

Survive&Thrive



Organisation for Responsible Businesses

■ ■ ■ PEOPLE PLANET PROFIT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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During the last six months (October 2010-March 2011), Anglia Ruskin University and ORB – Organisation for Responsible Businesses have been collaborating together in the validation and development of a comprehensive Standard aimed at auditing businesses in relation to their responsible and ethical practices. The instrument developed by ORB represents a comprehensive review of the different topics involved in 'social responsibility' and 'sustainable businesses' and it provides of a practical tool for SMEs to enhance their practices and actions as responsible businesses 6 dimensions: Workplace; Environment; Community; Marketplace; Ethics, Values and Transparency; and Other Business Procedures.

The main purpose of this was to provide of a validation process including the following questions:

1. Is the audit instrument measuring what is intended to do?
2. Are the questions valid and understandable?
3. Is the information obtained from the instrument useful to evaluate social responsibility of SMEs for different stakeholders?

In order to validate the instrument both ARU and ORB have been developing workshops and meetings aiming at clarifying the purpose and the type of questions. In addition, a pilot of the instrument has been implemented in order to test the validity and applicability of the instrument. Several discussions and exchange of ideas have informed the process

of validation, and as a consequence we are pleased to respond to the questions posed above as follows:

- The ORB Standard represents a comprehensive system for measuring and assessing the different aspects in which SMEs particularly meet the legal requirements and potentialities in areas such as the environment, the workplace or the market place, and also it provides a framework for continuous development. The Standard follows the rationale of accreditations such as the ISO14001 and the BS8555 as it considers the 'Deming Model' of quality management highlighting the cycle of Plan, Do, Check and Act. Consequently, the Standard represents a platform for SMEs to pursue further processes of accreditation, and most importantly, it encourages continual development crucial for any quality system.
- The ORB Standard is a well-designed accreditation with a robust delivery system. In particular, the questions correspond to a specific scale of evaluation for the categories awarded by the standard. In this sense, the instrument feeds a comprehensive database that allows comparisons, systematisation of the information and the production of useful knowledge for the stakeholders and users of the Standard. As part of the collaboration process, ARU attended one of the training sessions for auditors where lectures and case studies were designed to facilitate the understanding of the instrument and also the values underlying the Standard itself. This combination of practical application informed by a clear vision and objectives is a key characteristic of the ORB Standard. It was highlighted that the Auditors' role is of 'facilitator', meaning that they are providing also some ideas and suggestions for continual improvement for the SMEs while attending the particular characteristics of the SMEs in question.
- The ORB Standard is aimed at SMEs wishing to measure and develop their responsible actions. It is a useful instrument for a number of stakeholders, private and public procurement departments wishing to further relationships with responsible organizations; as well as customers who increasingly demand greater transparency from the companies they are dealing with. As discussed in many forums, SMEs are heterogeneous and their goals are diverse requiring thus a special approach when assessing their social responsibility credentials. SMEs are driven by strong values of commitment and social responsibility since their radio of action includes local communities and networks. From the process of validation, it is possible to say that the ORB Standard represents a very adequate system for SMEs since it recognises SMEs' particular characteristics and offer alternatives, solutions and ideas from experienced auditors/facilitators as well as the Standard itself as a valid accreditation of their actions and activities.