

bluecat design

LEGAL STRUCTURE SOCIAL ENTERPRISE TYPE MAIN ACTIVITY

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES TURNOVER LOCATION

TRADING AREA

DATE FORMED

PERCENTAGE GENERATED INCOME

HOW IT STARTED

FINANCE

Company limited by shares

Social firm

Graphic design, web development, print, communications media.

Less than 5

£50,001-£200,000

Nottinghamshire

National

1998

100% generated income

Voluntary organisation transition

Self generate income

INTRODUCTION

BlueCat is a creative design company set up as a social enterprise, with all profits covenanted back into the Nottinghamshire Rural Community Council (NRCC). The basic philosophy of BlueCat is to provide a complete solution. They produce the initial design and then apply it over a range of areas including web, print, exhibition and media. Their clients save valuable time and money and receive an integrated creative package that gets results – all from a single source.

They work with a wide range of clients from all sector backgrounds including local government, private sector and, increasingly, other social enterprises.

BlueCat is a strand of the 'NRCC Group', a trading arm which also offers training and consultancy as part of a comprehensive package of professional services.

HOW IT STARTED

BlueCat started life in 1998 as a private sector graphic design agency, managed by Daniel Cullen and based in the centre of Nottingham. It came across to the Trading Arm of the NRCC in April 2002 operating as a social enterprise and was re-launched as a company limited by shares.

In its first year the company generated profits and was able to provide contributions to the charitable parent organisation, NRCC, to the value of £8,000.

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

The company has its own board, which is independent of the parent charity. Board meetings are quarterly and are also attended by the Company Manager and Finance Officer. Beneath the board structure we have monthly team meetings and the Company Manager also undertakes monthly supervisions of all staff. Decisions are arrived at collectively between the board and the team.

SOCIAL OR ENVIRONMENTAL AIMS

Nottinghamshire Rural Community Council is an independent voluntary organisation, established in 1924, which exists to promote the social and economic well being of rural communities by:

- ☐ Supporting Local Services: The NRCC helps to protect and extend services in the community
- ☐ Stimulating Community Action: The NRCC supports the resourcefulness of local people in rural areas
- ☐ Raising the Rural Voice: The NRCC campaigns actively on behalf of village communities
- ☐ Facing the Future: The NRCC helps communities take stock of their present situation and make choices about the future

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The key stakeholders are represented on the board and so have a direct say in the running of the company.

The company owners (the charity) receive and review bi-monthly reports on the running of the company at executive committee meetings. The Chair of the charity's executive committee sits on the board of the company.

The final set of stakeholders are the customers who are subject to regular customer satisfaction surveys but have no direct input at company, board or team level meetings.

KEY TO SUCCESS

- ☐ Don't be too risk averse – be prepared to take a loan if you really need it.
- ☐ Ensure that there are people operating on behalf of the company who are able to keep out of the day to day running. Sometimes companies need leaders and not managers.
- ☐ Finally: quality product, experienced staff and total commitment.

LESSONS LEARNED

Clarity of message; despite being a communications company we ourselves were on a learning curve when it came to the marketing of BlueCat as a Social Enterprise.

In order to establish a strong presence in the market it is very important to have a clear, coherent and consistent image.

VISION

- ☐ As part of a long-term sustainability programme, to reduce the dependency of Nottinghamshire Rural Community Council on grant assistance and donations.
- ☐ To develop NottsRCC Ltd. as a model of best practice in the social enterprise movement

FINANCE

The Company started with a start-up loan from the charity of £8,000. All other resources have been generated by the company itself as it has expanded. We have no outstanding loans; however individual strands do occasionally launch discreet time limited projects that may attract public funding.

INTERESTING FACTS

We're probably one of the larger ranging SE's around in the East Midlands. The equities gained from running the company has enabled us to help establish and participate at board level on a number of other social enterprise support organisations such as the East Midlands School for Social Entrepreneurs Social Enterprise East Midlands (SEEM) and Nottinghamshire Social Enterprise Partnership.

CONTACT DETAILS

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