

Who is **lurking** in your supply chain?

Your company is only as strong as the weakest link...

Do you make a big effort to uphold your organisation's values? Do you walk the talk and generate positive brand reputation? We all spend a lot of time and money enhancing our brand to win work, service existing customers and to retain and engage our employees.

What about your suppliers and subcontractors? How much do you engage with them? Are they a risk or an opportunity for your organisation on your CSR ambitions?

Frequently used are supplier or subcontractor questionnaires or contracts – sometimes called Pre-Qualification Questionnaires (PQQs). A PQQ will usually include company details, details of insurance cover, financial information, relevant experience, technical and professional ability, capability and capacity.

PQQs often do not ask enough questions relating to social responsibility. For example, policies around health and safety, the environment, diversity and inclusion policy. As larger and socially conscious organisations begin to measure their environmental and social value impacts, these questions are increasingly included in PQQs. In the UK, as a result of the Public Services Act 2012, 10-30% of bid marks go to social issues. Are you ready to answer these questions?

Recently and specifically questions around the Modern Slavery Act have become mandatory in PQQs as a first step to protect organisations from forced labour and stories of sweat shops. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/modern-slavery-bill>

It is vital that you share your CSR objectives and targets with your supply chain so that they know what to expect from your PQQs, from your contract

requirements and how they can gain an advantage if they align with your social responsibility goals.

What can you do?

- Write to all parts of your supply chain and share your social responsibility vision and that you wish to be mutually supportive in this process
- Review what you currently ask of your suppliers and subcontractors
- Enhance your PQQ questions to be more ambitious in terms of social responsibility, to reflect your own values, objectives and targets.
- Have a process in place to collate the returning information and to score or weight your suppliers on all of their capabilities (not just price)
- Choose suppliers that support your organisation both short and long term to help you manage risks and maximise opportunities

Choosing the cheapest supplier short term, may not turn out to be the cheapest long term if they damage your reputation! Having a strong supply chain that is aligned with your values and vision will reduce risk and costs and increase compliance and business opportunities.

If this feels like an onerous task, start with the supplier where you have the largest spend and work downwards.

CSR-Accreditation provides support to structure and focus your CSR vision and independently validates your claims. If you would like to know more register here: <https://csr-accreditation.co.uk/apply-for-csr-accreditation/>