

RESTAURANT ASSOCIATES

WHITE PAPER

The Importance of Social Value and Mobility in the Workplace

In today's business world, it is increasingly important for companies to integrate and prioritise social impact alongside economic objectives. There is a growing recognition that businesses have a responsibility not only to their shareholders but also to the wider community and environment in which they operate.

With advice from our panel of experts, we examine how companies might make that first move using the support of organisations such as Social Value UK and look at the integral role that social value plays in procurement and supply chain operations. We will also examine how our wider business can further support social mobility and demonstrate ethical leadership.



From left to right: Luxey, Isabelle, Maya, Vanessa, Victoria, Carol, Jack and Laura

Panellists

1. Luxey Dayanandan, Head of ESG, Restaurant Associates
2. Isabelle Parasram, OBE CEO Social Value UK
3. Maya Gadhvi, Sustainability Specialist, Foodbuy UK&I
4. Vanessa Martin, Head of Wholesale at Ozone Coffee UK
5. Victoria Marshall, Head of People and Culture, Restaurant Associates
6. Carol Sommerville, Compass Group UK & Ireland's Chief People Officer
7. Jack Kelley, Independence, Business & Partnerships Manager, West Lea School
8. Laura Rigden, Founder, It's A Playground

What is Social Value?

Social value is the effect that a business or organisation has on its stakeholders in terms of wellbeing, equality and the environment. This concept extends beyond using money as the main indicator of value; rather, it puts an emphasis on how a business's activities influence the quality of life of individuals, communities and other stakeholders.

“Social value as a topic is sometimes conveyed as being quite complicated, but it really is quite simple. It is about impact on people” CEO of Social Value UK, Isabelle Parasram OBE

“Social value is about understanding the relative importance that people place on changes to their wellbeing and using the insights we gain from this understanding to make better decisions.

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By taking this relative importance into account we can ensure that the decisions we make as organisations focus on what is valuable to people, and through this we can start to increase the positive and reduce the negative effects and ultimately increase the overall value of our work.”



Social enterprise brands Change Please and Toast Microbrewery at Unity Place in Milton Keynes

What can being a part of Social Value UK bring to business and industry clients?

Social Value UK (now The Institute for Social Value) is the professional membership body providing support to businesses who wish to embed social value into their organisations and optimise their social value. Joining SVUK, members have access to training, networking opportunities, advocacy, expert advice, Thought Leadership Groups, report assurance, accreditation, a professional pathway for specialists and much more. As a professional body they work with people at every level including social value teams and those they guide, right through to boards, to advise on how social value can be integrated into their businesses. This helps them to better understand, manage and be responsive to the impact they have on stakeholders.



“Many organisations come to us with a particular motive – for example, winning a bid. But they end up discovering that they are creating or can create incredible social value that they should be shouting about! We show them that they don’t need to be modest and that we’re here to help evaluate and look at the integrity of what they are doing as a business. The need and desire to measure social value is growing and companies are seeing the benefits. For example, the improvement in staff wellbeing, staff retention and productivity that good social value management can bring.” CEO of Social Value UK, Isabelle Parasram OBE



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Foodbuy UK&I is a leading procurement organisation that works with Restaurant Associates to optimise the supply chains and support the food service industry. As advocates for social enterprises, they focus on creating positive social value by engaging with and supporting small businesses. Maya Gadhvi, a Sustainability Specialist at Foodbuy UK&I, talks about their strategy to support small businesses and the challenges they come across.

What are social enterprises?

“They are like any other businesses and whilst they seek to make a profit, they also choose to reinvest their profits (often more than 50%) to drive forward their social or environmental missions. We work with around 35 social enterprise suppliers across coffee, stationery, chocolate, corporate gifting, plant-scaping, beer and much more. Working with social enterprises, allows us and our clients to effectively turn everyday spend into positive social impact.

“It’s also important to look wider than just these certified social enterprises because social value can mean something different to each person. We have a concept that we term socially conscious businesses, and for us that includes social enterprises, not-for-profits, but also B-Corps and minority-owned businesses (be it black-owned, female-owned, LGBTQ+-owned). So, it’s important to us that we meaningfully represent each of these categories, so that our clients can support the cause that’s important to them.”



Case study

Life Water make sure all their profits go directly to Drop4Drop – Restaurant Associates collectively have funded 59 clean water projects to date funding the installation of wells to communities across India, Malawi, Mozambique. That’s almost 60,000 people who now have access to clean water through the simple act of purchasing bottled water in Restaurant Associates sites and offices.



RESTAURANT ASSOCIATES

What is the Foodbuy UK&I strategy to include more small and medium enterprises across Restaurant Associates business and what are some of the challenges you face?

“In 2023, 45% of our supplier portfolio was made up of small to medium businesses (SME’s) with over £400m in spend. We strive to ensure it is a collaborative partnership where they feel supported in all aspects of the journey.

“Since 2021, we have offered reduced payments terms to all our SME partners, recognising the positive impact this brings for small businesses particularly when working with large corporates. As added value, last year we established a new events series in the style of Dragon Den, inviting eighteen firms to pitch their products to Foodbuy UK&I. Five brands were listed from last year's event. We also introduced a sustainability portal that offers helpful tools and resources for smaller businesses.

“It can be difficult finding the right partners across all categories - meat/poultry and fruit and veg in particular. Impulse are often easy industries to enter for SMEs, fresh produce and non-food more difficult and therefore fewer diverse suppliers out there. It can be a daunting task for small businesses working with a large organisation and so we make sure that our door is always open, encouraging conversations – especially when they are facing challenges.”



How do you effectively engage stakeholders to communicate the importance of social procurement?

“Our target is to create 30M from our social enterprises by 2026 as one of 30 industry partners contributing to Social Enterprise UK’s Buy Social Corporate Challenge and their collective target of £1b. We already have 35 social enterprises in the portfolio.

“Impact measurement and reporting is our most successful way of engaging - if a successful social enterprise supplier can effectively quantify the impact being made. E.g., number of lives touched, number of homeless people supporting into employment, it really helps to tell the story and encourage partnerships with impactful businesses.

“We worked with Restaurant Associates on a trial earlier this year creating on site point of sale (POS) at cafes and restaurants, clearly highlighting where a product is from a social enterprise partner – this was well received. This is an example of how clear and direct communication to

RESTAURANT ASSOCIATES

consumers can help raise awareness to the wider story and impact associated with a given product, hopefully influence purchasing habits.”

Ozone Coffee sources, roasts, and distributes specialty coffee to leading restaurants, hotels, cafes and offices across the UK. The company also serves as a wholesaler supplier for Foodbuy UK&I, which in turn supplies Restaurant Associates venues. A New Zealand brand, they expanded to London in 2012 and believe that giving back to the community is a fundamental part of who they are. Vanessa Martin, Head of Wholesale at Ozone Coffee discusses how they build strategic partnerships to amplify social value efforts and share best practice.

How important is social value to you as a business and in your community outreach. How can businesses increase their social value output through their vendor network?

“Whilst we supply to retail, online and offer a subscription service, we are predominately a wholesaler partner and continue to try and stay humble to our Kiwi roots. We source our coffee from all around the world, which means the infrastructure varies across each country, however, we make sure that we are partnering with producers/farmers who are paving the way for more sustainable and ethical coffee production.”

OZONE

Case study

Ozone Coffee's commitment to giving back to the community is deeply ingrained in all of its partnerships. This year they helped support one of their farmers, Einer Saldivar who lives in an extremely remote part of Peru. Einer faced significant challenges with his outdated depulper and fermentation tank, which jeopardised the quality of his coffee. Recognising his need, they saw an opportunity to align its sustainability initiatives with his requirements. This support is crucial as producers often have limited access to financing and are paid only once a year, needing to invest in the new harvest while sustaining their livelihoods. They funded the purchase of a new depulper and fermentation tank for Einer. This investment is expected to boost the quality and quantity of high-grade coffee produced on his farm. Producing a higher percentage of quality coffee is vital, as lower-grade coffee fetches significantly lower prices. Enhancing the yield of good-quality coffee is essential for creating an economically sustainable farming operation.

What are your long-term goals for improving your social and environmental impact?

“We are proud to be a certified B Corporation and we are now on a journey of aiming to reach 100 points at our B Corp recertification - certification requires a B Impact Assessment score of 80+ points and we were awarded 83.6 points the first-time. Being B Corp certified aligns with our values and standards. We are also making great efforts to achieve Net Zero in our kitchens, which is a big step in the direction of sustainability and reducing our environmental impact.”

Social mobility is a fundamental aspect of social value and embodies the principles of fairness and equality, ensuring that people from all backgrounds have equal opportunities to succeed.

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When businesses integrate social mobility into their social value frameworks, they not only contribute to societal equity but also foster a more dynamic and innovative workforce.

West Lea School is dedicated to breaking down barriers for children and young adults with special educational needs, helping them to develop essential life skills. The school offers a unique Supported Internship programme for students aged 16-24, providing opportunities to train in various industries, including hospitality.

Through partnerships with organisations such as Restaurant Associates, students are offered extended work placements, providing invaluable experience in professional settings. These placements give students the time to apply their learned skills, gain confidence, and demonstrate their capabilities in actual work environments.

“Our school is a place to flourish and for our students to reach their full potential. Supporting students into employment is the clear objective. As awareness of social mobility issues grows, it becomes increasingly clear that businesses have been missing out on potential talent. We are committed to supporting organisations such as Restaurant Associates who value diversity, equity and inclusion and social value to make the inclusion of people with learning difficulties and disabilities work for them.” Jack Kelley, Independence, Business & Partnerships Manager, West Lea School.



Case study

A people matrix study conducted on employees at one of Restaurant Associates’ client businesses revealed the need for increased diversity in the workforce. In response, Restaurant Associates and other facilities management partners were tasked with recruiting 50 people from community, social-enterprise or disadvantaged backgrounds throughout 2023. This initiative involved several strategic partnerships and programmes aimed at fostering inclusion and providing valuable work experience.



- Restaurant Associates collaborated with the hospitality charity Springboard and West Lea School to offer 6–12-week work experience placements. This gave students, apprentices, and new employees access to various areas of hospitality operations, allowing them to develop practical skills and industry knowledge.



RESTAURANT ASSOCIATES

- Partnering with the Tower Project, a leading provider of specialist supported employment services for people with learning disabilities and autism in East London. Implementing two apprenticeship schemes to support individuals in gaining skills and employment in the hospitality sector; eighteen months later both apprentices have remained in part-time employment with the Restaurant Associates team, whilst continuing their education journey.

This initiative has gained so much momentum that the client themselves have expanded their involvement and implemented a 1-year work placement scheme, working with Project Search and Redbridge Council. This scheme allows students a 12-month placement, split between Restaurant Associates and other service partners to gain a comprehensive and well-rounded experience in hospitality and the wider service industry, with the aim to find employment with one of the partners at the end of the placement.

A significant component of an organisation's social value offer is wellness, which includes mental health. The founder of It's a Playground, Laura Rigden, devotes her time to helping businesses in nurturing their workforces by offering wellness workshops, training, and consulting. She discusses how companies can support employees who are neurodivergent and make sure everyone in the workforce feels valued and included.

Around 15-20% of the population are neurodivergent. Neurodiversity refers to the different ways a person's brain processes information - being neurodivergent means having a brain that works differently from the average or "neurotypical" person.

Neurodiversity is gaining awareness in the workplace; how can businesses more effectively support neurodivergent employees?



“It really starts before the application process and then extends throughout the whole of the employee lifecycle (including offboarding and beyond). When it comes to the application process - trying to be as inclusive an organisation as you can whilst providing informative essential details around the role is very important. Encouraging prospect applicants to get in touch so discussions can be had around any accommodations they might require can be helpful. You can do this by putting a note in the job advert, even before the applicant has contacted you. Also, providing people with information on the interview process and sharing the questions in advance. Some businesses may push back saying, ‘well, that makes it unfair’ but it actually makes it a lot more equitable.

“Providing an agenda in advance of meetings at work. Many leaders will do this instinctively anyway, but it can be helpful for lots of individuals. Following up with action points after a meeting and working to normalise this type of process can also benefit not only people that identify as neurodivergent, but also a lot of the other individuals in the organisation as well. Also looking at upskilling management and leadership, so they have the tools to engage with their team, understand how to make them feel valued and supported and help them to

RESTAURANT ASSOCIATES

thrive. Applying a strengths-based leadership approach is a great place to start – focusing on individual’s strengths whilst supporting them with their areas of challenge.

Three step process

Awareness

Building knowledge and understanding of neurodiversity. Advocacy and amplification is also key. Identifying employees in the business who are neurodivergent and recognising and elevating their voice through feedback; what do they believe is working effectively in terms of formal procedures, guidelines and everything in between? Challenging discrimination and encouraging leaders to discuss and address their challenges whilst actively providing awareness training for all levels of the business.

Practical

Reviewing procedures and policies and looking at it with a neuro-inclusive lens. Not just talking about attracting talent but making it inclusive throughout the interview stages and beyond - going through all the stages of the employee life cycle. Looking at how employees are reviewed in terms of their achievements and progress and how they are promoted, all the way through to how they're off boarded. This also includes supporting people with easily accessible reasonable accommodations and, if required, tailored Return to Work programmes.

Embedding/Enabling

Fostering a culture that welcomes change and makes employees feel meaningfully united. This can be achieved through ongoing conversations and employee network groups. It’s important to make sure there is buy in from all the different divisions of an organisation – some people may already be on board, whilst there may be some individuals that need to hear about the data and how it links to productivity and benefits individual well-being. The business case for neuroinclusion is extensive and, when organisations investigate it further and become more neurodiverse, inclusive and equitable, it is very likely they will be in a better place to achieve their business goals. It is also about making sure the business is always learning and evolving to the surroundings and equipping the team to do the same. Laura encourages organisations to think about what matters to them as an organisation (starting with what do they want to achieve and what do they want to be known for) – whatever that is, it’s likely that being more neuroinclusive will help them achieve those goals. This needs to be a continuing conversation and an ongoing learning journey for every business.

Laura suggests checking out the [City & Guilds Neurodiversity Index 2024](#) and the [CIPD Neuroinclusion at Work Report 2024](#) to access more insights and practical tips on this topic.

“Creativity, innovation and performance are more likely to be achieved if you have diverse minds in the workplace” Founder of It’s A Playground, Laura Rigden

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Restaurant Associates 'Collaborate' Level 4 apprenticeship programme with Michel Roux.

Next Steps

Restaurant Associates operates under Compass Group UK & Ireland, and as an organisation, Compass Group is committed to making a positive impact on its people and the community. The company's dedication to social value goes beyond financial metrics and focuses on creating meaningful opportunities for individuals and communities.



Through its Social Promise, they have pledged to support one million people by 2030 and are already making changes for good. As a business, since 2021 they have contributed £2 billion in social value – creating 17,000 weeks of training for apprentices, and 69% of its workforce now paid real living wage or above – that's an additional 20,000 people since 2021.

This year alone they have run over 600 apprenticeships and also supported 100 people into the business as a result of its newly implemented social referral hub – working with partners to help those who struggle to find employment e.g., long term unemployed, those with disabilities and ex-offenders.

***“Our goal is to touch the lives of 1 million people – it is ambitious, but it is about doing good in our community. We will continue to do more of it whilst acknowledging our networks and partnerships are a great way to encourage further learning.*”**

***“We need to be talking about inclusive culture, creating less initiatives and working more on integration. This is the way to attract talent. We need to make sure we onboard people correctly, develop and create career opportunities, and ensure that off-boarding processes*”**

RESTAURANT ASSOCIATES

are respectful and supportive, leaving departing employees with a positive impression. Leaders do play a part in the cultural home, but their goal is to build and nurture a team that they can rely on and tap into. We are committed to continuing the development of these relationships, ensuring that our environment supports both personal growth and collective success.” Carol Sommerville, Compass Group UK & Ireland’s Chief People Officer.

Social value is not just a notable endeavour, it is crucial for creating a positive and sustainable impact on employees, communities, and the environment. Through the process it enhances business reputation, attracts, and retains talent, fosters innovation, ensures regulatory compliance, and ultimately contributes to the overall success and resilience of an organisation.

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Additional Resources

Social Value UK - [Social Value UK | The professional body for social value](#)

It's a Playground - [It's a Playground | Mind Training and Mental Health Awareness \(itsaplayground.org\)](#)

West Lea School - [West Lea School – Enterprise Cooperative Trust](#)

Springboard - [Home - The Springboard Charity & Springboard UK](#)

Tower Project - [Home - Tower Project](#)