

Ornella Barra



At Alliance Boots, we believe that we all have a part to play in facing the challenge of climate change. We believe that the success, or failure, of the world to solve this issue will depend on billions of individual decisions taken by businesses around the world. We have to act now before it is too late and while we still can influence the outcome.

Our group's focus on healthcare means that corporate social responsibility forms a natural part of our business culture. At the heart of our approach is the simple concept of embedding basic CSR principles into our day-to-day work and job processes.

The employees doing their jobs understand the processes best and are in the ideal position to suggest improvements to make their activities more sustainable. For instance, it was our logistics people who developed the idea of sharing deliveries with other retailers to remote corners of the British Isles.

Our people have responded positively for two reasons: first, it is part of the essence of our business, the legacy left by the Boots family of working with the community and engaging in charitable work continues today. Second, it is often what people are used to doing at home anyway. So why not follow the same practices at work?

We have reduced our energy use as our buildings have become more energy efficient. And mileage has been cut through improvements to routing and training. Reductions in waste have been generated through using less packaging. Our free-standing display units are now made from recycled cardboard, so they are fully recyclable, saving 430 tonnes of waste and £156,000.

None of these successes has required specialist technical knowledge, but our colleagues understand how important this

We have a shared sense of responsibility and vision for the future

topic is – this is where leadership is key. We have a dedicated social responsibilities committee (SRC) at board level that oversees the group's CSR agenda. The SRC, which meets four times a year, keeps under review and advises the board on the group's policies and practices in the area of corporate social responsibility. CSR is measured and managed in the same way that any other business discipline is.

Local ownership of the corporate social responsibility agenda is the key to our success. We have decentralised corporate social responsibility to enable local 'champions' to set local programmes in line with priorities set at group level. And we have established a group-wide framework in which corporate social responsibility activities can thrive and which enables us to benchmark our performance and share best practice.

We have a shared sense of responsibility that is strongly in evidence as people throughout Alliance Boots continue to pursue, with dedication, many corporate social responsibility activities. This reflects our commitment to doing business responsibly and building the trust upon which our success depends. Increasingly we are gaining recognition externally for our efforts across the group, such as



Free-standing display units at Boots stores are now made from recycled cardboard, saving 430 tonnes of waste

being awarded the Carbon Trust Standard or Business in the Community Big Ticks.

We are always looking to find more efficient ways of working and have created a network of "critical friends" to help us develop our vision for the future and new thinking around the sustainability of products, such as using the carbon dioxide emissions from our combine heat and power plant to grow algae that can be used as replacement ingredients in products.

The economic climate remains uncertain, but our commitment to meeting the challenges of climate

change remains the same. We at Alliance Boots are optimistic about the future. Why don't you join us and start your own journey today? It's easier than you think and the Mayday Team at Business in the Community can provide you with the support you need.

Ornella Barra is chair of the social responsibilities committee at Alliance Boots and chief executive of the pharmaceutical wholesale division of the company. For information or to join the Prince's Mayday Network visit maydaynetwork.com