

## Partnering up or going solo

OPINION is divided on the effectiveness of the partnership approach to corporate social investment, with many companies believing that they can get quicker and more tangible results with a more visible CSI programme.

This, for example, could include sponsoring charities or welfare organisations and by working directly with local communities.

Keith Webb, partner at Bravura Economic Empowerment Consulting, said: "This [partnership] is a great idea which I would really support, but in reality I haven't seen this happening as companies just want to go out and get stuff done.

"Linking with government initiatives invariably becomes drawn-out and frustrating, which removes the ... 'feel good' factor."

Webb said that large companies tended to have internal CSI staff and were big enough to have a major impact on a community.

"Smaller companies do look at pooling funds to an outsourced CSI co-ordinator who, in turn, ensures that the money goes to well-run charities," said Webb.

He emphasised that BEE regulations require that companies spend 1% of NPAT (nett profit after tax) on CSI.

"Most companies we've worked with do well on this metric. Companies are spending CSI on more 'feel good' issues such as Aids clinics and orphanages, rather than job creation and education specifically, among others.

"Our advice to our clients is to align their CSI spending with their business.

"For example, an IT company should be spending CSI funds on IT education in schools as the source of the next generation of IT staff."

In Webb's view, CSI is not about job creation per se, (although it may result in this).

"CSI, in the BEE context, is typically seen as 'feeding a man a fish' — or, better phrased, as investing today in something that will only have economic benefit in many, many years' time.

"More and more funds are being targeted to BEE enterprise-development, which is about 'giving a man a fishing rod' and setting up sustainable businesses." — David Jackson

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