vodafone™

THE TIMES 100

Down loaded from the TT100.biz website

Developing and implementing a strategic approach to ethics

Introduction

Vodafone is a leading mobile telecommunications business, operating in 26 countries. Vodafone values ethics. Being ethical is 'doing the right thing'.

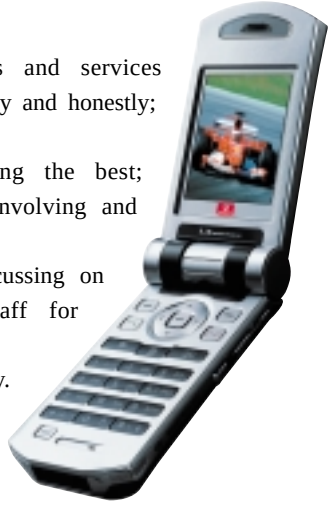
Aims

Vodafone has a responsibility to staff, customers, shareholders and society. Research shows that all groups care about ethics. People are loyal to companies they trust and prefer businesses that operate responsibly. A business that did not care about ethics would simply seek to maximise revenues regardless of how its products affected society. Ethical companies concern themselves with the longer-term, even though this may damage short-term financial performance. When Vodafone first included moderators to create a safe environment in chat rooms, the number of users dropped. This led to reduced revenues but was ethically correct.

Values

Vodafone's core values are linked to:

- Customers. Marketing products and services responsibly; communicating openly and honestly; protecting customers.
- People. Recruiting and retaining the best; investing in improving skills; involving and motivating employees.
- Results. Setting clear goals; focussing on achieving goals; rewarding staff for achievements.
- The world around the company. Investing in local and national charities; reducing environmental impact; listening to concerns.



SLEPT

Ethics guides Vodafone when responding to external changes. **SLEPT** analysis can be used.

- **S**ocial - trends in society. Concerns about young people being vulnerable now they are easy to contact. Concerns about phone theft and adult content.
- **L**egal – for example, not using the mobile whilst driving.
- **E**conomic - the health of the economy.
- **P**olitical - government policy concerns about content and contact.
- **T**echnological – new technology can be used inappropriately. 3rd generation (3G) mobile technology means a variety of content can now be offered. This brings additional responsibility including the need to protect young people from inappropriate content.

Ethical responses

Vodafone UK's research revealed that parents do not know the types of content available. They did believe that restricting access to adult content was important. In July 2004 Vodafone UK, with other operators, launched a joint Code of Practice for self regulation. This stops under-18 access to unsuitable content. Operators also offer parents the opportunity to filter Internet access services. In 2004, Vodafone was the first company in the UK to introduce a network bar that blocks all content rated as 18. Vodafone's ethical stance also works to reduce spam messages and to combat mobile phone crime.

Conclusion

Ethics are central to the company's development. The mobile phone industry has grown rapidly. This has presented challenges. Ethics are used to guide Vodafone through challenge and change.