

Green Impact Case Study

Using conference and meeting spaces that go unused to benefit local charities and public groups.

Background

Institution: **The University of Hertfordshire**

Team Name: **Fielder Centre**

No. of years participating in Green Impact: **This is our first participation after a two year break from the scheme. We'd previously participated twice before.**

2015-16 Award Level (if applicable): **Platinum**

Highlights

- Allowing public groups without money to spend on meeting spaces to enjoy a professional meeting space.
- Seeing the building get used more regularly in the evening and receiving gracious guests.
- Staff offering their own time to be on hand to assist in the facilitation of these meetings; adding to the inviting, community driven atmosphere.

Description

As a conference, meeting and events business owned by the university we run many meetings every day for both academic, internal business units and external businesses. Throughout Green Impact we'd worked hard to try and ensure that "green conferencing" really was at the top of our agenda. Not only is our environment something that every member of the team is passionate about but the conference facility market has heavily adopted the idea of "green conferencing". We'd installed bird feeders and an herb garden to encourage more biodiversity around the business park in which we're based. We'd actively increased food and mixed recycling in the centre and encouraged alternative transport options for both our staff and delegates. When it came to making our impact felt across the community however we were stumped. We have staff who were willing to help but, due to the nature of the business, couldn't be available for daily community work.

Discussing this in a meeting with the Greening Team we had a lightbulb moment and realised that we didn't necessarily need to take our resources to the community. Our biggest resource

nus

green impact

could have the public come to it. There are many local charity groups, school governor boards and local groups who fight for local meeting and event space. They often do not have a budget for such space and cannot compete with the daytime professional meeting requirements and costs. As a business we who works with either the university staff or external businesses we often work business hours. The majority of charity and local interest groups tend to meet outside of these hours to encourage turn-out.

We already had a connection to a local school governors group who we knew required space so we contacted them offering our staff members' own time and the meeting space for a minimum of ten people. This meeting space would be set to our usual professional standard as well as tidied up and reset for the next day's events after the meeting had finished. We also provided tea and coffee, usually included in our day delegate rate, but on the proviso that those taking a drink donate some money to the Fairtrade Foundation. By including a small sign and basket next to the coffee station we collected £8.74.

It would be unfair to ask staff and a stretch on facilities to do this every month so we have committed to a target of four times a year hosting a free meeting for a local group or charity. This allows us to give to the community without damaging the business. As the first year continues we're hoping further progress will be made and our aim is to use twitter to reach out to local charities and groups. Using the direct messenger feature we can get in contact using a more informal approach preventing it sounding like cold-calling whilst building a social-media rapport.

nus

green impact