

Project COSMIC
Logo

STOP LOOK & LISTEN

Social Accounts April 2002 – March 2003

SUMMARY

Project COSMIC
Ridgeway House
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We aim to encourage and develop the use, understanding and enjoyment of Information Technology for the benefit of individuals, businesses and communities.”

We are committed to :

- Being open and honest
- Being a fun and friendly place
- Being supportive and caring
- Creating our own future
- Wanting to exceed expectations
- Learning by doing
- Equal opportunities
- Using IT to benefit the environment

Who cares What you Think? ... We DO!

This is the first year of social accounting for Project COSMIC and it has also been a year of major change for the Company. I hope that the report provides a valuable comprehensive reflection of our work (both good and bad) and the ways in which we feel improvements can be made. Please do not hesitate to contact me or any member of the team if you have anything to say about this report, our work or any issue which you feel would help in our efforts to build a sustainable future for our company”

Julie Harris, Co-ordinator

Facts & Figures

In the year 2002/2003 we helped :

1495 young people and 758 adults with training in the use of IT

2033 visitors to our internet café

10 full-time and 4 part-time employees

7 volunteers

29 members and 6 directors to run our company efficiently

5 major funding bodies by helping them to spend their money wisely!

135 clients who purchased website and training services

16 community organisations to deliver funded services

£240,182 in turnover to boost the local economy and development of our company

Background

The Company was established in 1996 when its founder working around the youth club in Ottery St Mary saw the opportunities which modern technology present for young people.

COSMIC stands for the "Centre for Ottery St Mary's Internet Café"

Until the year 2000 most of our work was of a minor project scale and revolved mainly around specific groups and organisations. Having been awarded two major funding bids in 2001 the Company set about planning the changes needed including the set-up of a major mobile technology project (ORBIT) and the opening of our new centre at Ridgeway House.

2002 saw us celebrate the opening of our new centre, the successful completion of year one of ORBIT and some major changes in the staffing structure and business planning to make us more future-proof.

Company Structure

Project COSMIC is a social enterprise operating in the delivery of IT services – specifically computer training and website production.

The Company has Members (not shareholders) and anyone can become a Member as long as they are in agreement with its mission, values and objectives. The Company has 29 Members currently. The Members elect Directors at the Annual General Meeting and these Directors form the Management Committee. This committee meets at least six times a year to consider reports and issues of a major nature.

Social Accounting – the process

Spring 2002 – setting the scene – we revised our business plan and agreed a new mission statement, values and objectives

Summer 2002 – rolling up our sleeves - planning how to achieve these objectives, setting activities and targets.

Autumn 2002 – taking a good look – review of systems for measuring performance and feedback and how this is reported

Winter 2002 – listening is more important than talking – we developed a full consultation process to engage with key stakeholders

Spring 2003 – pulling it altogether – analysis of reports, consultation feedback, and production of our first set of draft social accounts.

Social Audit – the panel met on 21st May 2003 and consisted of John Pearce of the Social Audit Network, Debbie Stewart of CEU Ltd, and Robin Taylor of the Community Fund.

Social Audit Statement :

Copy of statement

Embedding – making it all worthwhile – the next steps are about making sure that the systems set-up to monitor and record our performance against social objectives are ongoing and regularly used. It is our aim to produce social accounts on an annual basis along with our annual report.

Stakeholders

Copy of stakeholders map

Consultation

<i>Stakeholder Group</i>	<i>No. invited to complete Consultation form</i>	<i>Responses</i>
Staff	17 staff (past and present)	14 (82%)
Directors	4	3 (75%)
Volunteers	5	4 (80%)
Members	29	21 (73%)
Clients	135	52 (39%)
Funders	4	2 (50%)
Trainees	36	11 (31%)
Community Organisations	5	4 (80%)
Partners	21	4 (19%)
Youth Workers	14	6 (43%)
Young People *	13	13 *
Local Community	3000 (approx)	4 **
Visitors	9	9 *

* *video and audio interviews with willing participants*

** *responses to feature in the local newspaper "Ottery Gazette"*

Objectives

1 : To develop our interaction with the local community to achieve mutual support and benefits

2 : To encourage and promote partnerships as a means of developing mutual sustainability

3 : To develop further a unique style of delivering our services which is easily understood, friendly and accessible to everyone

4 : To spread the word about the services which we offer to a wider target audience and to key target groups

- 5** : To provide a range of IT services which offer reliable, competitive, affordable and high quality solutions
- 6** : To provide young people with the support, guidance and opportunities to gain experience of IT and to focus on their skills and value within the employment market
- 7** : To keep ourselves and our clients up to date with new developments and cutting edge technology
- 8** : To develop and sustain a productive / professional relationship with the business and commercial sector
- 9** : To ensure that the company develops in a way which is fit-for-purpose, high quality, dynamic and financially sound
- 10** : To be a good employer with a supportive structure which encourages professional development, provides incentives for high quality performance and a productive working environment
- 11** : To involve and support the community and voluntary sector in developing / maximising the use of IT to further their aims and objectives

Analysis

Each group of stakeholders was asked questions specific to their use of our services related to our objectives, and some were asked for feedback on our overall performance within our mission statement and values. The result of detailed analysis has shown a number of areas in which recommendations are made.

Recommendations

Objective 1

1. that future reports from attendance at meetings of local organisations be made to the management team
2. that the company introduces a policy for using local suppliers of goods and services wherever practical and cost-effective
3. that regular monthly features in the Ottery Gazette and other appropriate local publications be continued
4. that we work towards providing a further two PCs in the drop-in internet café in the coming year
5. that the company continues to work harder to achieve greater recognition and working with the local community.
6. that reports on the use of the internet café be enhanced with a new online monitoring system and a visitor book to collect feedback from users on an ongoing basis.

7.that the company investigates other ways to consult with the local population which will encourage greater involvement from more people with an interest in our work.

8. that the potential for providing extending opening hours for drop-in users be investigated fully, including through the use of volunteer support for this service

Objective 2

1. that we carefully review our arrangements for partnerships using a definition and working practices which are appropriate and effective both for Project COSMIC and our partners.

2. that we look to increase the number of meaningful partnerships which we hold in line with all of our other objectives and values.

Objective 3

1. to further develop our approach to accessibility issues for both training and developing websites aimed at users with special needs

2. to work on development of our own team-building training based on progressing the Fish! philosophy

3. identify further funding to enable the training service to continue to work with disadvantaged groups

4. to further develop the Explore IT! training series into more advanced areas and with further training materials

5. further learning materials be developed to assist people who learn more successfully through the use of printed materials

Objective 4

1. develop and produce a regular company newsletter to all stakeholders

2. ensure the new marketing plan is in place and continually evaluated in order to maximise effectiveness

3. continue to promote work across the region and beyond

4. consolidate and extend our knowledge through membership of IUKE

Objective 5

1. that the training team investigate the cost and effectiveness of upgrading all training PC's to windows XP as the standard platform

2. that a new form of website and commercial training contract be introduced which is based on a more accurate description of the services being provided and what the client should expect for their money

3. that the new pricing policy be used as a basis for future years consideration in order to improve more competitive pricing policies
4. that the website team look into the development of packages to offer to different client groups
5. that further work on the Explore IT! series be undertaken
6. that the reliability of services be regularly checked through monitoring systems
7. that a new customer care policy be adopted and all staff trained in its implementation

Objective 6

1. continue to expand and develop opportunities for young people to work within COSMIC
2. maintain links with Exeter University in order to develop student placements
3. develop teleworking scheme and to find a way of it working successfully
4. empower young people with the confidence to work alongside the COSMIC team and take increased responsibility for their own work

Objective 7

1. we use a new email newsletter to all stakeholders as a means of passing on news of new and exciting IT developments in hardware, software or internet related matters.
2. we ensure the directors and members meetings are used to bring knowledge and skills up-to-date with regular presentations on new developments in hardware, software, internet or working practices
3. continued contact with the Social Accounting group in Devon (VEST) be used to reflect and advance the use of IT in the process so that COSMIC can in future act as a consultant for provision of good practice in this field
4. staff continue to attend seminars and conferences with the aim to provide new and enhanced knowledge and skills in connection with delivery of our services

Objective 8

1. continued attendance at networking meetings for the commercial sector which provide an opportunity to promote the work and objectives of the company

2. continued attendance at Business South West and other exhibitions which are aimed at the commercial sector within the region to promote the work and objectives of the company
3. use of the company's e-newsletter to promote our work and encourage existing contacts to recommend us to other commercial users.
4. continued emphasis on our status as a social enterprise and the reasons why businesses should chose us for their work
5. entry into the Investors in People award which will recognise the quality of our work and encourage further recognition within the sector

Objective 9

1. development of Directors team so that it can be more integral-less distanced from staff team
2. having clear roles and responsibilities for Directors, Members and all volunteers.
3. that a training audit and schedule be drawn up and delivered to meet the needs of directors to fulfil their role
4. that a session focussing on the Health and Safety Policy be conducted specifically for directors
5. that improved systems for delivering information and news to members be introduced including regular newsletter and copies of directors minutes.
6. that more members be sought - target for 2004 : 35

Objective 10

1. that the Company develop new policies and practices in its volunteer management and recruitment to reflect the needs of the company and volunteers.
- 2.that the Company develops a system of supervision and support for volunteers which enable them to fully perform their role within the company.
3. that a policy on training for volunteers be introduced and formal supervision arrangements put in place as soon as possible for volunteers.
4. that the company's Health and Safety Policy be the subject of an in-house training session for all staff and volunteers.
5. that a review of roles and responsibilities within the staff and volunteer team be undertaken to identify the issues which cause most concern for staff and recommendation on any changes be made to the management committee.

Objective 11

1. that the feasibility study into establishing an IT support unit for VCOs be used as an opportunity to comprehensively study the needs of the sector in Devon.
2. the further dissemination of good practice through e newsletter and features in publications aimed at the sector
3. further consideration of funding bids aimed at developing our work to support this objective

Environmental Report

Although the Company undertakes a number of small initiatives in an effort to reduce our environmental impact, we have not been able to undertake a major assessment of our environmental performance due to lack of time and resources. We do however recycle all non-confidential paper waste, print cartridges, cardboard and drinks cans.

Compliance

The Company has a full equal opportunities policy, a health and safety policy, a disciplinary and grievance procedure all of which are found in the staff/volunteer handbook. All staff required to work with children and young people as part of their duties are checked with the Criminal Records Bureau. All legislative requirements for our operation as a Company are complied with and our data protection registration is reviewed annually. In the coming year the Company will begin to work towards achieving the Investors in People Award.

Reflections

The recommendations made as a result of this process show just how valuable it has been. We look forward to full consideration of these recommendations and to enhancing our work further having taking into account the views of our stakeholders. The systems in place for future monitoring, reporting and consultation will help us to continue to use this approach in developing our Company in the future.

Thanks

Major thanks must go to all those who have helped in the process of producing the social accounts and the report. Members of staff have helped throughout the process and it simply would not have been possible without their support. Also the Company Directors have provided the support and trust to enable us to get to this stage. Staff at the CEU through the VEST (Valuing the Extra Stuff) programme have provided valuable tuition and support, and the Social Audit Panel provided some excellent feedback which the Company will wish to use in future years. Last but not least, thanks go to everyone who played a part by responding to the consultation – we hope that the report and recommendations demonstrate that the Company is committed to listening and learning from the people who we seek to serve.

How to find out more

A copy of the full report is available from our website as a downloadable PDF please go to www.cosmic.org.uk/socialaccounts

Alternatively you can view a copy at Ridgeway House during opening hours (currently 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday) and a copy can be printed for you at a cost of £12

There is a CD Rom available which contains the full report in PDF format, a multi-media presentation of our work, the video interviews and trainers reports and our website portfolio for the year. This CD Rom is available at £9 per copy.

Please contact us for further information

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