

Outlook

FINANCE with Paul Cochrane
Senior Partner, McEwan Wallace



You may think that as a senior partner of McEwan Wallace I would only have eyes for the so-called 'bottom line.'

That is perhaps the traditional view of people in my profession. The truth is very different. Yes, money is important and it opens many doors. But, as the 19th century American writer and philosopher Henry David Thoreau said: 'Goodness is the only investment that never fails.'

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is at the heart of everything we do. It is about taking a wider, more responsible and caring view of our role in society and it can make great business sense too. Over the last 100 years, we have built a reputation for helping organisations and businesses flourish and as part of our CSR policy we now have a specialist team dedicated to advising not-for-profit organisations.

This includes everything from helping voluntary groups or charities through the complex world of tax, to ensuring accounting systems are robust enough for their needs. Our staff find this work rewarding and many of us extend our support further, forging friendships with our community clients.

I am privileged to have been the chairman of Wirral Pro Help for the past ten years. Pro Help is a wonderful organisation that has helped community clients save thousands of pounds through free professional support delivered with the same dedication as for paying clients. Community groups in Wirral get help with legal issues, marketing, public relations, building services and much more from local firms who share a passion for CSR. Every successful outcome is a cause for celebration as it helps the local community.

There are benefits for the businesses too. We don't pretend otherwise. For instance, as well as our staff getting a buzz from making a difference, CSR helps us attract positive media coverage, so boosting our profile and enhancing our reputation. We were very proud to learn that we have been nominated for the Corporate Social Responsibility Award at the 2012 WIN Business Awards.

Businesses often find that a responsible and ethical approach helps to retain staff and even attract better staff in the first place. Everyone wants to work for a firm that cares about its staff and the world they live in. This ethos helped us become the first company in Merseyside to be awarded the Investors in People status and one of the first in the country.

For some business the term 'corporate social responsibility' may just be a section on their website or a heading in a brochure, but for McEwan Wallace and many other Wirral firms it is an exciting and rewarding business opportunity and part of our everyday culture. www.mcwallace.co.uk