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The Companies Act 2002 has gone some way to ensuring that businesses take their corporate social responsibility seriously. It states that all companies, except small businesses, have to prepare a business review as part of the director's annual report in which information is provided about environmental, social and community issues. They also have to consider the impact of their business on employment and employee matters.

Many firms are flying their 'green' credentials from the flag staff; some are employing whole teams to manage their corporate responsibility, but cynics have been known to say: "it's just a publicity stunt" or "they only do it for the tax breaks". Even if there is an element of truth in this, as long as the environment benefits, then it is worth doing.

Some years ago when a friend, who now runs a successful environmental consultancy, walked into our new offices looked around the atrium and asked, "Why do you have so many lights on in reception in the middle of the day?" The answer was very simple, they had been designed that way and no one had ever queried it before. Currently there is little legislation on energy saving, but there are increasing waste management regulations and it will not be long before old style filament bulbs are outlawed by legislation and we have to make the change. In several provinces of Canada last December there was an exchange scheme where traditional Christmas lights could be exchanged for energy efficient lights. This is a great example of practical corporate responsibility in action.

But saving power and having less waste is not just corporate social responsibility, it is corporate common sense and shows responsibility to the shareholders. The main beneficiaries are those that have to pay the ever increasing bills as power prices and waste removal become ever more expensive. For some time businesses have had a climate change levy to contend with, which is perhaps just environmental legislation in another form, punishing businesses that don't become more energy efficient.

We have anti-pollution laws, waste management legislation and climate change levy, and new legislation to outlaw traditional light bulbs is on the way.

There are simple ways we can all become more socially responsible without it costing us a penny: we can ask our staff to turn off computers instead of leaving them on standby; turn out lights as we leave the room; and not open windows when the air conditioning is on. These very simple housekeeping ideas help to get the team on board by raising social awareness and have the by-product of saving money for the firm.

If you do have a level of corporate social responsibility you should use it to help show off your business. Let people know you use recycled paper and encourage your team to be friends of the environment. You never know, others may follow your lead.

Adrian Barnes  
Barrister, Premier Legal LLP  
(www.premier-legal.co.uk)

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