

# smes: in the un global compact

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## Case Studies

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**LUCITA** case study submission to the SMEs in the UN Global Compact initiative

## STATEMENT OF PROBLEM/OPPORTUNITY

Addressing the first principle

“That businesses should support and respect the proclamation of human dignity”

**LUCITA** is a media company. As such, we recognise that the respect of human dignity is the media's first and foremost responsibility. This respect must be accorded to not only the people and communities portrayed or represented in the media, but also to the audiences themselves. We consider that there are several facets to this need: accuracy, objectivity, transparency and integrity, as well as respect for ourselves, the media.

The primary motivating factor that has triggered action on our part is a large-scale failure by many media outlets to fulfill the aforementioned responsibility. Much of mainstream media today is driven by politics, by ratings and by profit, and as a result tends to give primacy to news and content that is violent, shocking or controversial or to programming that highlights the baser human emotions and traits such as jealousy, greed and malice (the reality-based shows in particular). Movie and rock stars are given far greater attention in the media than scientists, doctors and teachers. Ignored in large part is the intelligence and dignity of not only those portrayed in the media (including the stars), but particularly those consuming it.

We do not accept the point that many media outlets make, that they only generate this kind of content because that is what their audiences desire. Enough associations, opinion polls and parent and community groups opposing this kind of media content exist to refute this point. We do not, however, see the status quo as a problem per se. We see it as an opportunity to raise the quality and integrity of media content and to give back dignity not only to those portrayed by the media, not only to those consuming the media, but also to those working within and with the media.

## **ACTIONS TAKEN**

1. The establishment of LUCITA was the first step we have taken toward achieving the above stated goal. LUCITA was founded as a green media company -- "green media" is defined as any audio-visual content that features social and environmental issues in an engaging, intelligent and accurate manner. We intend to set an example to other like-minded media companies that intelligent, responsible and respectful media content can prove desirable to audiences and can generate a profit.
2. Since our founding, we have endeavoured to develop and produce media content of the highest possible quality, integrity and appeal. Our current projects include "Balance of Life", a multiple part series on global climate change, "Akina Sisi", a feature-length documentary film about community-based conservation in Kenya, Africa, and "The Two Cowboys", also a feature-length documentary film on the similarities and contrasts between the Malpai of Arizona and the Maasai of Kenya. Each documentary project has attached to it a number of derivative products such as websites, companion books and other elements. These projects treat with dignity all those whom we portray, and respect the intelligence and interests of our audiences.
3. Our most significant company-wide policy that we have implemented and have followed since the beginning is to form long-lasting alliances and partnerships with other like-minded media companies and non media sectors whose work is in some way relevant to ours, such as scientific bodies, universities, non governmental and intergovernmental organisations, business and the like. The projects mentioned above actively use the resources, advice and information provided by our partners in those non media sectors whose work is relevant to the given topic. These activities demonstrate our respect for the knowledge, expertise and relevance of those working within these sectors.
4. Conscious that we alone cannot effect large-scale change in the media industry, we have also recently begun implementing a green media mentoring program for young and aspiring media professionals, whether they be students or adults. This program, called GreenLight, is now being developed for Australia, South Africa and the Caribbean. Other regions will be included at a later time. This program has resulted from our desire to help mentor, nurture and support new generations of media professionals, so that the work we and others undertake is not forgotten.

## **RESULTS**

The most significant and measurable result – and one that we consider the first manifestation of the kind of benefits we would like to see come out of our efforts – has been the response of the young people involved in GreenLight, the green media mentoring program, and of the non media sectors. Although GreenLight is still brand new, and has not yet been set into motion, already the level of interest on the part of all those to whom it has been offered has been surprisingly strong. The NGOs, the government agencies, the scientists and others with whom we have joined hands have all expressed their sentiments that such cross-sectoral alliances are indeed crucial to accurate representation of various issues by the media. No overt discussion or mention of dignity per se has taken place, but our sentiments are that respect, dignity and integrity within and without the media will in fact have been achieved before most constituents take conscious note of it.

The costs of all of the above-stated activities have been significant and run in the tens of thousands of dollars. These include costs for the

infrastructure, development, research, travel, production and other activities necessary to make our objectives a reality.

The benefits are only now beginning to be realised. We believe much of the real benefit of the work we are undertaking now may not be felt until a few years from now – other than, as mentioned above, those benefits that are already becoming apparent in the case of our mentees and our non media allies. It is difficult, in this particular case, to measure the results or progress of our actions and activities, precisely because qualities such as dignity and integrity are non tangible and can be expressed in a variety of ways. For us, it is the process itself that is important, as we ourselves continue to learn from our mistakes, our successes and our allies what dignity and integrity mean to the various constituencies.

The next steps involve taking our operations up several levels, partnering with key established corporations and agencies, and expanding our financial base so that we can begin to produce the media content we have been developing, enhance GreenLight, and form further alliances with relevant sectors.

### **WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED**

The primary factor that has supported our progress is the level of interest in our work from all of the sectors we have partnered or worked with: young media professionals and students, non governmental organisations, government agencies, scientific bodies and so on. It is this strong interest in and support of what we are doing and the goals we are working toward, that has continue to confirm the value and validity of our efforts.

The primary factor that has thus far impeded our progress is, very simply, lack of funding. We are still a small, independent company with little significant presence in the media marketplace, and that is the greatest obstacle to realising our goals in full. To achieve this, we need financial and other forms of capital, and alliances with some of the more powerful forces in the media industry.

The key lesson we feel would be most useful to other companies is that collaboration is ultimately much more valuable than straight-out competition, regardless of the sector or the particular activity a company or organisation is engaged in.