

VIRTUAL IGNITE MASTERCLASSES:

SUPPORTING THE
LOCAL COMMUNITY
**HOW-TO GUIDE
FOR SME'S**

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SUPPORTING THE LOCAL COMMUNITY: WHY AND HOW

Before we look at the why and how, let's just have a quick reality check! Everyone is aware of the devastation the pandemic has caused, and it is heart-warming to see how many individuals and businesses have stepped up to offer support in so many different ways.

But without minimising the terrible tragedies and the gaping wounds this cruel virus has caused as it has ripped through the heart of our nation, it is important to remember two things:

1. Poverty, hunger, abuse, mental illness, physical illness, homelessness, addiction, lack of aspiration, lack of opportunity, loneliness, modern day slavery. None of this is new. Even for those living in comfort in leafy suburbs, shocking inequalities are often very close. For example, I live in Southend-on-Sea and there is a ten-year disparity in life expectancy with two adjacent wards. This is a common story.
2. Long after all restrictions have been lifted and we are no longer assailed with statistics of death and hospitalisation, the impact of COVID-19 will compound the societal issues that were already in existence.

We are all impacted by the health and vibrancy of our local community either directly or indirectly. As business owners, understanding the problems in our local community and providing support in a way that is appropriate for us and appropriate for the community we serve should be a given.

A desire to support the local community is not only the morally correct approach to take, but proactively getting involved is also good for business.

However, it is important to stress that if you are considering community engagement projects purely for business benefit, this will not go unnoticed by either staff or the community. If your approach lacks authenticity, you could find yourself accused of 'greenwashing' and all the potential benefits negated.

Let's look at a few benefits:

- Increased reputation
- Reduced risk
- Increased staff engagement and motivation
- Become an employee of choice
- Excellent marketing opportunities
- Inspiring innovation & Increased business opportunities
- Gaining new skills
- Winning contracts
- The feel-good factor!

HOW TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

- [Volunteering](#). This covers a myriad of options, many of them detailed below. But also consider if you can offer paid volunteering options to employees, even just one day a year.

- Pick a charity of the year and get involved with their fundraising events or arrange some of your own.

- If you are thinking of holding a Christmas party, holding a celebration, or providing a thank you for your best clients, why not look out for a charity event such as a Golf Day or Charity Ball.

- Offer work experience and/or apprenticeships.

- [Payroll giving schemes](#)

- Workplace collections for: produce for foodbanks; smellies for local hospices or domestic abuse centre; toys for Christmas presents.....

- Become a Trustee of a local charity (contact your local voluntary association for advice)

- Social media can be a good resource to check out what is going on in the neighbourhood.

- Pro-bono services. Could you provide your normal professional services free or at a fraction of the normal cost?

- Could you match-fund, up to an agreed amount, employees' personal fundraising activities?

- Mentoring either a young person or maybe ex-offenders, unemployed, or start-up businesses is a fantastic way to give back. Most local authorities run mentoring programmes in conjunction with local schools, or speak with organisations such as [The Prince's Trust](#) or [Career Ready](#)

- Become a board member of a local school

- Don't forget environmental charities such as the Wildlife Trusts and the RSPB. These organisations need volunteers on both an ongoing and ad hoc basis.

- Think before you throw anything away, whether that's products, furniture, equipment. Many charities can make use of items that are redundant in a business.

- Large community events often need sponsors and/or volunteer support.

Cause Marketing

Cause marketing is a fantastic way of collecting money for a good cause, raising that cause's profile and raising your own profile. Cause marketing is where you pledge a fixed amount or percentage of sales or turnover, either across the board or for specific products or projects, and this is prominent in your marketing.

But it is important to remember that if you are using the name of the good cause in your marketing, it is a legal requirement that you have a Commercial Fundraising Agreement (CFA) in place.

If you are working with a local charity or community group, this is easy to set up and agree. You do not need a solicitor, just a written and signed agreement of exactly what the terms of your commitment are and how you are permitted to use the charity's name in your marketing.

If you want to fundraise for a large, national charity, that is more difficult to do unless you are a big corporate committed to raising huge sums of money. For small businesses, it is better to use a platform such as [Work for Good](#). It's free to join, takes just a few minutes to set up your agreed commitment online, and all the legal stuff is automatically taken care of.



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IGNITE

The IGNITE programme is a social purpose training and knowledge exchange initiative. Its focus is to explore the pivotal role associations, learned societies, professional bodies and professional institutes can play in advancing the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

As part of the initiative, the Masterclass programme acts as a platform to celebrate all the good work associations are doing to advance their social responsibility and create value for their members.

Join the IGNITE Global Policy Think Tank

As an integral part of the IGNITE programme, we are forming a global policy think tank consisting of both sustainability and association experts and leaders from around the world. This think tank, supported by Consort Strategy and the Institute of Association Leadership, will champion the production of valuable and thought-provoking publications related to sustainability throughout 2021.

Commencing in February 2021, the group will convene six times throughout the year to support the publication of six white papers focussed on a range of sustainability issues relating to the association sector. Furthermore, the group will act as a networking platform for leaders to connect, form new partnerships and, most importantly, discuss and advance social impact and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Being a part of our global policy think tank offers its members an invaluable opportunity to be cited in all-important publications, which will be promoted on an international scale, and ensures that you, and your association remains informed on sustainability issues worldwide.