



Consultation

Better World – Our Commitment to Society

Consultation

Effective communication is key to flourishing business relationships. The more positive and mutually beneficial these relationships are, the more successful our business will be.

Indeed, the CEO of BT Retail, Pierre Danon, set out the importance of effective communication with stakeholders in his recent major publication, Enlightened Values:

“In BT we fervently believe that creating stakeholder value is the route to creating shareholder value. That maximising employee and customer satisfaction, partnering with suppliers for mutual gain and being accountable for our actions to wider society is as important as making a profit. For they are, in effect, one and the same; because by addressing stakeholder expectations we create shareholder value – enlightened shareholder value.”

Enlightened Values is available at www.groupbt.com/betterworld/enlightenedvalues

His paper goes on to outline why stakeholder consultation is core to our business strategy and to the pursuit of shareholder value.

BT has important relationships with a wide range of different stakeholders, including employees, customers and suppliers. BT engages with these stakeholders in a multiplicity of ways – such as ongoing consumer liaison panels, an annual employee survey and a supplier relationship management programme.

- For Employees, go to: www.groupbt.com/betterworld/consultation and <http://www.groupbt.com/betterworld/employeeattitudes>
- For Customers, go to: <http://www.groupbt.com/betterworld/customers/customercommunications.htm>
- For Suppliers, go to: <http://www.groupbt.com/betterworld/suppliers/supplierrelationshipmanagement.htm>

These consultation exercises are embedded into our company’s core activities – they are not token exercises undertaken for the sake of this report. This is why you can find out more by following the links above to the relevant sections of the site.

And as groups of stakeholders will not always reach a consensus, a company must select the appropriate balance point and make, and be seen to make, responsible decisions. Corporate social responsibility is about being held to account for those decisions in an open and transparent way.

Therefore, we believe that it is important to be explicit about what BT is trying to achieve with each stakeholder group, and have a developed understanding of their expectations of us. For this reason, our specific aspirations and commitments which apply in our relations with our customers, employees, shareholders, partners, suppliers and communities, is set out in our statement of business practice, The Way We Work. (www.groupbt.com/betterworld/businessprinciples).

And to see that we are held accountable, you can navigate this site according to these aspirations and commitments by visiting www.groupbt.com/betterworld/accountability

We also have relationships with society as a whole, and have a major part to play in issues of social concern such as mobile phones and health, the Digital Divide and the rise of e-business.

- For the Digital Divide, go to: www.groupbt.com/betterworld/digitaldivide
- For e-business, go to: www.groupbt.com/betterworld/ebusiness

Moreover, we seek and encourage the input of specialists in social and environmental policy, for example through our European Stakeholder Advisory Panel or the debates that we host around our Occasional Papers. Our new Social Policy Strategy has been informed by these specialists, and also by a series of consultation exercises undertaken with employees, customers, shareholders and the wider public.

This report is itself part of the dialogue process, and for this reason we have recruited the Institute of Social and Ethical Accountability to help us develop on-line consultation methods. As part of this process we have held two “virtual” consultation exercises.

In the Autumn of 2001 we held a two-week email debate on the Digital Divide, which culminated in a live on-line discussion with Pierre Danon, CEO of BT Retail. An archive of this discussion is available at <http://www.groupbt.com/betterworld/yourviews/digitaldividedebate.htm>

In December 2001 we held a two-week email discussion on modern communications technology and quality of life. An archive of the discussion is available at <http://www.groupbt.com/betterworld/yourviews/modernmommunicationdebate.htm>

We will be continuing to experiment with this new form of stakeholder engagement over the coming months and details of this and other on-line discussions can be found at <http://www.groupbt.com/betterworld/yourviews>

If you have opinions or thoughts about any aspect of BT’s social and environmental performance then you can email us at yourviews@bt.com and we will do our best to respond within three days.