

# 5 easy tips for travel companies to make their CSI truly matter

 By [Teresa Richardson](#)

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Every industry has a responsibility to do good. In the travel industry, and as travellers, making our travel matter is vital.



Image source: [Gallo/Getty](#)

We have a far-reaching impact across the world and, with the focus on sustainable travel, we are starting to make sure that this footprint is a positive one – with as many benefits for the destinations we visit, as for the traveller.

But it can be overwhelming for any travel company trying to decide where and how to start. Here are 5 easy tips for your travel company to make your CSI initiatives matter this #CSIMonth.

## Harness your unique company advantages

Harness your company's unique advantages to make a positive CSI impact.

Whether you're a supplier, tour operator, travel agency, hotel group or guide, no matter what point of the travel chain you work in, you have a unique opportunity to reach a specific group of people.

For us, that's the guests travelling with our family of brands. We have access to over 1.9 million travellers each year. We have the responsibility to ensure that we're positively influencing our guests and ensuring that together, we're doing good.

In April this year, we announced we would no longer make available single-use plastic bottles on our coaches. And every time one of our guests chooses eDocs over printed documents, we plant a tree in their name as part of our partnership with One Tree Planted.



Image Supplied. Tree Planting Day/ Cape Town Team

Some of these initiatives may come at a financial cost for the business, but the long-term impact is worth much more.

## Remember, remember personal responsibility

The buck doesn't stop with the business. Each one of us – from the MD to the receptionist – has a personal responsibility to practise what they preach.

Consider your offices and daily routine and what you can change. These changes can range from small, easy-to-implement ones to larger ones. Do you buy a takeaway coffee every morning? Bring along a reusable mug. How many pages of paper does your office print? Think before you print. Does your building use energy efficient resources and greywater?

At The Travel Corporation (TTC) offices in Johannesburg, we've joined all TTC offices around the world by banning all avoidable single-use plastic in the office.

## Think long-term relationships

For a truly meaningful impact, to make a lasting difference, our corporate responsibility needs to spread much further into the daily lives of people. Long-term beneficial, sustainable relationships are the goal.

Is there an area of interest you and your staff are passionate about? Can you use your business talent to supply a need, offer training or time or assist financially? Ask your staff and network and consider the relationships, people or NGOs, you already have access to.

The Treadright Foundation aims to create a lasting, positive impact on the destinations and communities we travel to. We've carefully fostered these relationships to ensure the only trace we're leaving behind is a positive one, on the community and the earth. Engaging with the locals is vital. Gavin Tollman, CEO of Trafalgar, shared [why local experiences are so important](#)

[to ensure sustainability](#) and as travel leaders, we should be harnessing this for the benefit of the communities.

## Don't be afraid of starting small

However, if you don't have any long-term initiatives in place, don't be afraid of starting small. The standalone CSI initiative can still have an impact and can often lead to fostering that long-term relationship. At the very least, it will start the conversation with key stakeholders and, most importantly, they can tell you what they need most. That's often not what you think they may need.

Following in the footsteps of our late and great Madiba, this Mandela Day on 18 July presents the perfect opportunity to get stuck in. It's not too late to plan something. There's no shortage of shelters, non-profits, hospitals, schools and organisations in need. Ask your staff - there may be someone in your very office who can point you to a good initiative or perhaps assistance of some kind is needed closer to home.

For example, we started small with Busabout's #TooLegitToKnit initiative last year. We supplied the wool and knitting needles to interested travel agents around the country and collectively they knitted almost 90 warm and bright orange scarves that were donated to keep the needy warm in the winter. This year, we hope to knit even more.

We also have a few more initiatives planned for Mandela Day this year, including making sandwiches for the homeless and dropping off much-needed supplies for Kitty and Puppy Haven.

I'm also very excited to be assisting The Earthchild Project this year, visiting a school in Khayelitsha. The Cape Town-based Earthchild Project aims to nurture well-balanced children and teachers by taking a holistic view of their development. As a qualified yoga teacher, I'm personally very passionate about the many benefits yoga can have on our school learners.



Image Supplied. BusaboutPToo Legit to Knit/ Thandi Tembo



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## Implement into the company culture

Fostering long-term CSI initiatives should be implemented into the company culture.

Give staff the tools and means to make a difference and they will. We've seen great results in this by giving our staff an extra two special days of leave to volunteer at an organisation of their choice.

There are benefits for the business too. Volunteering has become one of the incentives you can use to keep your Millennial and Gen Z employees happy. There's incentive travel too – it's more popular than ever and helps you attract, retain and reward staff.

There's no doubt that travel is a gift. But it comes with a very important responsibility for those of us choosing to work and travel. Let's not forget it this #CSIMonth.

## ABOUT TERESA RICHARDSON

Teresa Richardson is the Managing Director of The Travel Corporation (TTC) SA, a Group of Companies which include Trafalgar, Cost Saver, Insight Vacations, Luxury Gold, Contiki, Uniworld Boutique River Cruises, U by Uniworld as well as the brand, Busabout introduced to South Africa by Teresa.

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