

# A conversation with John Connolly



John Connolly is the Senior Partner and Chief Executive of Deloitte in the UK and Chairman of Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu. John also leads the firm's Global Corporate Responsibility Council.

## **Why is Corporate Responsibility important to Deloitte?**

I see Corporate Responsibility (CR) as a big deal in Deloitte. It's the natural progression of the values that have always underpinned our firm. Our partners firmly believe that Deloitte should be a leader in creating a positive impact on society. We should do that through our own actions, and by helping our clients achieve the same.

Because of our long history, we take a broad view about what this means. Whilst our very significant charitable grants make a big difference to those in need, I am just as keen that the time and talents of our people, the combined skills of Deloitte, are applied to solve the challenges faced by many good causes. I think this approach makes a difference to the way our clients view Deloitte. For us, it delivers rewarding long-term relationships with unusual, challenging and high performing charities and community organisations. Our people relish the opportunity to make this contribution and to have another outlet for their skills – they feel proud of their work, their colleagues and their firm because of it.

## **How will uncertainty of the economic climate affect Deloitte's CR programme?**

In an economic downturn, it might appear to be an easy decision to reduce investment in areas such as CR. At Deloitte, we take the opposite view. Delivering on Corporate Responsibility remains a key priority for our firm. It is embedded in our business strategy and corporate objectives: we believe it sits at the heart of succeeding in turbulent and unpredictable markets.

Social and environmental responsibility has a profound effect in demonstrating shared values and ethical principles with those of our stakeholders.

## **How do you incorporate CR into your business practices at Deloitte?**

First of all, by leadership from the top. I believe that having the most senior people in Deloitte – myself as CEO, my Executive, the Board – committed to CR is fundamental to our people's buy-in and to being credible with our clients. Under this leadership, our attitude is about 'doing the right thing' in the longer term. We aren't in favour of the more gimmicky approach, we are looking for actions and behaviours that we can and should embed across the business.

We've brought this to life by embedding CR into our daily operations at Deloitte, not treating it as a bolt-on extra. At governance level, we have a named Executive Partner responsible for CR, we debate regular CR issues at the full Executive and our Board, and we have a Board advisory panel that takes a special interest in our performance and plans on CR.

At the practical, operational level, our commitment to setting benchmark performance led us to specify high levels of 'green building' in the development of our new headquarters building and wider redevelopment of our London campus and other UK offices.

At the client level, it is about forming high-impact relationships with high-performing charities and enabling them to achieve better outcomes through our advice and services. We want them to realise stakeholder value in the same way that we help our corporate clients realise shareholder value. Many of our people and partners play invaluable roles in

supporting good causes in the community, and we're proud to help them do this. And of course, we invest thousands of hours of our people's time into volunteering, fundraising and teamwork to generate support for needy causes – and almost always realising their personal development goals through the process. That's what I mean about CR being integral to our business – it's woven through everything we do.

#### **How can Deloitte make a difference?**

The best way for us to effect change is through our intellectual capital. We have more than 12,000 talented and enthusiastic people able to apply their business skills to pressing social challenges. That's immensely powerful.

What matters to me is that we don't fritter that valuable skill and time away. I'm determined that when we look at CR, it's on a broad platform. So when we form a charity partnership, I want to know what difference our people can specifically make by fundraising for a good cause, how they can learn more and feel involved, whether we should be helping that charity develop its own business to be more effective, efficient and impactful.

I'm motivated by making a long-term difference, for initiatives that have a far-reaching impact. For example, in the UK, we were part of many conversations going back several years now, with clients, politicians, commentators, about the then growing problem facing many UK businesses because of the lack of employability skills in young people. We decided to work on a solution to this. From the early steps we took with a pilot project and just a few colleges and employers, we now see The Deloitte Foundation working together with Government, national employers and the education sector to deliver employability skills training through nine UK-wide Deloitte Employability Centres and 65 Further Education Colleges. 2,000 college leavers have already completed courses and the scheme will benefit a further 40,000. This is a programme that will run for over five years and is already reshaping how the delivery of these skills and training happens. That is a great example of Deloitte's approach to CR – taking time to plan and deliver a high quality solution that will directly impact over 40,000 young people.

With my global leadership of the Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu organisation, I am constantly looking for areas where we can all work in pursuit of shared global objectives for CR, and to share good practice from the UK and elsewhere across our international network of member firms.

#### **You took a decision this year to invest in a major sponsorship of the London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games, in addition to your existing Deloitte Disability Sport programme. How will this partnership benefit the wider community?**

I see our London 2012 sponsorship as another dimension to our CR programme. I'm proud that Deloitte was one of the first leaders in the business community to back the London 2012 bid. Our selection as the official professional services provider to the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games recognises Deloitte's quality and breadth of services. We now have the opportunity to take the London 2012 story into the heart of our firm, and into our wider CR plans.

We'll do this by using London 2012 as a theme for our Community Day projects, where teams of Deloitte people spend time to repair, restore and enhance community spaces and places – a garden in a local care home, play centre in a deprived neighbourhood, sports facilities for an underprivileged school. I expect our support in this area to help deliver London 2012's Local Environment Programme, for example.

We'll also take the London 2012 message into our work with schools, mentoring young people, using athletes' stories as role model inspiration and into our support for major charities like The Prince's Trust who have already shown how sport can provide a route back for young people on the very edges of society. Of course, we'll also be able to make our relationship with the British Paralympic Association and SportsAid even stronger, creating a lasting legacy for disabled people getting into sport and progressing to a competitive level in the run-up to and way beyond the London 2012 Paralympic Games.