

The Morgan Inquiry

SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

*Summary of second evidence session (by theme)
- representatives from the business sector*

5 March 2008, Committee Room 21, The Palace of Westminster

Panellists: Baroness (Sally) Morgan of Huyton (Chair)
James Brokenshire MP
Andy Reed MP
Naomi Wilkinson, Scout and Young Leader
Tom Wylie, Former Chief Executive of the National Youth Agency

Apologies: Jo Swinson MP

Oral witnesses: Isabel Naidoo (IN), Senior Manager, UK Corporate Citizenship Lead, Accenture
Ismail Amla (IA), UK and Ireland Human Capital Lead, Accenture
Roger Cotton (RC), Head of Graduate Volunteering, Alliance Pharmacy Boots
Dave Hancock (DH), Head of Education and Volunteering, BT
Colin Willman (CW), Chairman, Education and Skills, Federation of Small Businesses
Stephen Alambritis (SA), Head of Public Affairs, Federation of Small Businesses
Sarah Shiletto (SS), Head of the Vodafone UK Foundation, Vodafone
Sally Gold (SG), Head of UK Social Investment, Shell

Opening remarks

- Baroness Morgan welcomed the witnesses and outlined the objectives for the Morgan Inquiry and the session. The Inquiry is looking to produce a very specific report on volunteering amongst 18 to 24 year olds with very practical recommendations for change. This was followed by introductions from the panel members.

Community outreach

- IA – Accenture offer employees three paid days off a year for them to undertake voluntary activities. At present 16-18% of their workforce volunteer through fourteen different schemes offered in conjunction with the company's key community partners. A key part of Accenture's business strategy is to ensure the well-being of the communities they operate within. Currently, of the employees who volunteer their time through the specific schemes run by Accenture, a third of those will go on to volunteer in their local communities.
- SG – Shell also ensures that it actively supports the local communities it operates in, such as London and Aberdeen, by actively encouraging its employees to volunteer. The company also has community relations managers in each of its key locations throughout the UK
- CW – A large number of small businesses are actively engaged in the local communities of where they are based and undertake a variety of voluntary work that often goes unnoticed. The FSB works closely with its members in supporting employees who volunteer their time and offer free support in local schools, helping to develop youth enterprise schemes.
- SA – The FSB works closely with the Princess Trust, voluntarily mentoring young people to help them get into employment. This relationship also allows the FSB to develop voluntary opportunities for its members.
- SS – Vodafone fund a volunteer post to do community engagement.
- DH – BT have 3000 CRB checked staff delivering educational programme material in schools.

- DH – Historically BT has special relationships with JP, the TA, school governors. Other volunteering comes under their volunteering scheme. They are trying to align the two.
- RC – Boots' main focus is on graduates. They employ 90 a year and give them a team building/community exercise instead of the traditional research project. Since the merger with Boots, they are planning to up-scale this to 600-700 graduates. In teams of 12, graduate employees are given a CSR brief that they then have to implement within the community. They have to plan and execute a project as a team, then present back to the directors. The outtakes are community insight into disadvantaged groups and an appreciation of what they do. Since the introduction of this, evidence suggests that their graduate intake's peers at other companies are very envious. They find that individuals get far more out of this than traditional, 'artificial' team building experiences. Boots finds that this benefits the company far better as they see genuine team building and managers see much more what employees have to offer.
- RC – We tie each department to a local charity (about 400 employees) to form long-term partnerships. Each year we find new ways of supporting them to build longevity and better community cohesion. Sometimes the schools we work with can be the problem. We offer work experience 2 days a week for borderline kids, who spend the other 3 days in school. However, when pupil's didn't turn up there would be little come back or communication from the school about this.
- DH – BT offer 5,000 work experience placements. BT also has a chairman's award of £500 to a charity of choice and staff can do GAYE through payroll.

Voluntary opportunities / Staff development

- IA - Two thirds of Accenture's workforce is generation Y, and the opportunity to get involved in voluntary work is often a key criteria in them choosing Accenture as an employer. Of the individuals who volunteer with Accenture 70% believe it has helped them develop their personal skill sets and over 90% say that it has increased their sense of job satisfaction. Accenture recognises the benefits that voluntary activity brings to their business, as it helps to develop a host of skills and creates a more satisfied workforce.
- IN / IA – By working with fourteen key community partners, Accenture is able to signpost various voluntary opportunities available to employees. It is not mandated that individuals have to volunteer with these key community partners, but around 75% of employees who volunteer with Accenture take up this offer.
- IN / IA – Accenture as well as offering three paid days a year, there are also opportunities to undertake three-month pro bono project or even take a paid leave of absence to volunteer at home and abroad.
- SG – Do not contractually offer any time off for volunteering, but are keen to offer flexibility amongst staff that positively encourages volunteering across the company.
- SG – The younger employees and graduates that are joining Shell are actively demanding voluntary opportunities. Parts of Shell's business are becoming increasingly flat structures in which employees may not be able to develop their management skills often until the age of 30. Therefore employees are increasingly looking towards voluntary opportunities as a means of expanding their skill sets.
- SG – Shell therefore offers a number of mentoring opportunities and also operates a grid where employees can find voluntary opportunities available where they can develop different skills, e.g. leadership, communication or management skills. Shell employees are keen to undertake opportunities that will enhance their CVs.
- SG – Soft skills are often lacking amongst younger employees. Skills such as communication, patience, and tolerance can be developed through volunteering and the company's HR department tries to push these "soft skills". Volunteering is also included in employees' performance plans and a pack on volunteering is provided to new starters.
- SS – Vodafone UK's volunteering opportunities are normally targeted at at-risk 16-25-year-olds.

SS – Vodafone finds that most people volunteer through a personal experience, for example, The Stroke Association if a family member has suffered a stroke. The average age of their staff volunteers is 31; majority are either at the younger or older end of the age scale.
- SS – Staff get three days per year, paid time to volunteer, as well as team volunteering initiatives organised by managers as team-building exercises. Getting the three day allowance into the mindset of office staff is easier than store staff because they cannot be away from the store for the 6 busiest months of the year.

- SS – Vodafone award 100 staff ‘Legends’ every year for their voluntary work. The ceremony is in-house, but glitzy.
- SS – It is equally important to tailor the volunteering opportunity to the person and their job. But providing guidelines as to what people do with their volunteering time is a big challenge.
- SS – Vodafone used to help young staff members into doing DoE and put 250 staff through it a year. But this has died off because of people doing it in their gap years.
- SS – Call centres are prolific fund raisers; hosting balls etc. Professional side, i.e., lawyers, work pro-bono.
- SS – More and more prospective employees want to know that they offer time off for volunteering; and likewise, more employers look for volunteering on a CV to differentiate people.
- SS – Vodafone has spent 18 months on its volunteering policy development to cater for all aspects of the business, from stores to call centres and head office.
- DH – BT have 3,000 CRB checked staff delivering educational programme material in schools. In 2007 they trained 152,000 young people. They also encourage people to be JPs and join the TA and take up school governor posts.
- DH – BT staff are given two hours a month to volunteer.
- DH – Employees are looking for both career development and proper volunteering. The majority of their 3,000 volunteers are there because they want to be and take their own time to do it. A certain percentage see the two hours as an opportunity for time off and advancement. People are asked to show their commitment to volunteering before the company will.

Recognition of voluntary activity

- IA – Accenture recognises that there are clear benefits for the employee and employer, but have not yet been able to achieve a recognition within Accenture for volunteering that is on a par with other business activities.
- IN – Although there is not a formally mechanism to recognise volunteering at Accenture the company does try to offer opportunities that combine training with voluntary work.
- CW – The FSB recognises that young people with voluntary activities on their CVs, gives them a significant amount of non academic skills and experience that can ultimately prove to be a key differentiator between themselves and their peers when seeking employment.
- SA – The FSB believe that the majority of small businesses look for experience as opposed to academic qualifications and that voluntary activities should feature more prominently on CVs. Perhaps there is work to be done with larger employers and even the CV industry to ensure that voluntary work is recognised in its own right, rather than often being listed as a hobby on CVs.
- SS – Volunteering is private and not everyone wants other people to know what voluntary work they have been doing. Likewise some don’t feel the need for recognition. It is important that the volunteer is honest about why they are doing it (generosity/ticks a box); what they want to do; and the commitment it involves. Volunteering is not just for Christmas. You don’t have to be a do-gooder; you can do it for selfish reasons as long as the recipient gains.
- DH – About 3,000 out of BT’s 80,000 employees volunteer, BUT over 40% volunteer but chose to keep this private. Support is also provided for them and they get time off too.

Barriers / Solutions

- SG - Due to Shell’s highly mobile workforce it is often difficult for employees to commit to certain voluntary work. Shell tries to offer maximum flexibility and is currently looking into e-mentoring schemes for employees that would allow them to carry out voluntary work from a variety of locations.

- IN –Despite the vast array of opportunities available, 82% of Accenture’s workforce do not engage in volunteering. They accept that they will never achieve 100% of employees volunteering, but are working hard to engage more of their workforce. Again a mobile workforce creates difficulties, but also a large number of employees are keen to volunteer privately in their own time.
- CW – Average size a business in the UK is four people, thus it can be very difficult to find the time to volunteer. The FSB works hard with small businesses to help them engage with the local communities of where they are based to offer free support, youth enterprise and enterprise training to help prepare school leavers for the work place.
- SA – Small businesses find that time, cost and bureaucracy are significant barriers. 58% would send their staff off to volunteer if there was less bureaucracy. Where it works best for small businesses is if there is an existing organisation that can handle the logistical work around releasing employees from their employers. A good example is the work SaBRE does in supporting British reservists and employers.
- SA – There is also a worry amongst small business about formalising their voluntary activities, for fear of them getting out of control and becoming highly costly to their business, with staff unable to properly fulfil both their voluntary and employment obligations.
- SS – Charities use income as their success measure, so a free lawyer/website isn’t their first thought. We have to tease out of them what they want the money for and then offer that for free. Likewise, not many people realise their work skills are relevant, most people end up going to paint walls in schools.
- SS – It is important to know, as a company, why you offer volunteering? Is it to be a good company work for? To make a difference? If volunteering is made a mandate, it is not volunteering.
- SS – People don’t like the word volunteer. We need to remove the stereotype of what volunteering and volunteers look like – can you spot one in a crowd?
- DH – There are not specific obstacles to volunteering for young people – young joiners are the most keen to do it.
- DH – Challenges for BT are time constraints, CRB checks, funding and risk assessments. There is little support/funding for corporates, and funding promised from v for Corporate Volunteering has not materialised. V have been very challenging to work with. BT have fought to get free CRB checks for staff. Now that the systems are in place, the CRB process is painless.
- RC – Sustainability within the company needs to have a strategic link to the business so it is not viewed as a passing fancy. It is important to realise that volunteering schemes only move as fast as employees are willing to volunteer and that you need to tell good stories to encourage more people to volunteer.
- SS – Data is not currently captured, but as a guide they expect that:
 - 25% of staff would volunteer anyway, even if not offered it
 - 25% would do it with help
 - 25% would do it begrudgingly if persuaded
 - 25% would not do it at all
- SS – Hardwiring volunteering into the culture of the business is something Vodafone are trying to do to improve take up.
- SG & IN – Volunteer brokering services are extremely expensive.