



2019: My year of realising I was just plain wrong about Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

CHARITY EDINBURGH EVENTS

SOPHIA BATES - HEAD OF CONNECTED EXECUTION 20 NOV 2019

Whilst this would probably surprise anyone that knows me (and has heard me talk about politics or social issues, especially after a glass of wine), I've always felt a little lukewarm about CSR initiatives. It's not that I have any issue with volunteering / charities, I've volunteered on and off for years and even considered taking the plunge with a VSO (Voluntary Services Overseas) career break in my late 20s

In all honesty, I've always felt a little bit guilty about my lacklustre involvement in initiatives; I'm usually enthusiastic to a fault – some would say overly enthusiastic. But, since the beginning of the year two things have combined to pivot my approach to CSR.

Firstly, since the beginning of the year I've been involved in implementing the MediaCom business strategy and developing cross-agency initiatives that will help further the behaviours we believe are core to our business. We recognised from the start that we wanted to make this a bottom-up, not top-down process and have been speaking to people across the office about what makes them want to come to work, what makes them feel good about working at MediaCom and what they want to see more of. This process made me think (and research) what makes people feel good and want to be at work.

Secondly, on a slight whim I put myself forward for an event put on by MediaTrust in Glasgow. The event was sponsored by Google and focused on providing charities with Digital skills and knowledge to help meet their objectives. Ashley (one of our Account Directors) and I went along to answer questions around Digital strategy in a speed-dating version of mentoring. Admittedly we were both incredibly nervous and wondered if we could translate our experiences within the brand space into advice that would be helpful to charities. We needn't have been nervous; it was an amazing experience and both of us left the event walking on air, feeling that we had genuinely helped and armed with incredible on the spot feedback from the charities we spoke to.

These two factors converged and shortly after attending the MediaTrust event, we asked the business for initiatives. Ashley put forward working with the MediaTrust as an opportunity and the feedback from MediaCom Edinburgh was incredible. In short order we had a team of volunteers, ranging from the Managing Director to planner-buyers, that wanted to host a similar event.

On Wednesday 13th November our hard work paid off and we ran an event, in collaboration with MediaTrust, focused on Social Media Strategies for Success; we welcomed 30 individuals from charities across Scotland that varied in size and focus.

Spilt into two parts, the day started with four talks given by members of the MediaCom team around audience, third sector inspiration, social strategy and social tactics. Then, after a quick stop for a lunch from [Social Bite](#) (a brilliant social business, tackling homelessness in Edinburgh) we had an hour and a half "speed" mentoring session,

answering questions around content, PR, digital strategy, data and analytics and (unsurprisingly) Social Media. I hosted the content area and it was as inspirational as my previous experience, my favourite part is how quickly the charities in my group shared their own experiences and gave advice to their cohorts.

Teaming up with [@MediaComUK](#) in Edinburgh today for our 'Strategies for Success on Social Media' masterclass – covering areas such as the best ways to achieve online success and much more. [#MediaComTrust](#) pic.twitter.com/vDtSdickAE

— Media Trust ([@Media_Trust](#)) [November 13, 2019](#)

The day was a success: on the spot from charities was fantastic and we had great engagement/support from the wider industry. Amazing people from Bauer, JPI, JC Decaux and Clarion PR came and contributed to our inspiration zone answering questions, whilst Media IQ (in addition to media owners who attended) provided treats for the (much appreciated) goodie bags.

Importantly, we also had a fantastic response from the MediaCom office; so many people (beyond our initial team) helped out preparing materials, stuffing goodie bags, ensured things run smoothly and were super positive about the event, despite the fact we definitely disrupted their day!

So, after this experience I am no longer lukewarm about CSR (but still perhaps the term CSR) and I'm planning the next event in my head. In fairness, it's no surprise it worked so well – a recent survey by the [Charities Aid Foundation](#) found that 57% of respondents agreed that involvement with a charity helps improve morale at work (I imagine this would be higher if we focused on younger people).

If you're not engaging with charities already or are looking for a partner to engage with I

would recommend Media Trust. For anyone unaware Media Trust are a fantastic organisation that works in partnership that works in partnership with the media and creative industries to give marginalised groups a voice. They encourage the media and creative industry to share their time, knowledge and creativity to benefit charities, under-represented groups and young people. You can get involved with Media Trust as an organisation, or volunteer individually. Visit their website [here](#).

CHARITY EDINBURGH EVENTS