Introduction

For many schools, the first stage in the adoption of the Principles is an examination of the curriculum, and this is reflected in the narratives of many of the SIPs that have already been submitted. As a relatively newly established organisation, Winchester Business School was able to design our curriculum with the Principles of PRME in mind. There is now a regular review to ensure that the content reflects the values of our University and the Principles, which are so closely aligned.

Initially, we examined each of the Principles in turn and took steps to engage with the rationale behind each. In looking at Principle 5 – Partnership, we perceived a number of challenges and set about creating an approach that would produce benefits from fostering partnerships with business and the wider community.

The Hoare Centre for Responsible Management

Firstly, we had to decide what we were seeking to achieve, and decided that the aim of the initiative would be threefold and ambitious:

1. Build an emergent community of informed minds
2. Create a forum where issues of significant societal importance could be debated
3. Establish an entity with the potential to inform thoughts and activities, reflecting the aims of the PRME initiative, over the long-term.

In essence, the aim was to create and sustain a 'Community of Practice' founded on the values of PRME and involving faculty from the Business School and the wider University, businesses of all sizes, Civil Society organisations, and students.

Secondly, we perceived that to make a success of such an initiative, its launch and subsequent development would be greatly aided by the support of a high profile sponsor.

Challenges

We considered the obstacles to developing a vibrant, dynamic, and effective community of practice and identified three key challenges to our plans:

• How to identify the most suitable partner?
• How to persuade the partner to provide financial support?
• How to develop a series of events to fulfil the aims?
Actions taken

First, we drafted our proposal by carefully constructing a business plan to ensure that our funding arrangements were adequate and that we could demonstrate both to the University and to the prospective partner that the proposal was viable and fully thought through. The plan was presented to the Dean of the School who obtained support from the University to approach suitable partners. We then identified a Charitable Trust with connections to Winchester and the University, and an approach was made, with a positive response from the Trust.

By this time, a ‘wish-list’ had been created and presented to the trustees, including events with high profile speakers actively engaged in promoting CSR and a plan to attract local businesses and NGOs. An annual series of events, talks, and workshops was developed, and two programmes were planned at a provisional level. It was envisaged that there would be a more regional focus, but as the Centre’s reputation increased and its activities became better understood, national figures would be contacted and asked to participate. The Trust agreed to back the proposal with funding sufficient to support the activities of the Centre for 5 years.

The Centre launched in 2011, and the programme of events was circulated to a database of regional companies and organisations within a 25 mile radius. Since then its activities have increased and, two years later, a Chair in Responsible Management was supported by the Trust with an appointment made in December 2012.

Results and Benefits

1. Relationships

This initiative has allowed the Business School to develop useful relationships with businesses at a local and national level. Equally, however, multinational businesses with facilities in the vicinity (e.g. IBM, Kingfisher Group, etc.) have been supportive and provided speakers for several events. A thriving network is developing with new ideas for further events originating from this interaction.

2. Networks

As these relationships developed, other networks engaged with the activities of the Centre, and the Centre continued to broaden its reach. The University embraced the initiative and joined Business in the Community as a full member. In fact, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor was invited to sit on the regional Advisory Board of BiTC, a position since taken up by the newly appointed Chair in Responsible Management.

The University also became a full member of the UK Network of the Global Compact, and work is now underway to involve all faculties in the University with the goals and ideals of the Global Compact.

3. The Business School Profile

As a Business School that was only established in 2008, it was seen as a crucial part of the process of increasing its visibility, reputation, and reach that the Centre’s CSR activities should become widely known and its activities have an appeal to a wide range of interested stakeholders. With the
appointment of a Professor attached to the Centre, the task now is to build on the successes of the initial two years and to begin to develop a centre of excellence. Already, initiatives are underway to increase the number of Visiting Fellows and Professors attached to the Centre to foster increasing interest in the Centre’s activities, both locally and nationally.

4. Enhancing the Student Experience

The relationships which have been nurtured and the networks that have been developed have acted to enrich the experience of students at the School by allowing us access to a growing pool of CSR expertise in both small and large businesses, as well as social enterprises and NGOs, who willingly visit classes and take part in teaching activities as well as providing materials for case studies. This activity has also increased the range and number of different possibilities for student placements and research dissertation opportunities.

The role of PRME /sustainability principles

- PRME provides a readily identifiable, proven framework through which to reach out to interested companies and organisations to develop a mutual understanding of the challenges and possible approaches to achieving sustainability.

- The Principles of PRME stand behind the activities of Winchester Business School and are easy reference points as we plan activities going forward.

- Stakeholders understand more quickly how the University values are being operationalized though the Principles of PRME and the Global Compact.