



# Driving profitability through social impact

How social value empowers people with purpose to deliver business success



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## Introduction

# Get a feel-good afterglow

Richard Eglon, CMO, Nebula



The power of social connection cannot be overstated. Credited with significantly contributing to everything from physical, mental and emotional well-being to enhancing business productivity, strengthening community cohesion and promoting societal longevity. Humans are hard-wired for social connection.

While the environmental aspect of an Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) strategy often takes the spotlight, the social dimension is equally crucial in shaping resilient and forward-thinking businesses.

One reason the social element of ESG is often overlooked is its complex and multifaceted nature; there is no single official definition for organisations to use as a benchmark.

Generally, the social pillar of ESG encompasses how a company manages its internal relations with employees, financial stakeholders, and leadership, as well as its external interactions within local communities, supply chains, and the broader political and societal environment. If I had to sum it up in a nutshell, it's about doing the right thing and giving something back.

Another reason the social element of ESG can be overlooked is the lack of formal reporting requirements for small businesses. The existing requirements for larger businesses often only address parts of the social pillar, such as Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I), human trafficking, and working conditions, which are relatively easy to measure.

However, other aspects, like employee well-being and discrimination, present challenges because they're harder to quantify and require more in-depth analysis than most businesses, especially SMEs, can conduct.

Despite being overshadowed by the environmental aspect of ESG, social value and responsibility are gaining recognition as more businesses realise their benefits. Companies are increasingly understanding the importance of the impact they can make, whether on the lives of individuals within their organisation, local charities and communities, or underdeveloped countries.

In the [first edition](#) of our ESG Unwrapped series, we explored the meaning of ESG in each form – Environmental, Social and Governance and delivered the best strategies to kick-start an ESG journey.

In this second edition, we delve deeper into the social pillar of ESG and through our Net Heroes, we find out how, on a practical level, companies are making social value and responsibility integral to their business strategies. A huge thank you to our Net Heroes for sharing their stories with us.

This report aims to help executives looking to drive meaningful change and business growth within their organisations through both internal and external social value. We also guide you on measuring the social impact of your strategy, so you can bask in the feel-good afterglow that doing good by your teams, your community and our society will undoubtedly bring.



Chapter 1

# Internal social responsibility

“Train employees well enough so they can leave but treat them well enough, so they don’t want to,” says business guru Richard Branson. A firm advocate of giving employees the best experience, Branson was an early adopter and advocate for the internal social pillar of an ESG strategy at Virgin.

In this chapter, we’ll delve into the core aspects of internal social responsibility as part of an ESG strategy, exploring how effective talent acquisition, development, and retention strategies, combined with robust Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives, can elevate both employee morale and overall business performance.

We’ll also explore how, for channel players, prioritising the well-being and

engagement of employees is not just a moral imperative but now drives strategic advantage. By fostering an inclusive, equitable, and supportive workplace, companies can unlock unprecedented levels of productivity, spur innovation, and secure a competitive edge.

### CSR vs ESG

Before ESG became a buzzword, CSR was the acronym of choice for organisations aiming to structure their social sustainability efforts. Given that neither Environmental, Social Governance (ESG) nor Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has a universally accepted definition, confusion often arises regarding how these two strategies compare and relate to each other.

The concept of CSR was introduced in 1953 by American economist Howard Bowen in his book “Social Responsibilities of the Businessman”. Bowen recognised the significant influence of corporations and the tangible impact of their actions on society. ESG, in contrast, is a relatively recent term, emerging only two decades ago, but it addresses many of the same issues related to businesses acting ethically and responsibly within society.

CSR is a self-regulated strategy that individual organisations use as a framework for sustainable and ethical practices.

The key difference between the two lies in their approach: CSR is a self-regulated strategy that individual organisations use as a framework for sustainable and ethical practices. ESG, however, takes this a step further with official reporting, regulations, and guidelines, making it more measurable. ESG criteria are often used by investors to assess and determine investment decisions, adding a layer of accountability and transparency.

The primary intersection between CSR and ESG occurs within the social element. CSR is often seen as a qualitative, people-

and brand-focused approach, where businesses use strong CSR policies to attract and retain staff, boost morale, and enhance brand credibility.

However, with increasing regulations, most organisations will likely shift to reporting their social value efforts under an ESG framework. This approach offers greater transparency and measurability regarding employee well-being, DE&I metrics, and talent acquisition and retention. By doing so, companies can attract investors and potentially improve their share price through enhancing their brand equity.



Source: One Trust



**53%**

of organisations now have a dedicated well-being strategy, and **69%** report that senior leaders prioritise employee well-being. *Source: CIPD*

**Happy + healthy = engaged**

Employee well-being and engagement encompass far more than just job satisfaction and competitive salaries, though these elements are certainly important. According to the latest Chartered Institute of Personnel Development’s (CIPD) Health and Wellbeing at Work survey, over half (53%) of organisations now have a dedicated well-being strategy, and more than two-thirds (69%) report that senior leaders prioritise employee well-being.

But what exactly does employee well-being encompass, how is it related to employee engagement, and why are both so important?

An employee well-being strategy, as part of the social pillar of ESG, involves

a plan to safeguard and enhance the well-being of employees. This can be as straightforward as flexible working, discounted gym membership, free eye test or a cycle-to-work scheme for example, which can be funded through government-backed initiatives.

However, many organisations recognise the advantages of extending their support for employees by offering a broader range of benefits. The Great Place To Work organisation has developed a well-being model with five essential pillars: psychological safety, mental, physical and financial health, work-life balance, interpersonal relationships, and job design and fulfilment. This comprehensive approach is also supported by the CIPD, which has its own set of guidelines (see boxout).

**Help employees belong**

Your well-being strategy will be unique to your organisation. Since your teams have diverse interests, it’s beneficial to involve them from the beginning; people support what they help create.

Whether it’s lunchtime yoga classes, support groups for minorities, or financial well-being assistance during a cost-of-living crisis, these policies are crucial.

They enhance workforce engagement and foster a sense of belonging.

Belonging is a top priority in Deloitte’s latest Global Human Capital Trends survey, with 79% of respondents stating that fostering a sense of belonging is vital for their organisation’s success over the next 12–18 months. Furthermore, 93% agreed that a sense of belonging drives organisational performance. The CIPD highlights that alongside a well-being strategy, strong communication, good relationships with managers and pride in the organisation are key to fostering this sense of belonging.

VAR CAE nurtures the culture for its 400 employees through its CaRe initiative, where R stands for responsibility. As we revealed in our first ESG Unwrapped report, Natalie Hailey, People Services Director at CAE, is focused on developing a culture of transparency and trust at the company. “We have spent a long time creating an environment where people feel they can belong and can talk to us if they need help. We want people to be confident and comfortable to address any concerns – and also enjoy where they work,” she says.

It has long been recognised that a healthy, engaged employee tends to be more productive, and recent studies underscore that employee engagement directly influences customer satisfaction, loyalty, and longevity.

For example, TechJury reports that companies with high employee engagement levels are 21% more profitable. The Workplace Research Foundation reveals that engaged employees are 38% more likely to achieve above-average productivity. Furthermore,



**93%**

of respondents to a Deloitte survey agreed that a sense of belonging drives organisational performance. *Source: Deloitte*

**“We want people to be confident and comfortable to address any concerns – and also enjoy where they work.”**

*Natalie Hailey, People Services Director, CAE*

Glassdoor research indicates that a mere 1-point improvement in an employee’s company rating correlates with a 1.3-point increase in customer satisfaction.

However, the most significant impact on employee engagement and well-being is in an organisation’s ability to attract and retain staff.

**Hiring (and keeping) the best talent**

We all recognise that employees are crucial to the vitality of any business, especially in the competitive sales environment of the channel where attracting and retaining the right salespeople is paramount. However, the landscape has evolved. While salary remains a primary consideration, as highlighted by Zoe Chatley at The Channel Recruiter (see Net Heroes, p34), the incoming generation of employees – Gen Z – has additional priorities.

This shift began with Millennials (born between 1981-1996), who, according to Inc will comprise 75% of the workforce by 2025 and seek out socially responsible employers. The Cone Communications Millennial Employee Study indicates that 64% of Millennials would decline a job offer from a company lacking a robust CSR policy, and 83% would show greater loyalty to a company facilitating their involvement in social and environmental causes.

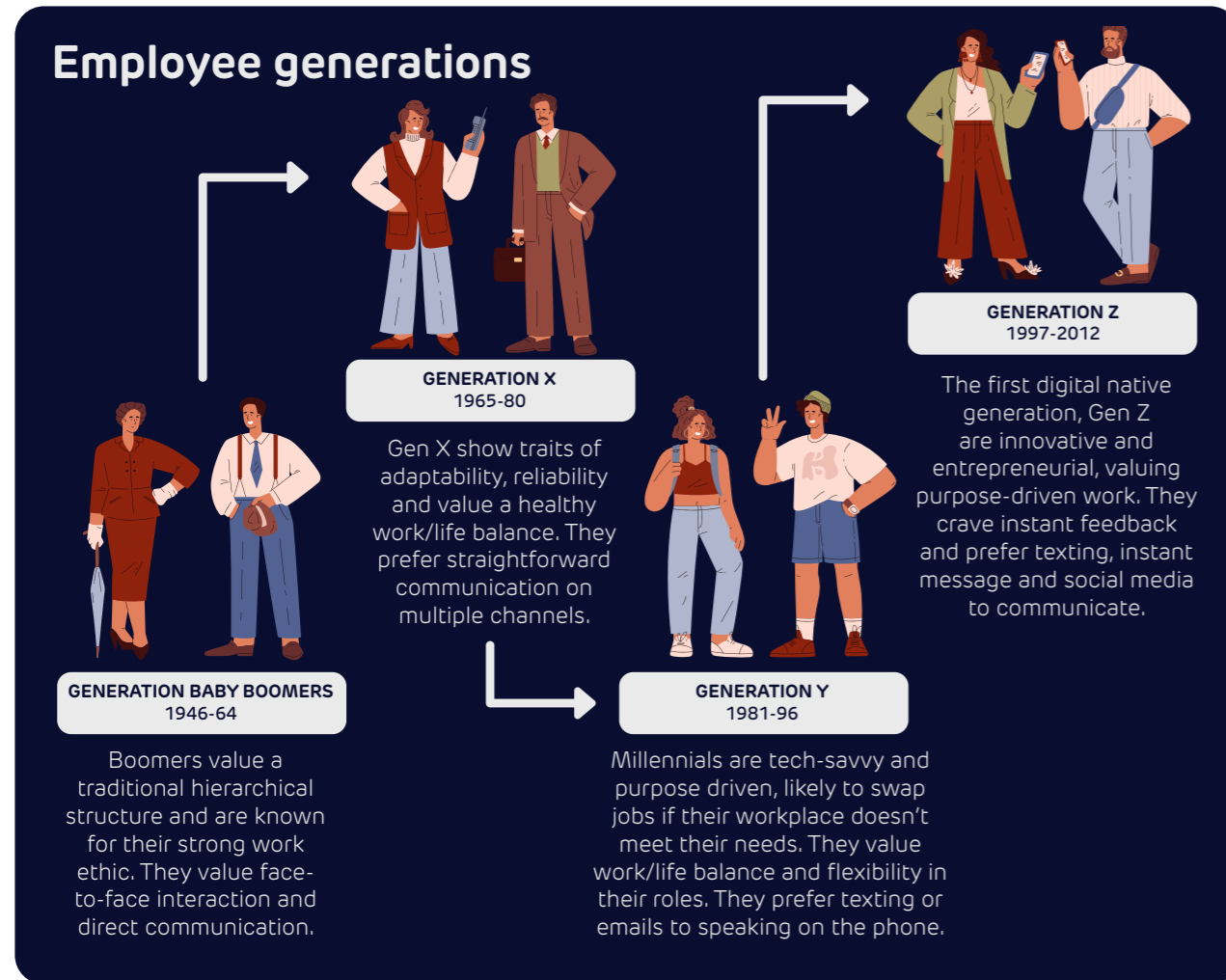
For Gen Z, these preferences are even more pronounced. According to a WeSpire report, Gen Z is the first generation to prioritise purpose over salary, with an empowering work culture being twice as important as a higher salary for retention. While many of these statistics originate from the US, given the influence of

**Employee well-being guidelines**

A robust internal social responsibility strategy will include some or all of these workplace initiatives and activities to support people’s health and wellbeing:

- 1 Health**  
Physical health, physical safety, and mental health
- 2 Good work**  
Working environment, good line management, work demands, autonomy, change management, pay and reward
- 3 Values/Principles**  
Leadership, ethical standards, inclusion and diversity
- 4 Collective/Social**  
Employee voice, positive relationships
- 5 Personal growth**  
Career development, emotional support, lifelong learning, creativity
- 6 Good lifestyle choices**  
Physical activity, healthy eating
- 7 Financial wellbeing**  
Fair pay and benefit policies, retirement planning, employee financial support

*Source: CIPD*



American culture on this UK generation, they are likely relevant to Gen Z coming into the channel as well.

A comprehensive well-being strategy, a supportive culture, and an engaging environment are crucial for attracting this emerging generation. They scrutinise company values and missions, seeking alignment with their own ethical beliefs, and favour companies that demonstrate authenticity and contribute positively to society and the community.

**Get your employer branding right**

Achieving an effective talent acquisition strategy demands strong employer branding, a focus long pursued by industry players like Daisy Corporate Services and Natilik (see Net Heroes, p28 and p32, respectively). According to [CIPD research](#), employer branding encompasses ‘...a set of attributes and qualities, often intangible, that makes an organisation distinctive, promises a particular kind of

*employment experience, and appeals to those people who will thrive and perform best in its culture’.*

A robust employer brand integrates your organisational values, people strategy, and policies with the company’s overall brand identity. Consider Virgin, renowned for Richard Branson’s emphasis on employee experience, or Starbucks, which utilises social media for recruitment.



More than **a quarter** of employees aged between 16-34 believe training and development is the most important factor when it comes to their engagement as an employee.

*Source: HR Director Magazine*

Once new employees are onboarded, the challenge is to retain them and help them become engaged within the role and your organisation.

Involve them in your social ESG strategy from the outset. Encourage their participation in existing teams or pair them with colleagues who share similar interests.

Retaining talent necessitates personalised career progression plans, comprehensive training programmes, and mentorship opportunities. [HR Director Magazine](#) cites research stating that more than a quarter of employees aged between 16-34 believe training and development is the most important factor when it comes to their engagement as an employee.

Training GenZ also requires a new approach. Studies show that they want training that involves mixed media, they thrive on self-study, and want the opportunity to shadow managers to achieve greater workplace connection as well as snackable content available on mobile devices.

While these initiatives may sound expensive, there are many training organisations available to help, including several within the channel that offer these services at low or no charge, such as The Channel Community and Coterie Connect.

**Widen your talent net**

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) are top priorities for many Gen Z and Millennials. [According to a WorkHuman study](#), 80% of Gen Z consider DE&I very important, compared to 60% of Boomers. Similarly, a [WeSpire study](#) revealed that 72% of Gen Z respondents view racial equality as the most pressing issue today.

A robust DE&I strategy is essential to the social pillar of your ESG framework. In

**“Talent is everywhere; opportunity is not.”**

*Yvonne Matzk, CEO and founder, The Channel Community*

**Employee branding checklist**

- 1** Let your values as an organisation be your guiding light and your purpose shine through
- 2** Build and nurture long-term relationships with your potential new hires
- 3** Work on ensuring your company culture stays strong
- 4** Review and audit your attraction and hiring funnel
- 5** Your HR department must not work in silo
- 6** Get your employer brand content right
- 7** Engage your workforce from the top down

*Source: Hays*

the UK, the Equality Act 2010 provides legal protection for nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

However, the CIPD emphasises that an effective DE&I strategy should extend beyond legal compliance and “... take an *intersectional approach to DE&I. Consider factors such as accent, age, caring responsibilities, colour, culture, visible and invisible disabilities, gender identity and expression, mental health, neurodiversity, physical appearance, political opinion, pregnancy and maternity/paternity and family status, and socio-economic circumstances, among other personal characteristics and experiences.*”

Yvonne Matzk, founder of The Channel Community, highlights that socio-economic backgrounds are often overlooked in DE&I efforts (see Net Heroes, p30). Matzk points out that many

## DE&I checklist

- 1 Get managers' buy-in and commitment to D&I**  
By securing buy-in throughout the organisation, you're one step closer to making your DE&I strategies and practices a success.
- 2 Collect and analyse high-quality diversity data**  
Representative workforce data is a crucial component in making more informed people management decisions. The more high-quality people-data employers collect, the better you can design and target DE&I activity and evaluate progress.
- 3 Design diversity training holistically and use perspective-taking**  
Though training on DE&I can change attitudes and foster a diverse and inclusive workplace, avoid taking it for granted.
- 4 Root out bias in job specifications and selection**  
Biased hiring and promotion decisions are a major issue in promoting workforce diversity. The criteria of 'fit' is well embedded in recruitment literature, but we need to be aware of the potential contradiction between recruiting and promoting people for 'person-team' or 'person-organisation' fit, and ensuring that talent management practices are inclusive and promote diversity.
- 5 Be ambitious in taking positive action on diversity**  
Positive action programmes should form a central part of any DE&I strategy. Consider evidence on the effectiveness of various positive action practices and strategies, including targeted recruitment campaigns, as well as mentoring, coaching and sponsorship for underrepresented groups.

Source: CIPD

young adults lack access to the resources needed to enter the tech sector. "Talent is everywhere; opportunity is not," she says.

Numerous studies demonstrate the value of diversity in the workplace, showing benefits such as increased creativity and innovation, skills variation, improved customer service, enhanced staff retention and a boosted bottom line. For example, *McKinsey found* that executive teams with more than 30% women are more likely to outperform others, and those with greater ethnic and cultural diversity outperformed less diverse teams by 36%.

There are various ways to develop your DE&I strategy (see box). Like your well-being strategy, it should be tailored to your organisation and its unique diversity. For example, channel players like Natilik have employee-led communities focused on race in tech, LGBTQ+ issues, and women in tech. These groups help promote diversity, foster inclusion, and offer awareness and mentoring sessions.

Daisy Corporate Services has an initiative called Bridging the Gap, an open forum for employees to talk about different areas of the business, help make decisions about engagement, and form clubs around areas they are passionate about – such as mental health, Andy's men's club and LGBTQ+.

### Conclusion: Internal well-being for external success

Internal social responsibility is a cornerstone of a successful ESG strategy. By prioritising employee well-being and engagement, adopting comprehensive talent acquisition, development, and retention strategies, and fostering a robust DE&I framework, you can create a thriving workplace.

A comprehensive internal social ESG pillar will not only boost morale and productivity but also drive innovation and strengthen your company's competitive edge. As channel players try to navigate an increasingly complex landscape, investing in internal social responsibility will be pivotal in attracting and retaining top talent that drives sales and ensures you can continue building a resilient, forward-thinking organisation.

## NEBULA'S 2024 JOURNEY

# SUSTAINABILITY IN MOTION

Gain a behind-the-scenes look at how Nebula is shaping a greener, more resilient future through innovative strategies and responsible business practices.



Scan to Download Nebula's Sustainable Business Report 2024





Chapter 2

# External social responsibility

Have you noticed that LinkedIn is bursting with organisations showcasing their extra-curricular activities; from building wells in developing countries to volunteering at shelters and participating in fundraising activities? The pressure is on for companies to ramp up their focus on external social responsibility.

External social responsibility as part of an Environmental, Social, Governance (ESG) strategy revolves around the impact a company has on the local community, its contributions to global welfare and its ethical conduct within its supply chain.

For channel players, adopting an external social responsibility strategy not only brings significant societal benefits but also helps build trust and brand loyalty, enhance employee morale and boost business performance.

However, it is understandably overwhelming; in today's cost of living crisis and with such global societal and geopolitical unrest, there are so many people, charities and organisations deserving of support. It's challenging to determine where to start, whom to support, and how to integrate an external

social sustainability strategy within your overall business vision.

### A company-wide strategy

Much like an internal social responsibility and sustainability strategy, the approach and plan for working responsibility externally will be unique to every business. It's essential to involve employees in the process to ensure they feel engaged, with strong top-down support, according to all our Net Heroes interviewed for this report (see p26).

Encouraging leaders to collaborate with employees they may not typically interact with helps break down barriers and foster a culture of openness and transparency.



**69%**

of the public believe that businesses have a responsibility to support their local communities according to the Charities Aid Foundation.

Source: The Charities Aid Foundation

Consult with your people to identify local and national charities they are passionate about and work with them to help set clear expectations about what can be achieved.

### Set goals, drive outcomes

To embed the strategy into your culture, the [Forbes Business Council](#) suggests setting goals for your social value and responsibility strategy that align with business aims and company values. Whether it's holding a fundraising event in the office or donating school supplies abroad, successful projects require clear objectives and measurable outcomes.

Setting specific goals, such as the number of volunteering hours donated by teams or the number of schools equipped with technology in a particular area, helps track progress and ensure accountability – a core part of measuring the impact of the social pillar within an ESG strategy (see Chapter 3).

Appointing 'Social Champions' to lead groups focused on different aspects of the strategy can help to ensure these social impact goals are met.

### Local community engagement

One of the best places to start a social value strategy is the local community. According to the [Charities Aid Foundation](#), more than two-thirds (69%) of the public believe that businesses have a responsibility to support their local communities. Building meaningful connections can be achieved by forming partnerships with local organisations, charities, or schools.

For example, many VARs and tech firms encourage teams to participate as [STEM Ambassadors](#) or within organisations such as [Tech Channel Ambassadors](#), which focus on raising awareness of opportunities within the tech sector to disadvantaged groups and communities.

### An army of volunteers

While one-off cash donations are appreciated by charities, they are unlikely to provide employees with a sense of fulfilment, enhance brand reputation, or deliver the other major benefits that social value can offer.

## Ideas on how to help



Make a financial donation to local causes – for example, a fundraising event run by employees



Provide team members with 'give back' volunteering days, such as planting trees, helping at a food bank or within a school



Answer local calls for help – for example, for extra food donations or support for a local cultural venue



Support local primary and secondary schools by offering talks and work experience opportunities, give to their raffle or donate refurbished technology



Partner with local charities and community groups for one-off events or ongoing support

## SHARING is caring

As part of its social strategy, Nebula Global Services partners with community support and food charity SHARE Wokingham. Based in the same town as Nebula's HQ, SHARE Wokingham and its affiliate organisations **save over 40 tonnes** of food and beverages a month, which supports more than **500 households** (2,000 people) every week. As the cost-of-living crisis continues, those numbers look set to increase, and Nebula believes it's vital that businesses support local charities that provide the final safety net for many people in need.



Claire Revie, Founder of SHARE Wokingham said working with the Nebula team is different to working with any other corporate team: *"SHARE has become a*

*community of its own and a support network for not just those that come along for food but also for the volunteers – Nebula is integral in that. The team support regularly and they are fully committed not just on service days but to the charity as a whole."*

### Financial benefit of volunteering to those in professional jobs

	Additional benefit
Wage increase attributable to volunteering	£2,301
National Insurance contributions	£318
Employer pension contributions	£69
Wage uprated for average profit	£1,864
<b>Total value of added productivity – individual</b>	<b>£4,551</b>
<b>Total value of added productivity – across all volunteers</b>	<b>£4,620,000,000</b>

Source: [ProBono economics](#)

A more impactful approach is to offer paid volunteering days. Stats range from between 50% and 75% of UK firms providing volunteering or charitable opportunities to their employees, and the demand for such initiatives is rapidly increasing among staff, according to Hays.

However, despite UK businesses donating 11 million days of paid volunteering time annually, uptake remains low. According to [HR Magazine](#) and the London Benchmarking Group, only 14% of employees participate. The primary reason cited is that under-pressure employees feel they don't have the time.

Our Net Heroes have overcome this uptake issue in two ways. Firstly, encouragement for employees to take time off for volunteering comes from senior leadership and is supported through line management. Secondly, they arrange volunteering days where groups of employees can go together – such as working in local soup kitchens or helping out at the local homeless shelter.

#### Put the 'fun' in fundraising

Fundraising is another effective way to engage employees in a social responsibility strategy. This can be done through company-wide initiatives such as holding special events, like cook-offs, or fancy dress. This is where your engaged employees and Social Champions will be essential in coming up with ideas and seeing them through to execution. Alternatively, simply supporting employees' fundraising efforts, such as matching

their sponsorship targets empowers people into action and demonstrates a commitment to social value.

Working in the technology sector allows channel players to offer useful products and services for free. Donating refurbished technology to schools or local small charities makes a big difference. The free use of office space is another impactful way to contribute without a substantial upfront investment or direct donation. For example, VAR CAE offers its offices to a local YMCA for people who need a safe space or when the organisation is running fundraising events.

Tree-planting, street-cleaning or sponsoring a local children's sports team can also foster goodwill and showcase the company's dedication to the community's well-being.

#### Helping further afield

Social sustainability is not limited to just the local community. Many channel players align charitable giving with employees' passions on a national level, with major medical research,



Only **14%** of employees participate in paid volunteering, despite UK businesses donating 11 million days a year.

Source: [HR Magazine and London Benchmarking Group](#)

children and animal charities featuring high on the list. A useful resource is [Charity Choice](#) which lists all registered UK charities and allows donors to see how each pound they give is spent.

Sponsoring events is another way of giving back – CRN's Channel Awards and Fight Night events have raised hundreds of thousands of pounds for multiple charities over the years from sponsorship opportunities. [Tech for Good](#) is also popular and allows organisations to partner with charities and other good causes to pool their resources and skills to tackle major societal issues.

Further afield, engaging in overseas projects allows channel players to extend their impact globally. This could include education, health, infrastructure, and environmental sustainability. Collaborating with international NGOs and local communities ensures that these projects are relevant and beneficial.

For example, Daisy has partnered with [Ground Breaker](#) to provide educational technology to underfunded schools in developing countries. This not only aids in local education efforts but also helps boost the wider economy of that country, helping uplift disadvantaged communities.

#### Be part of a socially responsible supply chain

External social responsibility is about more than just sponsoring the local girl's football team and planting trees in the nearest National Trust site – important though these are. For the channel especially, it's about being part of an ethical, socially responsible supply chain.

Ethical supplier practices involve ensuring that all suppliers throughout the value chain stand by fair labour practices, meet environmental standards and operate ethical businesses. It allows channel players to communicate the values of their organisation to external stakeholders and ensure expectations and requirements are met.

For channel players, much of the components and language in a supplier code of conduct are standardised and

### Code of conduct checklist

According to [ecoVadis](#), a global provider of business sustainability ratings, to develop a code of conduct organisations should:

- 1 Assess any risk in their supply chain such as where manufactured products are sourced from, and whether the labour practices in those countries adhere to your own business ethics.
- 2 Consult with other suppliers and stakeholders in your supply chain to see if they have a code of conduct so you can work in tandem and use consistent language. This is crucial for channel players because it's likely most of their vendors and suppliers will already have their own codes of conduct.
- 3 Look for common standards for the technology industry, such as the [Responsible Business Alliance](#) (used by IBM, HP and others).
- 4 Regular audits and assessments are then required to ensure ongoing compliance and address any issues.



will be familiar – all larger vendors will have ensured their channel has read and adhered to their own code of conduct.

While compiling a code of conduct might seem daunting, there are templates and organisations available to help. And, by adopting ethical supplier practices channel players can be transparent and open with prospects and customers, further enhancing their brand reputation, improving customer trust and gaining competitive advantage.

#### Achieve a positive corporate image

As we mentioned in the [first ESG Unwrapped report](#), consumers (both B2B and B2C), especially the latest generation, are most likely to engage with brands that are making ethical, sustainable and responsible choices.



The exposure from helping with the local community, while not the main reason for the engagement enhances the company's visibility and reputation. Positive word-of-mouth and media coverage of community initiatives can attract new customers and partners who share similar values, which translates into business opportunities.

Similarly, working with global charities helps contribute to a positive corporate image, so prospects, customers and potential employees view the business as a responsible and proactive global player. This helps to build trust and brand loyalty because customers and stakeholders perceive the company as responsible and ethical.

The uplift in reputation achieved from a social responsibility strategy converts into increased business opportunities, customer retention and talent acquisition and retention.

**Boost morale, attract talent**

Offering benefits such as volunteering days isn't just good for brand reputation and community awareness. Developing a strong external social sustainability pillar and engaging employees helps to improve job satisfaction and morale, and enhance an employee's sense of belonging and accomplishment – all of which have a positive impact on productivity and staff retention.

Beyond this, The British Psychological Society notes that employees identify more with organisations that have a strong ethical purpose and responsibility, have greater pride in working for those organisations, are more engaged and committed, and are less likely to want to leave.

And it's not just about staff retention due to high levels of morale, studies show that ethical and responsible employees are much more attractive to potential employees, especially Gen Z. A 2021 Ernst & Young survey shows that almost two-thirds of Gen Z feel it is "very or extremely important" to work for employers that share their values, as their work life is defined by value, not money.

**Conclusion: start local, go global, drive success**

The integration of external social responsibility strategies into an ESG programme is crucial for channel players aiming to lead in today's competitive market. Engaging with local communities, participating in impactful overseas projects and implementing ethical supplier practices, are more than just good deeds; they are strategic priorities that drive business success.

Local community involvement fosters positive relationships and boosts a company's reputation. Overseas projects showcase global commitment, enhancing corporate image and attracting partners and customers who value responsible business practices. Ethical supplier procedures ensure fair and sustainable operations, reducing risks and strengthening supply chains. All of which improve employee morale, leading to better staff retention and greater attractiveness to potential employees.

Engaging in local and global efforts highlights the importance of a comprehensive approach to external social responsibility, regardless of how small your company or embryonic your strategy. Channel players that adopt these strategies, will foster a sustainable and responsible business environment that benefits both society and their bottom line.



# #TeamNebula Community Volunteering

SHARE Wokingham Community Charity

50+

Nebula commits to 50+ volunteer days a year

12

Up to 12 days per year for each UK employee



40 tonnes of food waste avoided every week



2,000 people per week provided with fresh food



500+ households supported weekly



1,500 children receive Christmas presents



£90,000+ spent on Christmas presents for low-income families



11,000+ Christmas presents distributed

## Chapter 3 Social value measurement



'What gets measured gets done', according to business guru Peter Drucker, so while incorporating social value into your ESG strategy is a commendable step, the real challenge lies in understanding and then measuring the impact of your efforts.

By quantifying the impact of your social initiatives, both internally and externally, you can ensure that your strategy isn't only meaningful but also aligned with your company's values and long-term objectives.

In this chapter we explore how you can effectively measure the impact and value of your social value strategy, offering guidance on selecting the right frameworks, and growing and developing your strategy for the long term.

### Integrate to accelerate

As we've demonstrated in chapters one and two, social value is a crucial pillar of your overall ESG strategy, directly impacting how stakeholders, employees, customers and prospects perceive your brand.

By integrating it more deeply into your ESG strategy, your organisation can better align your social goals with your overall business strategy driving further benefits. A strong alignment between social impact and

business values not only helps to solidify your brand's identity and build trust, but it also helps accelerate positive change inside and outside your organisation and drive competitive advantage.

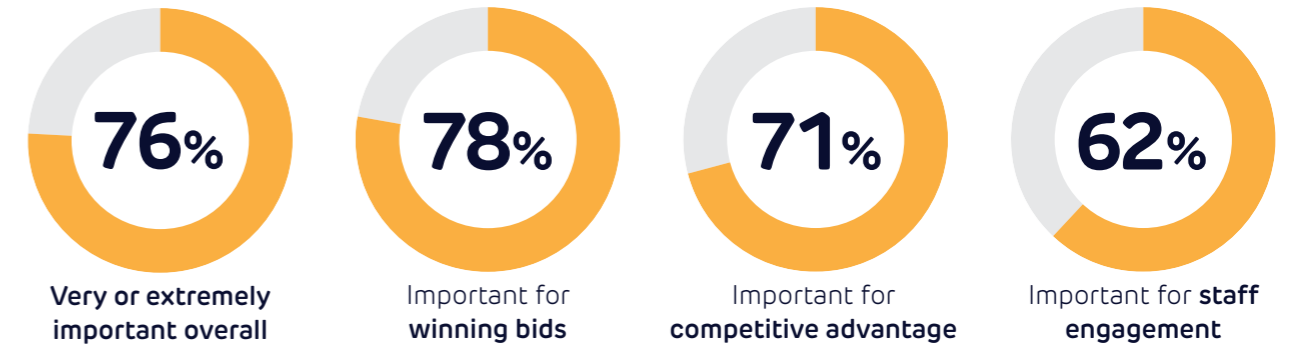
A core element of this integration is measuring the impact of your social value.

### Why measure?

Measuring social value allows you to track progress, refine strategies, communicate successes, and ultimately expand your social impact. By integrating impact measurement into an ESG strategy, channel players can create a feedback loop that highlights areas for improvement and celebrates the positive outcomes of their efforts, reinforcing commitments to responsible business practices.

Not only that, but as we've already seen in this report, organisations can no longer just pay lip service to social value; it's now a deciding factor in new business (especially in large public sector contracts), in attracting and retaining the best talent, in reputation management and for boosting morale (see graph on page 19), which in turn improves productivity. Being able to properly and accurately measure social value means businesses can use data to prove their efforts, rather than just relying on anecdotal evidence.

### How important is social value for different operational areas?



Source: Social Value Portal: *Social Value Insights Report 2024*

### 'Good' for business

Jo Ballard, Managing Director at ESG consultancy firm Mundus Consulting, and Net Hero from our first *ESG Unwrapped* report, says in her experience customers relish seeing these figures in black and white. "It's not just in the public sector. Over the past five years, everyone has become more aware of social value and the social impact their organisation is making. Now, for very little resource, technology channel players can have a big outcome in reputation, customer commitment, and loyalty.

"Adding social value onto a contract by taking someone on locally or using local providers, means customers are much more likely to choose your business over a competitor that isn't adding this social value."

Beyond this, for the public sector especially, there are formal obligations that state certain social values must be added to contracts. For example, the 2012 Public Services (Social Value) Act and subsequent Policy Notes have helped to embed social value in public sector procurement. In 2023, the Procurement Bill was launched that will make 'the public good' an even more central pillar of UK public sector procurement decisions.

However, it will only be a matter of time before this trend spreads to wider commercial contracts. According to [research from the Social Value Portal](#), 82% of respondents expect their organisations to spend more time supporting social value over the next three years. This number was even higher among public sector respondents, at 88%.

### Finding a framework

The biggest challenge most organisations face when it comes to measuring social value, according to Ballard, is knowing where to start. "It can be easy to feel overwhelmed, especially for small

## Social frameworks and standards

### UN Sustainable Development Goals

The 17 goals created by the UN are a 'universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and improve the lives and prospects of everyone, everywhere.'

### Social Value Model

The 2021 framework helps public sector buyers choose which questions to ask to help differentiate between suppliers based on how they behave towards society.

### The Social Value Portal/TOMS

A useful tool/framework to help calculate the proxy value of your social sustainability efforts.

### Social ROI

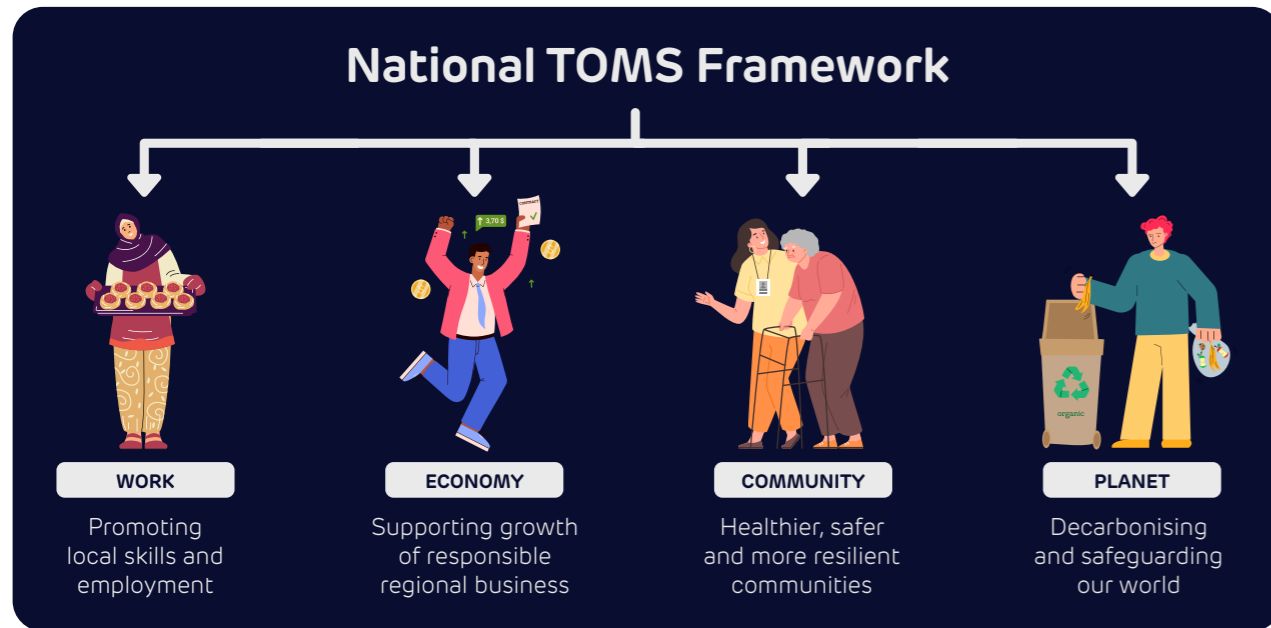
Social Return On Investment (SROI) is a method of accounting for the social, economic, and environmental value created by a company.

### Business for Societal Impact

A more formal framework for measuring social value and the difference a company is making in society.

### Global Reporting Initiative

A global, wider framework that helps larger organisations understand their impact on the economy, environment, and society.



businesses, but there are lots of tools and metrics out there to make it easy," she says.

The tool Ballard uses the most is the [Social Value Portal](#), which incorporates a measurement method called the National TOMS Framework (Themes, Outcomes, Measurement). The framework measures social value in four distinct areas: work, economy, community, and planet. It then allows users to calculate the social value in real terms (i.e. donating money to charity) or in proxy value.

For example, if a group of employees volunteer at a homeless shelter, there's a list of hourly proxy values that would equate to, such as £5 per hour per employee. Users then input the number of hours and volunteers to see an exact amount of proxy social value. The list of values is substantial and reassessed every year.

Traditionally designed for public sector procurement organisations that were seeking ways to select the best supplier, TOMS is also aligned with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Anyone can get a log-in to investigate the tool for free.

Alongside TOMS there are other widely recognised frameworks such as Social Return on Investment (SROI), which monetises the social value created by activities, comparing the benefits generated to the costs incurred.

There is also the [Business for Societal Impact](#), a more formal framework for larger organisations and the [Global Reporting Initiative \(GRI\)](#) which provides standardised guidelines for measuring and reporting on sustainability performance, including social impact.

Choosing the right framework depends on an organisation's size, resources, and specific goals. The key is to ensure that any measurement approach is consistent, transparent, and tailored to the business, says Ballard.

**Combining business with measure**  
According to this [EY podcast](#), organisations with strong social credentials will be better positioned to weather challenging times and business conditions. In addition, stakeholders are looking for social metrics to be included

**"By putting a value on achievements, businesses have a benchmark from which to set some KPIs and then develop a strategy that will last long term."**

*Jo Ballard, Managing Director, Mundus Consulting*

in non-financial disclosures to help better compare performance with peers and suppliers. Therefore, ensuring your measurement strategy is robust is vital.

While there are no formal guidelines, below are four steps many specialists advise for planning a social impact measurement effectively:

**1 Set clear goals and objectives**  
Start by defining what success looks like. Establish clear, *measurable* goals that align with broader business objectives, such as improving community engagement within the education sector or boosting the number of employees participating in volunteering.

**2 Engage stakeholders**  
Involve key stakeholders – not just those at the top of the organisation who sign off on activities, but also customers and community partners. It's useful to collect feedback to understand what matters most to them and ensure their perspectives shape your approach. This can be done as part of a Materiality Study (see box).

**3 Collect and analyse data**  
Use both quantitative and qualitative data to assess your impact. For smaller organisations, this might be done in a spreadsheet that can be transferred across to a framework/tool such as TOMs to calculate the proxy values. Within larger companies, a more sophisticated integrated social impact system approach may work.

Qualitative data, like testimonials and case studies, are also useful to provide valuable insights into the personal and community effects of your initiatives which can be amplified through marketing and PR.

**4 Report and communicate results**  
Transparency is crucial. Regularly report and celebrate your impact with stakeholders, across your organisation, and in the community.

**Celebrating achievements**  
Communication and showcasing activities are a critical part of social impact. For



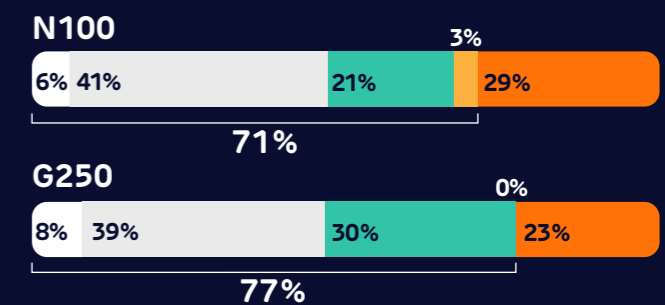
## What is a Materiality Study?

"A Materiality Study is designed to find out what's important to your customers, what's important to your stakeholders and to your employees," according to Mundus Consulting's Jo Ballard (pictured above), who conducts these types of studies with her clients.

Ballard says she is seeing increasing numbers of organisations conduct materiality assessments that also cover the local community, such as local charities or local government. "By understanding what the priorities are for key stakeholders internally and within your community, it means businesses can ensure their social strategy is focused on things that actually matter to people rather than just on trends."

According to [KPMG's latest sustainability reporting research](#): "Materiality is the cornerstone of reporting and a useful starting point for companies of all sizes. Around the world, a significant majority of reporting companies in both the N100 (71 percent) and G250 companies (77 percent) are performing materiality assessments."

### Material topic disclosure by materiality concept (2022)



- Companies that identify material topics using the "impact on the company" concept
- Companies that identify material topics using the "impact on the company and its stakeholders" concepts
- Companies that identify material topics using the "impact on the company, its stakeholders and broader society" concepts
- Companies that identify material topics using "none of the above" concepts
- Companies that do not identify material topics

Source: KPMG Survey of Sustainability Reporting 2022

## Nebula's Sustainable Business Report



Nebula began its sustainability journey in 2023, and has this year published its first Sustainable Business Report.

This document combines all the activities, results, inputs and outputs from the firm's sustainability journey over the past 12 months.

"It was fantastic to be able to put some figures and stats on what we've achieved this year," says Richard Eglon, CMO at Nebula and the firm's ESG champion. "We thought we'd accumulated around £250K worth of social value from our activities throughout the year, but when we added it all up, we'd achieved £262k! We were proud of this achievement in our first year of measuring our social value, however, we'd never have known these figures if we hadn't started measuring everything and using a social impact calculator, like TOMs. We've already worked out by how much percentage we want improve on this for next year," he adds, "which contributes in a positive way to our overall business strategy."

And it's not just the social aspect of ESG included in Nebula's Sustainable Business Report. The documents also include detailed DE&I information, its stance on everything from corruption to IT security and how it maintains supply chain integrity in the tech world.

[Download the report](#)

It also incorporates a forward-looking statement that highlights how the firm intends to improve on these figures and develop its ESG strategy over the next 12 months.

larger organisations, legislation has been the persuasive tool used by governments to ensure businesses report on ESG. With no such legislation applicable to smaller channel businesses, a Sustainable Business Report can be used to highlight activities around social impact and ESG in general, according to Ballard.

She says a Sustainable Business Report is an effective way of showing an ESG journey. "There isn't a set format for this type of report, so it gives businesses more freedom to talk about the workings of their organisation and showcase internal and external achievements around social value and ESG in general."

It's not only about sharing results and achievements through reports. Marketing and PR can help gain local and national media coverage, as well as in industry trade magazines. This not only boosts brand awareness, and helps attract and retain employees, but also ensures that stakeholders and potential investors recognise your ESG efforts, ultimately driving new business and investment opportunities.

### Develop and grow

One of the biggest benefits of producing an annual sustainability report is that it gives you a benchmark from which to grow, Ballard says. "Most companies are already doing a lot of social impact work without even realising it," she says. "By putting a value on achievements, businesses have a benchmark from which to set some KPIs and then develop a strategy that will last long term."

Producing a Sustainable Business Report also enables organisations to assess successes and areas for development. For example, while HR and hiring the right people for DE&I might have been a successful focus for year one, perhaps a volunteering programme could be added for year two.

Alternatively, organisations might find they have spent lots of investment time and resources on the environmental side, but less on the social elements, says Ballard. "That's why measuring and then conducting analysis through this type of reporting is so valuable: it means you can



plug any gaps and improve on any social impact even further next year."

Vitaly, she adds, it also presents an opportunity to encourage feedback, especially from senior leaders, who play a pivotal role in championing social impact and can inspire greater participation and commitment across the organisation year-on-year.

### Conclusion: Measure to accelerate success

Measuring social value and its associated impact isn't just about proving success; it's about driving it. Technology channel firms that prioritise measuring their social impact will unlock multiple long-term

## ESG report checklist

A sustainable business report is defined by PwC as... "A report published by companies that enables addressees and users to understand more clearly the impacts of a company's business activities on the environment and society and to assess the risks and opportunities companies face, or which are offered to them. It is a communication tool that plays an important role in convincing sceptical observers that the company's actions are sincere."

This list is not exhaustive and is designed as a starting point to develop a Sustainable Business Report:

- Executive summary
- Basic 'About us' company information including roles and responsibility and stakeholder information
- Governance – Mandatory reporting information (such as Scope 1 and 2 data)
- Materiality study data
- Internal and External approach
- Framework and guidelines
- Three sections detailing stance on Environment, Social and Governance
- DE&I and corruption information
- KPIs
- Achievements
- Forward looking strategy and new KPIs

benefits such as improving brand loyalty, enhancing employee satisfaction, and increasing customer retention.

Vitaly for channel players, strong measurement and transparent reporting can attract investors that are increasingly looking for companies that demonstrate a commitment to social responsibility. By embedding measurement into your social value strategy, you ensure that your efforts remain focused, impactful, and aligned with your overall business vision. Remember, what gets measured gets done.

## Conclusion



ESG is commonplace – most organisations understand what it is, how it works and the impact it is having on their business. And, while five years ago many businesses saw ESG as a box-ticking exercise, new legislation, public and customer opinion, and the latest generation of employees entering the workplace have seen a fundamental shift.

However, there still exist executives who incorrectly consider the social element of ESG – more so than the environmental aspect – a fad or a trend. With no legal requirement for organisations to report on their social value, some technology channel players still believe that simply signing off on a volunteering day or two or hiring one person of colour and one over 50 years old is enough. Naturally, when there is little benefit and no positive repercussions and reactions, they become disappointed and discouraged. [Harvard Business Review](#) describes

this in detail and says to overcome this frustration organisations need to understand the difference between operational effectiveness and strategy. In his formative article [“What Is Strategy?”](#) Michael Porter says the former, “*means performing similar activities better than rivals*”; the latter “*is about being different*.”

When it comes to an ESG programme, while the environmental side focuses mostly on achieving operational efficiencies, it’s forming a strategy around the social element that will result in differentiation and in long-term financial improvement.

Not only that, as we’ve discovered throughout this report, having a differentiated social value strategy and driving social value will also boost competitive advantage, help you attract and retain the best employees, improve customer loyalty and catch the eye of

serious investors looking to capitalise on a business that stands out from its competitors.

As many of our Net Heroes pointed out, social value is more than just an ethical imperative; it’s a strategic opportunity for businesses to make a positive impact on their people, communities, and the world at large – as well as boost business and drive sales. Whether through internal initiatives that enhance employee well-being and engagement, or external projects that foster local community partnerships and global outreach, a strong social value strategy forms an essential pillar of a robust ESG plan.

Interconnecting social value with environmental efforts and ethical governance then creates an overarching ESG strategy that not only strengthens your organisation’s reputation but also ensures long-term resilience and

competitiveness in an increasingly conscious market.

However, building a strong social value strategy is not a one-time effort – it’s a continuous journey of improvement and adaptation. The needs of employees, communities, and the global landscape will evolve, and so too should your approach. By committing to ongoing measurement, engaging in meaningful partnerships, and aligning with broader ESG goals, your business can create a positive and lasting social impact.

Social value is about more than doing good – it’s about succeeding by doing good. With a clear strategy, strong leadership, and an engaged workforce, you can build a socially responsible business that thrives on purpose and performance, not only contributing to a better world but also securing your place as a trusted, forward-thinking leader in the industry.



# NET HEROES

There's a growing community of sustainable tech activists who are passionate about ESG. Here's just a few of them...

## The real value of partner marketing

Helen Curtis and Jo Dunkley,  
Co-founders, Coterie



With business giants such as BT, Arcadia and Intel on their CVs, Helen Curtis and Jo Dunkley are well-versed in marketing to and through channels. This expertise led them to establish Coterie, a dedicated channel marketing agency, in 2013.

Their deep understanding of marketing within ecosystems made them aware of the nuances between various marketing disciplines, but they identified a significant knowledge and skills gap in partner marketing.

"We wanted to help people within marketing, so we started training our clients so they understood the value and had the right skills to do partner marketing properly," says Curtis. "We wrote our book – [How to be a Boundary Spanner](#) – and gave away all of our IP because we wanted to give something back and help the next generation of marketers."

It was the idea of giving something back that spurred Dunkley and Curtis to launch the Coterie Community – now known as Coterie Connect.

"It wasn't a formal part of our ESG strategy, but we realised that Coterie Connect was the perfect outlet for our skills and meant that we could create a whole community of support to help with mentoring, training and networking for everyone in partner marketing," says Dunkley.

Coterie Connect holds regular meet-ups, and members include professionals from some of the largest tech vendors, including Veritas, Palo Alto and Verizon. Members contribute to the community by giving time for mentoring or training and sharing best practices.

Research by Coterie reveals that partner marketing is frequently undervalued and often considered the Cinderella of marketing. Many companies either lack the in-house expertise to train their marketers or mistakenly believe that field marketers can easily transition to partner

marketing. Curtis and Dunkley are determined to change this perception.

Curtis emphasises that the world has changed significantly. With the influx of data and the vast array of choices now available to B2B buyers, organisations must excel in ecosystem marketing to capture market share and retain customers for the long term.

"Skills development is a vital component of an ESG strategy. Many young people entering our sector possess general marketing skills, which is great. But, to succeed, they need to do more than just find their way in the dark when it comes to ecosystem marketing. That's where Coterie Connect comes in," says Dunkley.

And it goes beyond just training and skills development. Channel marketers in smaller companies often work in isolation, lacking a team to support them or validate their strategic decisions, which can negatively impact their mental health.

"Giving individuals the opportunity to be part of a community of people who share the same challenges and can problem solve together isn't just great for the S in an ESG strategy, it's good for business too," Curtis says. "It makes people feel valued and helps keep them motivated, so they'll be more productive and help drive business growth."

**One piece of advice:** Put some structure and framework around the partner marketing team – even if it's just one person. Give them a career development plan, get them skilled up, and use free mentoring and training services to make sure they have the right skills in place for success.



**An engineer by trade,** Lyndsey Charlton, formerly COO at Daisy Corporate Services, realised the scale of opportunities being missed by thousands of talented girls in the technology sector when an article featuring her went viral almost eight years ago.

This revelation led her to become involved with STEM Learning, an organisation that promotes Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) in education. Her passion for and knowledge of social responsibility grew from there, and as she advanced to COO, she helped embed social sustainability and responsibility into Daisy's core strategy.

Daisy's ESG strategy is divided into three areas: People, Planet and Partnerships. Responsibility for delivery of these areas is split between senior executives, with the firm's chief people officer overseeing the social remit, although the entire business is actively involved.

Charlton has encouraged many of the employees at Daisy to become STEM Learning Ambassadors alongside her, working with local primary and secondary schools. "Some people thought you had to be an engineer, but I involved our finance team and our project managers – they all work for a tech company and can help encourage and enthuse," she says.

Daisy also partners with The Greggs Foundation to provide free breakfast clubs for children at the local schools it engages with through its STEM programme. "It's a real lifeline for children who need it and it feels more like we are in a partnership with the local community," Charlton says.

To build a robust social sustainability strategy, the firm aligned its ESG programme with the [17 UN Sustainable Development Goals](#), focusing on areas the team felt passionate about. Charlton highlighted the digital divide as a key focus. "One of our account managers wanted to support a customer's charity that helps homeless people get back into work. We supplied SIM cards and mobile phones, and whenever that customer buys from us, we donate via an agreed tech fund to the charity," Charlton explained.

And the relationship extends beyond donations. The account manager realised that many of these

## Prioritise giving back at a senior level

Lyndsey Charlton, formerly COO at Daisy Corporate Services

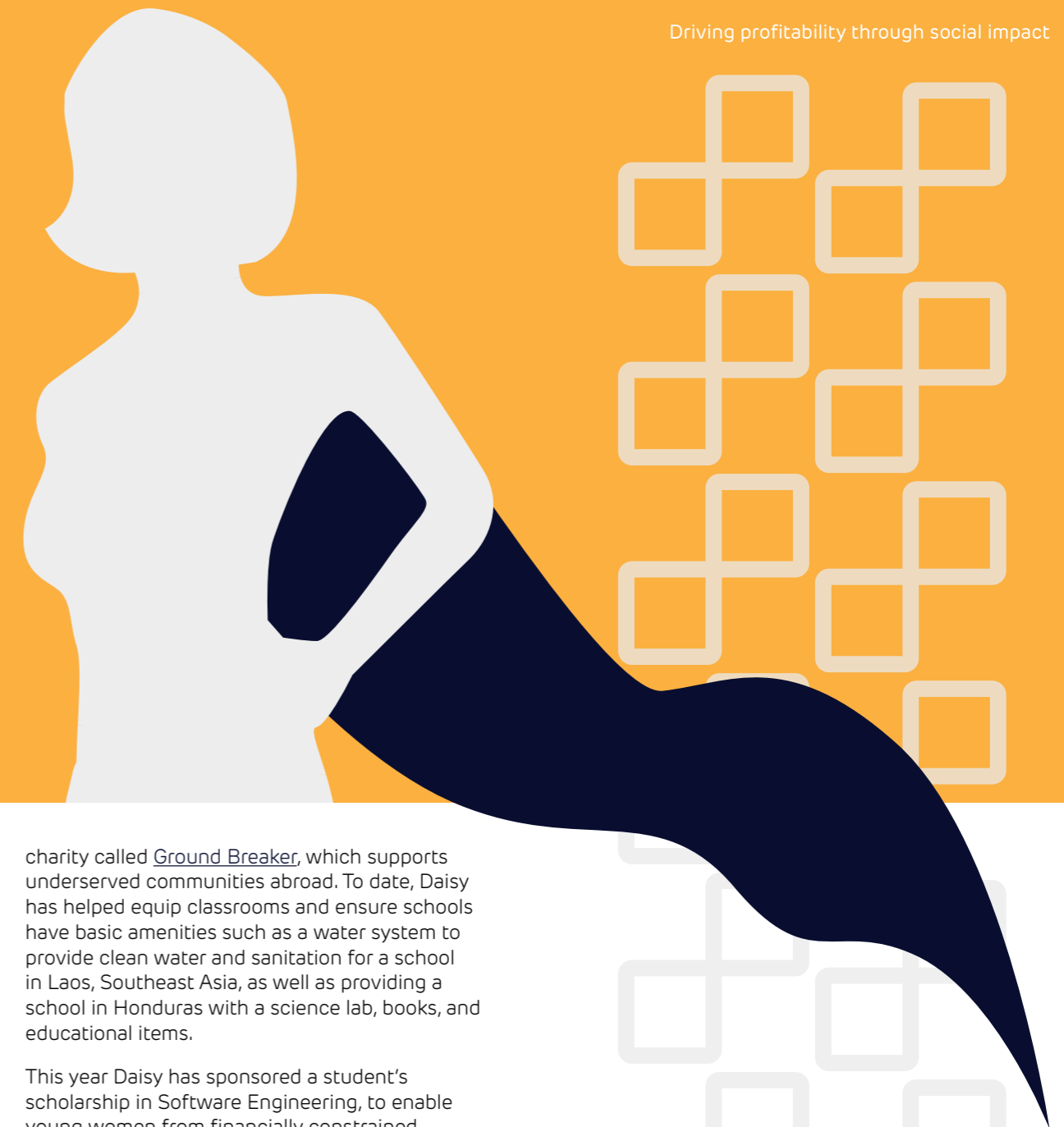
individuals also needed assistance with writing CVs and preparing for interviews. In collaboration with Daisy's L&D team, they compiled a range of materials and opened the Aston office to provide interview guidance and practice, as well as an online learning portal for access remotely.

The firm offers multiple volunteering days to all staff and organises a variety of charitable activities that employees can participate in. One such initiative is [Chapter One](#), which aims to improve reading skills in schools. Employees are paired with children to help them read, encouraging their progress and fostering a love for reading.

Charlton has particularly enjoyed working with the Girl Guides and Rainbows group, with Daisy providing support through funding and materials to sponsor the Recycling Badge. "We held a competition for the girls to design a recycling superhero character, which our management team judged. It was great fun, and from this, we created a comic strip to accompany it," Charlton said.

Daisy is also a founding member of [The Big Goal](#), a UK-based organisation that tackles youth homelessness through football. "We work hard to give back to our local community. The challenge is deciding where to volunteer or donate, but this is where we get our teams and customers involved," Charlton says.

Daisy's efforts extend beyond the local community and the UK. The firm collaborates with a global



charity called [Ground Breaker](#), which supports underserved communities abroad. To date, Daisy has helped equip classrooms and ensure schools have basic amenities such as a water system to provide clean water and sanitation for a school in Laos, Southeast Asia, as well as providing a school in Honduras with a science lab, books, and educational items.

This year Daisy has sponsored a student's scholarship in Software Engineering, to enable young women from financially constrained communities to exploit their full potential and access a brighter future in the digital era.

Charlton emphasizes that Daisy's culture of giving back originates from the top down. "ESG needs to become part of the board strategy to be successful," Charlton says. "You need someone who understands it, is passionate about it, and takes responsibility for it. As a business, you have to prioritise it to make meaningful progress."

**One piece of advice:** Find a cause that means something to your business and treat ESG and social value as part of your culture – it can't just be left up to one or two people. We all have a responsibility as businesses to try and right some wrongs and help mitigate and improve our impact on the world.

## Time to break the class ceiling

**Yvonne Matzk, CEO and founder, The Channel Community**



**After a diverse career** in IT, Yvonne Matzk decided in 2020 to venture out on her own and start a coaching and consulting business.

During her tenure in the tech industry, Matzk benefited from training, support and mentors who helped her build a network, overcome challenges and navigate her career. However, it was only after becoming a coach that she recognised a significant gap: many in the tech sector lacked access to such support.

Driven by a desire to give back, Matzk reflected on her own experiences. "Whenever I was at tech conferences, a group of us would gather at the bar, sharing our experiences and challenges that were consistent across the industry," she said. "This informal community provided great support, and I wanted to create something similar for those without access to it."

Matzk noticed that her network included many experienced professionals who would be willing to mentor the next generation and be part of a community of like-minded individuals willing to share ideas and collaborate to address bigger issues.

This realisation led to the creation of [The Channel Community](#).

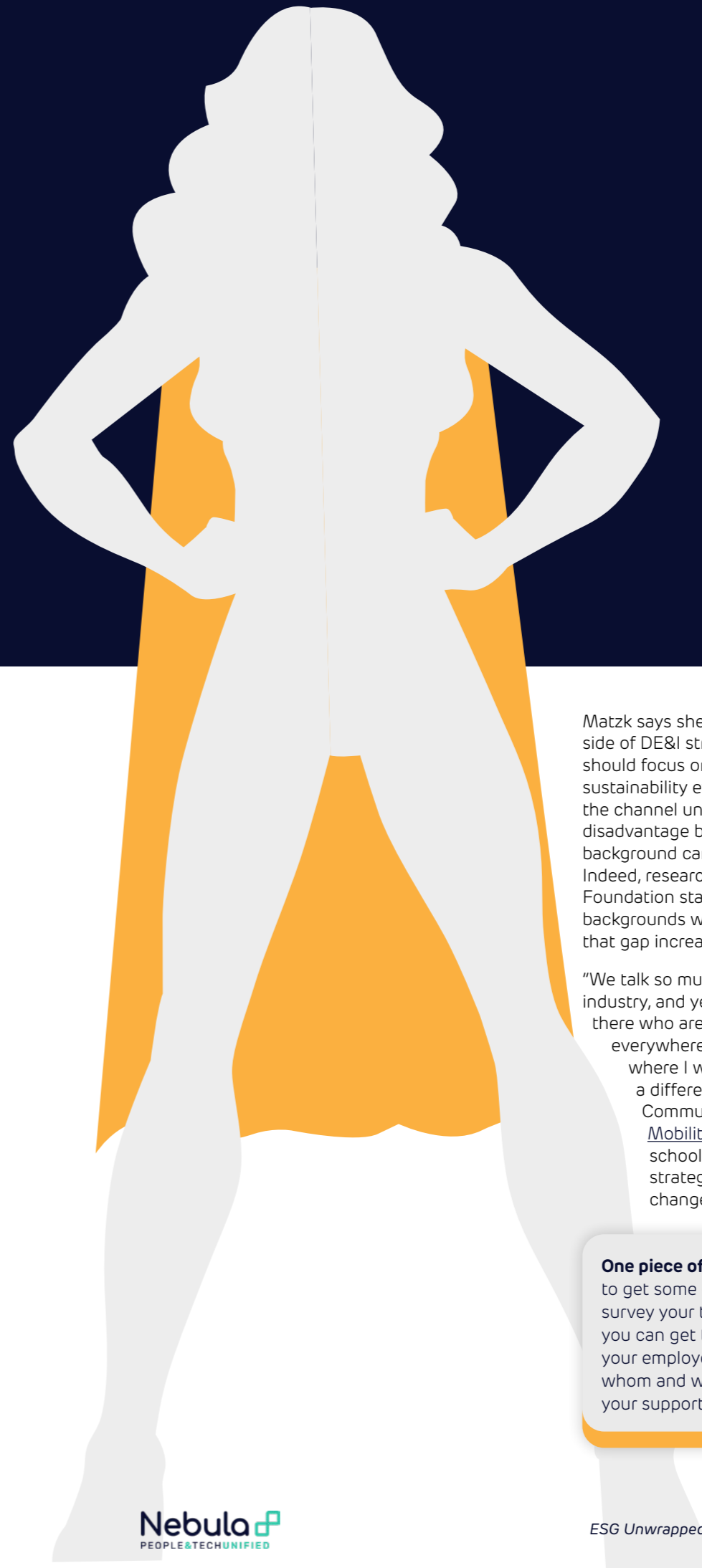
Channel Community is a Community Interest Corporation (CIC) that operates as a non-profit, with eight directors and 400 members who want to make a difference through mentoring, support and guidance. This includes everything from becoming a Channel Buddy (the Community's

term for mentors) to a younger person who is new to the channel, to helping someone more established who has changed roles or simply attending the regular community meet-ups or educational panels to network with peers and channel executives.

Anyone in the channel can become a member and attend events, which are aimed at being informative and approachable. "There's a lot of events in our industry that are quite elitist and intimidating," Matzk says. "We are the alternative to that – we are where people can go to feel welcome, irrespective of their role. We've got quite a strict constitution that states that all members have to be in the community for the right reasons and to give something back."

Since becoming a CIC, the community has had backing from organisations such as Nebula and The Channel Recruiter, becoming part of the social element of their ESG strategies. These organisations provide event spaces, operational funding and executives who are keen to participate in the community.

As well as being part of ESG programmes, the Channel Community also has a charity partner, The Social Mobility Foundation, something that Matzk is passionate about. "I'm from a low-income background and when I found out, through the [Tech Talent Charter](#), that only 9% of technology executives come from low-income backgrounds, I knew I had to help change this. I'm here to help break the class ceiling."



Matzk says she believes class is the forgotten side of DE&I strategy and that more organisations should focus on class as part of their social sustainability efforts. Most companies in the channel underestimate the stigma and disadvantage being from a lower economic background can have on a career, she says. Indeed, research from The Social Mobility Foundation states that those from disadvantaged backgrounds will earn on average 12% less, and that gap increases even further for women.

"We talk so much about a skills gap in our industry, and yet there are all these people out there who are not given a chance. Talent is everywhere but opportunity isn't. And that's where I want organisations to start making a difference. By working with The Channel Community, investing in the [Social Mobility Foundation](#), or working with local schools or job centres as part of their ESG strategy, businesses in the channel can change lives."

**One piece of advice:** Use the [Employer Index](#) to get some guidance on the questions to survey your teams. By collecting this data, you can get to know the demographic of your employees and understand, subtly, with whom and where you might need to focus your support.



## Social engagement helps people feel like they belong

**Kelly White, Chief People Officer, Natilik**

For the past 15 years, caring for its people has been integral to the heritage and culture at Natilik, says Kelly White, Chief People Officer at the VAR. Natilik's ESG strategy is built around five guiding principles: people inclusion, growth and well-being, client excellence, governance, ethics and risk, and the environment and community.

The company emphasises the importance of the social pillar of ESG through its Communities programme, Give Back commitment and B Corp accreditation.

The community programme is an internal initiative led by employees who want to contribute more to the business, explains White. Currently, Natilik has four communities: women in tech, diversity in tech, mental well-being, and physical health.

"It's about more than just profit," White says. "We are immensely proud of our communities. Individuals volunteer to be part of a community and they are passionate about giving something back. They collaborate with different people across the business to create a strategy and plan for the year, which is then approved at board level. We provide them with a small budget to help them achieve their goals."

These communities aim to raise awareness and promote inclusion and understanding. They often organise volunteering events, charity campaigns and guest speaker sessions, and participate in mentoring programmes. According to White, they frequently introduce the business to valuable partnerships, such as Generation for Success, a mentoring programme for ethnic minorities, and Just IT, a training and awareness organisation for ethnic minorities or people from low-income groups. "The talent available is amazing; these people just don't have access to the resources needed to develop the right professional skills, which is where we can help," says White.

The communities update the business quarterly on their strategies, ensuring everyone is informed. "We include community and ESG updates in our town hall meetings. They are as integral to our business as sales or strategy updates," she adds.

Many Natilik people take part in the company's social sustainability efforts, both internally and externally, with projects, ideas, and budgets supported by the senior leadership team. For example, the company collaborates with local schools, where a range of Natilik's people talk to students about different careers in tech and assist them with mock interviews and techniques.

The firm runs a two-pronged Give Back scheme. Firstly, Natilik gives back in terms of donations to four different charities every month, nominated by its people. This allows the company to ensure funds get distributed to charities or causes that people feel passionate about, rather than having a single charity selected by the leadership team.

Secondly, it empowers people to give back their time through volunteering days. Although White notes that people often didn't know how to use them. To address this, Natilik has begun organising volunteer days at the Whitechapel Homeless Shelter, where Natilik employees help cook and serve food to those in need.

The company also collaborates with The Stemettes, a charity dedicated to encouraging girls to engage in Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Maths (STEAM). Natilik provides its facilities for training, speaks at events and showcases the women within its organisation.

Finally, the firm has B Corp status, which alongside its recent EcoVadis accreditation, reinforces its commitment to sustainability by providing clear benchmarking and demonstrates its bid to improve, develop and enhance its ESG strategy and social goals.

White emphasises the significant value of having a robust social and ESG strategy. "It's very rewarding to see our people get involved and engaged – it helps them feel like they belong. It's part of our employer brand and it means something to people. The generation coming in today asks about our values, our volunteering efforts, and what we do to give back, and you can see their eyes light up when we explain it all to them," White says.

**One piece of advice:** Don't overthink it, White says. It's easy to become overwhelmed, but starting small means companies can still make a huge difference. Look locally, find a school, a charity or an organisation that means something to the people in your teams and encourage them to lead the way to see how you can work together.





## Showcase employer branding to attract new talent

**Zoe Chatley, founder, The Channel Recruiter**

**With 15 years of** experience in IT recruitment, Zoe Chatley, founder of The Channel Recruiter, aimed to set a new standard in talent acquisition, specialising in the channel. The unique selling point of her firm, The Channel Recruiter, is delivering the same quality and personal touch for everyone, from graduates to CEOs.

Chatley emphasises providing clients and candidates with compassion, empathy, and understanding. "Candidates feel the pressure to secure a job and hiring managers feel the pressure to find the right person. We understand these pressures, especially in today's market, and we want everyone to have a positive experience throughout the entire recruitment process," Chatley explains.

Chatley is passionate about the social impact and responsibility within channel recruitment. "I noticed that candidates were struggling and being left to fend for themselves without any support to help them secure their next position," she says. "So, we started running free interview preparation webinars once a month. We guide people through interview preparation, including researching the business, asking the right questions, and preparing for competency-based interviews. It's about giving people the confidence to land the job they want."

Chatley believes that many traditional recruitment processes need an overhaul. Today's generation of employees – whether Gen Z, Millennials, or Gen X – have different priorities that organisations must address, necessitating changes in recruitment strategies.

"Businesses need to be open-minded and follow through with their commitments. Many companies claim they are not concerned about age, yet ageism is an issue we come up against a lot," Chatley says. "There is exceptional talent among both older and younger generations that businesses are potentially turning away because they're not being open-minded enough."

Ensuring career progression is another crucial strategy for retaining top talent. Many candidates view benefits like 25 days holiday, gym membership and a pension as standard; they're looking for advanced training and development plans to achieve their personal growth goals.

Recruiting and retaining the right talent requires more than just offering competitive salaries, although that remains a priority for some. "Businesses need to highlight their employer branding. Emphasise why someone should work there, the experiences they will have, and the career opportunities available throughout their lifetime," Chatley advises.

Externally, The Channel Recruiter engages in charitable activities with the MS Society, raises funds through sports events, regularly donates to Cancer Research via team events, and sponsors a young adult involved in conservation work in Peru.

"There are a lot of channel organisations out there that are doing the right thing; giving back, setting up career plans, nurturing their teams and recruiting a diverse workforce, and it will be those companies that will still be around in ten years for us to be working with," Chatley says.

**One piece of advice:** Listen to your staff to understand and help you develop a social responsibility and value plan. Ask them what support they need, what courses they want to go on and what career progression would they like to see. Also, start-up mini councils or groups for active outreach with local charities, make people feel good about themselves and about working for you.

# Journey to NebZero

Nebula recognises they too are a key partner in the technology channel value chain. Therefore, we are fully committed to doing everything in our control to deliver continuous marginal gains when it comes to sustainability. This is delivered through our obsession to source-local, source-responsible and source-ethical, aligning to relevant UN Global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



We have aligned our sustainability goals with core business objectives, setting targets, and developing action plans to drive progress and achieve positive impact and progress towards the SDG targets where relevant to our business.

**Please visit us on our sustainability journey by visiting NebZero – Nebula's roadmap to NetZero**

[Click here for more](#)

# ESG

## UNWRAPPED

Nebula Global Services is a privately-owned, award winning, outcome focused technology channel services organisation with a mission to be the world's leading sustainable technology services business through the local unification of people and technology.

Our purpose is simple: an obsession to source-local, source-responsible and source ethical. We want to create a sustainable technology community for the benefit of future generations. We work as a collaborative partner with our customers, enabling them to achieve their sustainability goals and business outcomes.

Our ESG Unwrapped Series aims to demystify the ESG process, by providing useful, practical guidelines and advice to help our partners and customers achieve a common goal of helping our people, our communities and our planet be a better place for us all.

**Nebula**   
PEOPLE&TECHUNIFIED

