

CSR 4U news

SMEs BUILDING A BETTER SOCIETY through CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Issue 4

in association with



Irish SME's see Best Practice CSR in Turkey

As part of the CSR4U initiative, four best practice trips will be made to countries across Europe. The second trip took place in May of this year. A group of delegates from the South Dublin and Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Enterprise Boards met with Dr. Yilmaz Argüden, Chairman and Ms. Pinar Ilgaz, Managing Partner of ARGE Consulting at the company's offices in Istanbul. The delegation had travelled to Turkey to examine how ARGE Consulting, a Turkish SME, conducted their CSR practices.

Dr. Yilmaz Argüden is highly respected within his field and it was clear to the delegation that his vision and commitment to CSR form the basis for ARGE's continued growth. ARGE Consulting was founded in 1991 to provide advisory services in the areas of business strategy development and implementation, business excellence methodologies, evaluation and development of investment projects, institutional and organisation development, and change management. The company currently employs approximately 15 people. ARGE expects its employees to participate in NGO activities for one day in the six day working week.

ARGE practice CSR in the following ways:

- Partnering with NGOs. Employees are encouraged to take positions of leadership within NGO organisations.
- ARGE has developed a 'methodology for participation of the corporate sector in NGO activities' and has promoted this approach through the establishment of a **Corporate Volunteers Association**.
- The Corporate Volunteers Association runs an "Adopt a School" initiative where ten students between the ages of 10-15 from schools from disadvantaged areas are given after school tuition and are encouraged to compete in debating.

The benefits that ARGE derive from its CSR activities include:

- Higher motivation of staff with consequent productivity benefits
- Development of staff skills and experience
- Promotional and branding benefits
- Enhanced networking leading to further marketing benefits
- The ability to operate on a six-day basis, though with a capacity reduced by one sixth at any one time due to staff absences while volunteering

The County Enterprise Boards recognise that there are many ways for micro-enterprises to practice CSR. From the Boards' point of view, this visit underlined the importance of partnering with NGO associations in order to spread the benefit of CSR practices through local communities. The key lesson of the trip has been that using the knowledge and skills of its staff and applying these to voluntary projects is probably the most effective way to implement CSR.

Here are some of the comments from the delegation:

John Mullins, Commercial Director of Zahra Publishing,

"Following our recent visit to Turkey to see how CSR is enacted in that country, I was so inspired

by what I saw we have done a full review of our operations here to examine how we can incorporate some of the work done in Istanbul here in Ireland.

Mr. Tim Greenwood, Cooks Academy,

"I found the visit to Istanbul very informative. I was impressed with the staff from ARGE Consulting. They were highly motivated people at the cutting edge of their profession. Ireland, and its small business sector, has much to learn from the culture of 'Corporate Social Responsibility' which we witnessed. I have definite plans to implement in my business some of the principles outlined to us."

Geraldine Lavin, 3rdi IT Consulting,

"What impressed me most about ARGE is how the personal values of the founding director have permeated throughout the entire organisation - ARGE don't view corporate social responsibility as a separate part or strategy of their company; it is simply an integral part of how they do business"

Mr. Quentin Scally, Amdex Systems,

"What struck me most was that the CSR work done by these Turkish companies and by its employees actually benefits the company itself as well as the projects they work on. Amdex certainly has opportunities to take on CSR projects and this visit will provide a new perspective on these opportunities."

