

Eventia CSR Leading Lights Story – Graham Harvey, ExCeL

Which aspect(s) of CSR does this Leading Light story touch?

Environmental

- Carbon footprint reduction
- Waste management
- Reuse, recycle, repair
- Transportation reduction
- Responsible marketing

Community

- Investment in local community
- Involvement in local community

Suppliers

- Suppliers' standards
- Transparency in procurement practices
- Fair trade / ethical sourcing
- Business ethics policy and practices

Employees/Workplace

- Health and safety
- Learning and development opportunities
- Employee involvement with the community
- Employee retention

Individual profile

Graham Harvey, 59 years old – Cleaning & Waste Manager. Graham has been at ExCeL London since the very beginning and has been the pioneer for the Materials Recycling Facility & Wormery onsite at ExCeL. He has a number of permanent and contract staff that work for him, depending on the events and has 100% retention of permanent staff in his team.

Company CSR profile – how was this supported by the organisation

ExCeL London provides 90,000 metres of flexible space and a blank canvas for event organisers to host and run events of all kinds. Since opening in 2000 we have hosted more than 2,000 events and welcomed in excess of five million visitors from 200 different countries. ExCeL is home to corporate conferences, international association conventions, product launches, gala dinners, banquets, award ceremonies, meetings, religious festivals and sporting events. ExCeL is situated alongside Canary Wharf and London City airport on a stunning 100 acre waterside campus with 6 hotels and a number of bars, restaurants and cafes.

ExCeL runs a Corporate Social Responsibility programme which includes environmental initiatives, community and employee engagement. The Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) and wormery are part of ExCeL's wider green programme, which also includes energy initiatives. Graham costed out the recycling centre and the ExCeL Board was fully supportive of the cost implications, as they could see the huge impact it would have on our carbon footprint.

Story

Graham and the Head of Operations felt that the amount of rubbish that the venue was sending to landfill (6,500 tonnes in 06), was far too high and that ExCeL needed to reduce its carbon footprint and invest in a recycling facility. They put together a proposal with costings to the Services Director which was then submitted to the Board. The Senior Team at ExCeL were fully supportive of the programme and invested in the MRF. The MRF opened in June 2007 and is able to recycle cardboard, plastic, paper, wood, glass and cans. Following the opening of the MRF, Graham then investigated the possibility of having an industrial wormery (he already used a small one at home) with Enterprise Plants in order to reduce the amount of food waste still going to landfill. 2 months later, ExCeL purchased the UK's largest and only commercial wormery.



Earthworms are the ultimate recycling machine. All types of food waste can be recycled naturally into productive, nutrient rich soil. Food waste is collected from the kitchens, preparation areas and delivered to the wormery. Here it is processed through a macerator into a pulp which is fed to the worms. The pulping makes the food easy for the worms to consume, removing the need for rotting to break it down. The worms digest the waste and convert it into rich worm casts.

Key benefits of our food waste policy include:

- Reduction of carbon emitted by transporting waste from ExCeL
- Reduction of the number of lorries travelling on already congested roads
- Reduction in landfill – volumes have been reduced by approximately 90%
- Production of valuable soil additive which can be used around the ExCeL campus after minimal processing
- Our systems have the capability to be expanded to cope with increased volumes
- No smell or liquid runoff
- No incineration
- Minimal power usage – the power that it does use can be offset
- Worms eat almost anything – certain amounts of green waste and paper can also be incorporated
- It is virtually a completely green solution to food waste disposal.

The major challenge was to encourage our clients and onsite partners to participate in the scheme by separating their waste. Graham championed the facility internally and externally by running training sessions, raising awareness, education and tours of the centre. He held numerous meetings and corresponded regularly to all the relevant parties to let them know about the waste. At the end of 2007, Graham worked with the Marketing Team to help produce ExCeL's first ever annual CSR report.

Results

The results have been staggering. In 2007 ExCeL reduced the amount going to landfill by 17%. Overall, between the onsite and offsite MRF, ExCeL recycled 78% of its waste. This has led to Graham becoming a thought leader, educator and setting a benchmark for our industry.

Moving forwards

ExCeL is currently looking at further recycling and energy saving initiatives, as well as the possibility of purchasing another wormery. Graham is continuing to educate our service partners as one of the biggest challenges is the contamination at source because waste is not being separated properly. Graham and his team audit contamination from the waste streams daily and meet with the onsite service partners to report these results. He also continues to train staff and communicate the benefits and best practices.

How can we encourage others to do the same?

ExCeL London and Graham will continue to promote the MRF, benefits and results via its website, tours of the Recycling Centre and all marketing communications. In the last year, we have won several sustainability awards, including the C&IT Reader Award – Best Venue for Sustainability. Graham sits on the Sustainability Committee and the programme is promoted to all the industry members via their communications. ExCeL is also working with Sauce, funded by the London Borough of Newham to run a pilot study for 2012 to view the procurement of more sustainable materials used in food packaging, composting of food waste and recycling.

We will continue to raise the profile and benefits of the Materials Recycling Facility and wormeries so that our industry and others can make a big difference in our carbon footprint and the amount going to landfill.