

The Media CSR Forum

Activity Report covering 2005 & 2006

About the Media CSR Forum

Objectives and purpose:

The Media CSR Forum (The Forum) is a group of media organisations who came together to develop CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) practices and understanding for the UK media sector. It was established in 2001 following recognition that the practice of CSR for media companies has many unique features that set it apart from other business sectors. We work collaboratively to:

- develop an understanding of CSR for media organisations
- identify areas for prioritisation
- share best practices
- run collaborative projects on key issues.

Membership:

Members of the Forum as of Dec 31st 2006 were:

Aegis Group, AOL UK, The BBC, BSkyB, GCAP Media, Channel 4, EMI, Five, Guardian Media Group, Informa, IPC Media, ITV, MTV European Networks, Pearson, Reed Elsevier, Trinity Mirror, Turner Broadcasting, United Business Media, WPP and Yell Group

Chrysalis and Reuters were also members during 2005.

Organisation:

We have invited Acona to act as the Forum Secretariat (www.acona.com), with a role agreed in September 2004 as:

- **Organising quarterly meetings:** Agreeing dates and venues, choosing and inviting third party speakers, circulating agendas and writing minutes;
- **Facilitating and chairing the meetings:** Providing a neutral voice, encouraging progressive debate and distilling key points;
- **Managing projects:** Managing ad hoc projects including supporting issue working groups from time to time;
- **Fielding enquiries:** Providing a contact point for stakeholder enquiries (mediacsforum@acona.com tel. +44207 8127133);
- **Performing general administration:** Overseeing membership attendance, new member enquiries and other administrative duties.

The Forum has a website at www.mediacsforum.org, which contains some basic information on its work.

Strategic and administrative decisions relating to The Forum are made by a Steering Group. This is a self appointed sub-group also facilitated by Acona. As of December 31st 2006 the steering group comprised of:

The BBC, BSkyB, EMI, GCap Media, Guardian Media Group, ITV, Reed Elsevier and Trinity Mirror.

Costs and expenditure:

The cost of membership for 2005 and 2006 was £500 per member per year. The income was spent as follows:

	Income	Of which		
		Administration	Media Literacy	Donation to Plan UK
2005	<i>£9,500</i>	<i>£5,000</i>	<i>£0</i>	<i>£0</i>
2006	<i>£10,000</i>	<i>£5,000</i>	<i>£5,000</i>	<i>£5,000*</i>
TOTAL	<i>£19,500</i>	<i>£10,000</i>	<i>£5,000</i>	<i>£5,000</i>

* An additional £5,000 was donated directly by Forum Members to Plan UK

Activity summary

Meeting stakeholders

Most meetings include an invitation to a relevant stakeholder, who usually gives a presentation and takes part in a subsequent discussion. During 2005 and 2006 we met with the following:

- **TwentyFifty and the MTV Foundation**, in relation to The Business Leaders Initiative on Human Rights and the MTV EXIT campaign to raise awareness of the trafficking of women from Eastern Europe.
- **WWF**, discussing the paper, "Through the Looking Glass" (www.wwf.org.uk/filelibrary/pdf/looking_glass_0105.pdf).
- **Ofcom's** Media Literacy representatives presented of the results of Ofcom's research into Media Literacy skills in UK society.
- **Plan UK**, who presented their Youth Media Development 06 initiative, which we agreed to fund.
- **The Media Literacy Task Force** presented its work to us, requesting that individual members consider signing the Charter for Media Literacy.
- **The Voluntary Action Media Unit** (www.vamu.org.uk) presented its services to The Forum, inviting members to become project partners for one or more of their initiatives.
- **Goldman Sachs** presented the first wave of their findings from their European Media Sector Environmental Social and Governance framework research.
- **The Global Reporting Initiative** suggested how we might work with the GRI to develop a Media Sector supplement.
- **Business in the Community** outlined their work on responsible Marketplace behaviour.
- An embryonic **US Media CSR Forum** presented their ideas for feedback.

In addition a dedicated stakeholder consultation meeting was held with the following organisations:

- Forum for the Future
- TwentyFifty
- The Media Trust
- Mediawise
- The National Union of Journalists (Freelance department)
- Ofcom

We asked each of them to respond to the following questions:

- What are the key social (and environmental) responsibilities of the Media Sector today?
- What is the Media sector currently doing well in this regard?
- And where is it weak – what should the sector focus on?
- And what of tomorrow? (What are the new issues and responsibilities coming over the horizon?)
- If we swapped places – what would you, as the Media CSR Forum, do to work collaboratively to begin to address these things?

For the minutes of the responses, please refer to the relevant report at www.mediacsforum.org

Sharing good practice

The Forum also encourages the sharing of experiences between members. This is done through facilitated round table discussions in the meetings, but also through formal presentations:

- **The Guardian Media Group** presented its approach to editorial integrity and the use of an independent ombudsman as a mechanism for voluntary regulation.
- **GCapMedia** presented its "Radio in Schools" community initiative that is designed to inspire pupils to read more by giving them insight into the world of media and working in radio broadcasting.
- **Acona** presented an overview of Supply Chain management based on issues encountered in other sectors.

We intend to have more member presentations in 2007.

Media Literacy

On December 9th 2004 The Forum made the decision that additional work was needed in the areas of Media Literacy and the development of a measurement and reporting framework for the Media Sector.

We formed a working group to look at the question of Media Literacy. One of the group's first actions was to research and establish a working definition for the topic. We found that there was broad agreement that being 'Media Literate' has three components:

- **Being able to access the media.** Barriers to this could be technology, affordability or skills related.
- **Being able to understand and critically evaluate media** e.g. how it is put together and to be able to discern the differences in between fact, opinion, entertainment and advertising.
- **Being able to create/interact with media.**

We concluded that this is a critical and specific CSR topic for the media sector, which presents a number of very significant issues, for example:

- **Rational ignorance.** With such ferocious competition for space and time there is a threat that people will choose to either switch off completely or only trust a very limited number of media sources for their news, information and entertainment, missing out on other perspectives and opportunities. In turn this has an impact on people's ability to participate fully in a democratic and plural society, and intensifies any potential effects from editorial bias or mistakes in the limited sources being used.
- **The speed of technological change and platform convergence** within the media sector is leaving many members of society behind, limited by an out of date understanding and an inability to take advantage of new opportunities for interaction. At the same time other sections of society are forging ahead with new models such as citizenship journalism and platforms such as mobile phones. These changes represent both threats and opportunities for the sector.

The working group considered the most effective way to address these needs collectively. We researched existing work in both the UK and the US. The group also joined the Associate Parliamentary Media Literacy Group, and met numerous times with the Media Literacy Task Force and with Ofcom.

Whilst the group considers the issues and opportunities around Media Literacy to be substantial and real and significant progress has been made, particularly in the educational arena, there was a feeling that society and business at large are currently unaware of the issue. They are also unaware of the potential impact a media illiterate society could have on civil participation and even on democratic process. One could compare the issue to the state of awareness on Climate Change in the early 1990s.

We concluded that the best way Forum members could contribute, would be to stimulate the debate, using our reach and expertise to challenge the public to evaluate the information they receive on a daily basis. In November 2006 EuroRSCG Fuel, a global advertising agency agreed to develop the initial concepts for a campaign to do just this and simultaneously Harvard PR (part of the Bell Pottinger Group) agreed to support the campaign with relevant public relations work.

We believe that by stimulating such a debate we can encourage the public to become more critically aware and to engage more readily with new media. There is also an opportunity to demonstrate the processes and regulatory frameworks behind the British media and share with the public at large the mechanisms by which factual, opinion, entertainment and advertising media are put together and their respective roles within the broad spectrum of media choices.

Measurement and Reporting

The Forum's second subgroup was established to look at the progress of CSR reporting and specifically at the use of indicators relevant for the media sector. Much of the Group's early discussion was concerned with materiality; attempting to understand which topics were truly significant for the sector and – within this – which were both significant and unique to media companies.

As part of this exercise Aegis developed an on-line survey which the majority of members completed. This tested a wide range of possible indicators, inviting members to rate their importance to their own organisation, and the extent to which they currently reported on the topic.

At the same time, the group heard from others who were developing indicator sets for the sector, including the research team at Goldman Sachs and the GRI.

The conclusions from the group were as follows:

- In the two years since the sub group was formed, the general level of CSR Reporting in the sector has increased markedly (see separate analysis) and is now commonplace. This change has been stimulated in part by discussions at the Forum meetings.
- The sector is not homogeneous: even within it there are distinct sub-sectors (e.g. print media, broadcast media, music, advertising) each of which faces subtly different issues.
- Many of the sector's most important issues (particularly those around broadcast content and editorial and regulatory process) do not lend themselves to quantitative analysis, and individual members are making great strides in reporting these.

Ultimately, the view was that there was little marginal benefit from a sector specific framework, largely because of the rapid progress made by individual members and others in reporting and analysing the sector in other ways.

Donation to Plan UK

In March 2006, the Forum hosted a presentation from Lorraine Williams of Plan UK, the outcome of which was an agreed donation from the Forum of £10,000 GBP. The money was earmarked to establish a pilot Children's Press Agency in India as part of Plan's broader Amazing Kids project.

Background

The International Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children have the right to be listened to and to have their views respected, to express themselves and to have access to information important to their health and wellbeing and appropriate for their age. In India 41% of the population is aged under 18 yet children, especially poor children, are both under represented in the media and often disrespected at home and in their communities. There is a clear need to move children's rights up the media agenda in India and to build the capacity of poor children to speak out for change.

In 2005 Plan began working with One World South Asia on a joint initiative to encourage child centric communication from and within poor communities. This included launching a child journalist's programme in Plan communities; highlighting stories of children and their achievements to audiences in these communities; and enabling poor children to address mainstream audiences through media. A series of workshops took place with peer selected children, in Kranjia and Bhubaneswar districts in Orissa, Bauui in Bikaner district in Rajasthan, Gairsain in Chamoli district in Utteranchal, Srikali and Vellupuram districts in Tamilnadu and Karaikal district in Pondichery. By December 2005, 500 children had been trained to express themselves through internet, radio, photography, comic strips and the traditional popular folk medium, Villupatu.

The Pilot Children's Press Agency was established in November 2006 in order to:

- Gather and edit stories, from children in poor communities,
- Pull together a Children's Feature Service Bulletin with Journalists' Alerts on children's issues, distributed monthly by post and electronically to over 1,000 media contacts. Telephone follow up to selected journalists, to stimulate take up. All resulting coverage acknowledged, with thanks, to build relationships.
- Notify young writers when their material is used, providing clippings and making a token payment, to encourage their efforts.

As of December 2006 the Press Agency the first bulletin had already been sent out. The bulletin contained ten stories from children including:

“My Day in Geneva”, nine-year old Archana Bisht’s talks about her participation in the Day of General Discussion of the United Nations Child Rights Committee in Geneva; a story about cycle rickshaws in the famous hill station of Mussorie in Uttaranchal by Lakshmi Nautiyal; and another about a school teacher who decided to serve the children of her village instead of seeking greener pastures by Deepak Shah. More sensitive issues were also presented by child writers including one on female foeticide in the Indo-Nepal border one on child marriage in the same area.

Feedback from the Indian media has been constructive and encouraging. Dainik Jagran and Dainik Bhaskar, two of India’s leading Hindi newspapers have promised to publish some of the stories in their news columns and have shown interest in commissioning some of the writers.



Attendance overview

The following table charts the attendance of the members at the all member meetings.

	08/03/2005	23/06/2005	22/09/2005	08/12/2005	09/03/2006	07/06/2006	20/09/2006	06/12/2006	Total
<i>Aegis Group Plc</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	7
<i>AOL UK Ltd</i>			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	5
<i>BBC</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8
<i>BSkyB</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	7
<i>Channel 4</i>			✓	✓	✓			✓	4
<i>Chrysalis</i>	✓								1
<i>EMI</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	7
<i>Five TV</i>						✓	✓	✓	3
<i>GCapMedia</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	7
<i>Guardian Media Group</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	6
<i>Informa</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	6
<i>IPC Media</i>				✓	✓	✓		✓	4
<i>ITV Plc</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	6
<i>MTV Networks International</i>									0
<i>Pearson*</i>								✓	1
<i>Reed Elsevier Group Plc</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8
<i>Reuters</i>		✓	✓						
<i>Trinity Mirror plc</i>		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	5
<i>Turner Broadcasting</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	7
<i>United Business Media Plc</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8
<i>WPP*</i>					✓				1
<i>Yell Group</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8

* some of this absence is due to the primary contact being on maternity leave

indicates that the organisation was not a member at this point in time