our commitment / policy & management system

- Echo aims to reduce its negative environmental impact through recycling and minimising energy use.

Actions implemented in the last year and outcomes

- We established a baseline figure for our carbon footprint of 23,460.25 units of electricity consumption to be benchmarked against in future years.
- We provided *pro bono* (free-of-charge) research services to the global sustainability charity WWF, which conserves biodiversity and addresses threats to the environment.
- We restricted travel where feasible to public transport (up to 80% of total Echo business journeys last year).
- 95% of Echo Research products were again supplied to clients in electronic rather than paper form. .
- The majority of paper used was recycled (Green "Evolve"), less than the 100% achieved in the previous period because there was a requirement for a small number of high-quality-finish photographic papers. This was an occasion where a balance had to be struck between commercial and sustainability imperatives - a pragmatic solution in other words.
- We have a standing requirement of our stationery suppliers to recommend green options.
- The sending of 1000+ paper Christmas cards was replaced by electronic greetings and a donation of £1 for every card saved to the charity WaterAid (see above)
- Two members of staff purchased bicycles under the government's environmental Cycle-To-Work scheme to travel to and from work.
- In our Paris office, we further raised staff awareness on paper reduction, increased electronic traffic over paper, drove down the use of printing, and encouraged our staff to use public transport.

Principle 9	Business should encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies
Our commitment / policy & management system	

- We support the introduction, development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies.

Actions implemented in the last year and outcomes

- Over the past 15 months we have gradually consolidated some of our inefficient and outdated servers using virtualisation software. This makes it possible to run multiple server operating systems *virtually* on one *physical* server. This is not only a more efficient use of our server hardware, but also requires less electricity. For example: we now have 5 of our less demanding servers running virtually on 1 physical server, effectively using less than 20% of the original power usage to perform these same tasks.

- Any obsolete or broken computing equipment is collected by our Restriction of Hazardous Substances (RoHS) and Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE)-certified IT collection company. According to their website: "We recycle over 95% of all electronic equipment by dismantling and recycling the raw materials with possible refurbishment options."

Principle 10	Business should work against corruption in all its forms, including extortion and bribery
Our commitment / policy & management system	

- We aim to work against corruption in all its forms, including extortion and bribery.

Actions implemented in the last year and outcomes

- We asked overseas partners to confirm in writing that they do not infringe this Principle.

How we make this COP available to our stakeholders

We make this COP available through the quarterly Echo e-zine which is sent to 3000 Echo stakeholders, and by posting key points on our website. In terms of raising broader awareness of our actions, Echo maintains its commitment to Corporate Responsibility and the UNGC through its professional engagement in reputation management, leadership in assessing CSR strategies, and *pro bono* involvement in the International Business Leaders' Forum. Throughout its daily work and thought leadership activities in articles and conferences, Echo's commitment to CSR and the UNGC is underlined