

# Best *CSR strategy*

## Winner

# *Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park London*

**O**n 6 June 2018, two weeks before reopening the Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park London hotel after a £100 million refurbishment, a huge fire broke out. It was estimated it would take between six and eight months to clean up and rebuild, which raised the question of what to do with the hotel's 600 staff. The HR team sprang into action and turned disaster into opportunity.

HR director Jon Dawson put together a detailed business case for retaining all staff and the costs associated with this. It made economic sense to try and hold on to these people rather than rehire and retrain new employees when the hotel reopened.

It was agreed all staff would be remunerated in full for the duration of the closure. To keep them engaged the firm took a two-pronged approach centred around its core values of 'delighting our colleagues' and 'acting with responsibility'.

All staff were offered the opportunity to work overseas and gain new skills in other Mandarin Oriental hotels; 77 took up the offer, and their wages, transport, visas and accommodation were covered. For those unwilling or unable to relocate, the hotel decided to engage them in positive action to give back to the community. It set an ambitious target of 40,000 volunteering hours – around 100 per person.

To ensure the volunteering was more



than just a tick-box exercise, the organisation consulted employees on charities they would like to help, and focused on fitting skillsets to the charities' needs. For example, the sales team volunteered in Oxfam shops and used their know-how to boost sales there. Many chefs supported the Felix Project, helping deliver food to vulnerable people. Other colleagues volunteered to wash cars at fire stations to say 'thank you' to London Fire Brigade, which put out the blaze at the hotel.

This approach has had a marked impact on engagement and morale. Turnover has reduced by 12% and sickness absence by 21%, which has saved £141,000. Of the 600 colleagues, 524 were retained, 30 returned to education, 19 relocated, and only 27 left.

Judges described this as "hands down the best story of any submission", a "standout moment" and "a great example for other organisations". This entry really shows how CSR can work through a crisis and bring people together.

## Highly commended

### Connect Group

Homelessness is a growing problem in the UK, and Connect Group was determined to do what it could to help vulnerable people. Its Pass It On strategy began in December 2015 with colleagues distributing hot drinks and sandwiches. The aim was to help the homeless while engaging and involving each of the 5,000 employees.

The campaign captured the hearts and minds of colleagues, publisher partners and the communities in which Connect Group operates. Since launch, Pass It On has directly helped more than 3,000 homeless or vulnerable people, collected 30,000 items of warm clothes, given out 10,000 cups of coffee, supported more than 500 colleague volunteers, engaged corporate sponsors, worked with 10 charity partners, collected more than £20,000 in cash donations, created a 'care bag' to meet the needs of rough sleepers, and much more. It will soon launch a Summer campaign to distribute much-needed items such as sunscreen, hats and water to the street community.

## Shortlisted

Microgaming

Network Homes

Unipart Group