**DQ1: Ethical**

‘In developing a Web site, companies must take account of their ethical and social responsibilities.’ Make recommendations to the board of your organisation as to how it should approach this issue.

1. Introduction
   1. Company website.
      1. Purpose?
      2. How is it developed?
   2. What are ethical responsibilities?
      1. (Mack, n.d.)
         1. Ethical responsibility is the duty to follow a morally correct path. In your personal life, you might feel the greatest sense of ethical responsibility to your family and close friends. But small business owners also have ethical responsibilities to the many people who count on them to do the right thing.
         2. Businesses have ethical responsibilities to their employees, customers and society as a whole. For example, a small business owner has a responsibility to be honest with his employees so they can make informed decisions about their careers; a responsibility to respect his customers, who expect to receive exactly what they are paying for; a responsibility to invest in the community upon which his company’s well-being depends.
         3. When things are good, it’s easy to be ethical. If customers are plentiful, employees are happy and income is soaring, there is little temptation to cut ethical corners to secure a bit more profit. But when times are hard, the temptation to neglect your ethical responsibilities increases. For example, you might toy with the idea of using company funds to cover personal debts.
         4. Ethical missteps -- whether by a company or just a single person within a company -- can destroy even the biggest organizations, according to the book “Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility: Why Giants Fall,” by Ronald R. Sims. Common ethical problems include shady accounting practices that hide fraud and theft from employees and investors. Such violations can lead to criminal charges, loss of consumer confidence, employee outrage and a host of other negative outcomes.
         5. Maintain an ethically responsible company by setting clear moral standards from the outset. For example, create and enforce a code of conduct that ensures employees treat customers fairly. To avoid even the appearance of unethical behavior, be as transparent as possible in all your dealings with customers, suppliers, employees and the surrounding community.
   3. What are social responsibilities?
      1. Corporate initiative to assess and take responsibility for the company's effects on the environment and impact on social welfare. The term generally applies to company efforts that go beyond what may be required by regulators or environmental protection groups.
      2. Corporate social responsibility may also be referred to as "corporate citizenship" and can involve incurring short-term costs that do not provide an immediate financial benefit to the company, but instead promote positive social and environmental change.
      3. Companies have a lot of power in the community and in the national economy. They control a lot of assets, and may have billions in cash at their disposal for socially conscious investments and programs. Some companies may engage in "greenwashing", or feigning interest in corporate responsibility, but many large corporations are devoting real time and money to environmental sustainability programs, alternative energy/cleantech, and various social welfare initiatives to benefit employees, customers, and the community at large.
      4. (Fallon, 2014)
         1. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is all the rage among brands today. "Giving back" and "doing good" have become the mantras of many companies hoping to appeal to the modern generation of consumers, who are increasingly concerned about global and social issues. But the motivation behind many companies' CSR efforts actually provides the very reason that they shouldn't take on socially responsible initiatives.
         2. A recent report by the Public Relations Society of America found that CSR efforts are primarily driven by a need to keep up appearances, rather than a genuine desire to help the community. The top motivators for brands' CSR included reputation (88 percent), competitive positioning (71 percent) and profitability (56 percent).
         3. While a brand should consider the consumer appeal of charitable work, that shouldn't be the only reason to get involved. Ryan McCarty, director of customer and employee relations at national Verizon Wireless premium retailer The Cellular Connection, said that a brand's motivation for CSR makes a big difference in customer perception. [15 Great Examples of Socially Responsible Businesses]
         4. "Sometimes, CSR becomes a patch sewn on the outside of what the everyday business is, like when it's a large corporate check written to some organization" said McCarty, whose job is implementing CSR initiatives for the "Culture of Good" at The Cellular Connection. "We wanted our give-back to be more of a thread that weaves through everything we do, from recruiting people that share our sense of responsibility, to employee training and the work experience, etc."
         5. McCarty believes that CSR intended to save a failing product or brand won't work in the long run. Instead, a company needs to have already achieved success before it begins CSR efforts.
         6. "If it's about reputation laundering or saving your brand, you shouldn't give back," he told Business News Daily. "You need to resolve what's wrong with what you're doing first. If your boat is sinking, you can keep patching the holes, but you really need to dock it and repair it. Then you can leverage your success through CSR."
2. Recommendation 1
   1. Broadcast what you believe to be your corporate and social values on your webpage. The company that I work for, Thermo Fisher Scientific, has a section on our webpage labeled “Responsibility” under “Company Information” (Thermo Fisher Scientific, 2014a) Google has a section on its home page under “company”, labeled “What we believe” (Google, 2014). This leads to a section with a list of things Google believes “to be true” and how it ties into their business model.
3. Recommendation 2
   1. Broadcast how your organization donated its time and resources to certain causes. For example, my organization participates every year in “Global Volunteer Day” (Life Technologies, 2014). However, Thermo Fisher Scientific, the larger organization that acquired us this year, makes no mention of this on its web page. However, since the acquisition did just take place a few months ago, I am willing to give them a pass since the integration of our two entities could take some time. I actually like Google’s “about” page, which contains links to news articles how their organization has worked with the community for various causes, or what many refer to as “giving back”.
4. Recommendation 3
5. Conclusion
   1. Publishing what you believe are your organization’s core values (at least the ones that will make the average person feel warm and fuzzy inside) give visitor’s of the web page the idea that the organization goals do not contradict with a “better world”.
   2. Publishing how your organization donated its time and resources for certain feel-good causes give the perception that you have “given back” to the community.
   3. While these things will probably not save a struggling company, they are good PR.

References:

Google (2014)

Investopedia (n.d.) *Corporate Social Responsibility* [Online]. Available from: http://www.investopedia.com/terms/c/corp-social-responsibility.asp (Accessed: 31 May 2014)

Life Technologies (2014) *Global Volunteer Day* [Online]. Available from: <http://www.lifetechnologies.com/us/en/home/about-us/sustainability/engaging-stakeholders/community/volunteering-time/global-volunteer-day.html> (Accessed: 31 May 2014)

Mack, S. (n.d.) ‘What Is the Meaning of Ethical Responsibility?’ *Houston Chronicle* [Online]. Available from: <http://smallbusiness.chron.com/meaning-ethical-responsibility-56224.html> (Accessed: 31 May 2014)

Thermo Fisher Scientific (2014a) *Responsibility* [Online]. Available from: <http://www.thermofisher.com/en/responsibility.html> (Accessed: 31 May 2014)