

IMPRESSION

Impact Report 2020



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Background

With a noticeable generational shift in awareness of societal and environmental issues, businesses are increasingly being scrutinised for the part they play.

Businesses' previous purposes were solely aligned around shareholder returns, however, in this new world, responsible businesses with mindful staff want to make a meaningful positive impact.

Impression is no different. We at Impression have a mission to push boundaries together with our clients, our people and our communities. We strive to be transparent and we take responsibility and accountability for our actions. We want to tread lightly on the earth, leaving no lasting impact from our movements, and want also to contribute a positive difference to a number of societal issues.

It's for these reasons Impression is pursuing voluntarily becoming a registered Benefit Corporation "B Corp". It's our hope that through our investment we'll create long term sustained growth and value creation for all stakeholders, beyond our shareholders.

This year, COVID-19 has had a huge impact on our lives at both a personal and professional level with individuals and businesses suffering. At Impression, we immediately recognised that working together to make it through such a difficult period was more important than ever. Despite all of the challenges faced as a result of the pandemic, we are really proud to have taken the steps we have taken so far to support our aspirations of becoming recognised as a certified B Corp. One of our core values has always centred around giving back to our community and showing that business can be a force for good. During a year that has truly challenged everyone, we're proud to have stayed true to this value.



About this report

This is Impression's first annual Impact Report, covering the reporting period of our 2019-2020 financial year.

This report has been prepared by the directors of Impression to outline the impact the business has had this past year. We've reported on the two main categories of impact which we are measuring: social issues and environmental issues.



Impact performance 2019-2020

Looking for ways in which we can create a positive impact on our society and our environment is a real team effort.

Across Impression, we are lucky to employ a passionate workforce who are motivated to find ways to give back and support causes that we really care about. Although last year saw us face unimaginable challenges, we're really proud to have still been able to support a variety of initiatives that have created a positive impact for our employees, our community and the environment.

To determine what initiatives we should focus on, Impression carries out bi-annual wellbeing surveys to all staff, and also occasionally carries our ad-hoc

surveys on topics such as brand representation or future working practices. To inform our decisions, we take into account all available recent surveys at the time as well as industry insight and research and discussions among our management team.

The below section highlights what Impression has been committed to working on and how the business has performed against these commitments for the 12 month period ending 31 Nov 2020.



Social Issues

Our People

Our people are an incredibly important part of Impression and without them, we wouldn't be where we are today. We take various steps to ensure that we continually engage and retain our people including the review of staff benefits and overall package and regularly evolving staff working practices.

To reinforce our commitments to our people and to equal opportunities, we measure a number of KPIs which are inline with the B Corporation's monitoring of Worker Impact. Some of the important KPIs we measure are:

17%

% of leadership employees identifying as female

We're calculating this number based on our senior management team headcount, of which as of November 2020 one of the six members identified as female.

35%

% of manager employees identifying as female

We're calculating this number based on line management responsibilities across the business, which as of November 2020 was 7 of our 20 line managers.

8.1%

Employee attrition rate:

This is calculated as the number of leavers divided by average headcount over the 12 month period. We had 3.8 FTE leavers and our average headcount was 46.8 through this period. According to the **ONS**, Information and communication workers attrition rate is as high as 30%. Monster Jobs puts this at **15%**. In any case, Impression has a below average staff attrition rate which we're really proud of!

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employee engagement surveys ran

Impression runs bi-annual engagement surveys, covering topics such as wellbeing, DEI, health at work, satisfaction, and more. We also ran an additional survey specifically around charities we wanted to support as a team.

78%

% of employees who have had a pay rise or promotion this year

41 employees completed the full 12 month period running to the end of November 2020, and 32 were successful in achieving a pay rise or promotion during this period.



Mental and emotional wellbeing

At Impression, our staff's mental health and wellbeing has always been a priority. We have a wellbeing committee and run bi-annual wellbeing surveys, and we regularly bring in external speakers to talk around mental and physical fitness. None of this changed during COVID.

Throughout lockdown, we sacrificed our profit margin, adopting a "people not profit" mentality to maintain full team resource, morale and culture rather than utilising the UK's furlough scheme to its fullest. We doubled down on strong internal communication and continued to arrange company-wide digital social activities to give teams who wouldn't usually work together the opportunity to keep in touch.

Our monthly lunch and learn and weekly internal training sessions continued to run successfully throughout the entire period, keeping business as usual activity as close to 'normal' as possible. We organised private team confidence and wellbeing coaching with Kirsty Hulse, plus various other virtual sessions that raised awareness of and supported mental health and well-being.

When lockdown restrictions began to ease, we implemented a phased return to work approach, prioritising staff who were struggling to work from home for various reasons.

Employment benefits

An important category to monitor and reflect on. Through the 2019-2020 year we planned a number of changes, however these actually came into force in December 2020. The achievement we're most proud of is the implementation of Private Medical

Insurance which was a requested benefit from our staff wellbeing surveys.

We have made plans to further refine our overall package and begun recruiting a new role, Head of People, in November 2020. This new role will take full ownership of benefits, packages, wellbeing, impact and more.

Evolving working practices

An anonymous wellbeing survey is sent out twice yearly to gain an understanding of how staff are feeling and to ideate new initiatives. We measure how engaged our staff are feeling via an average pulse score, a score provided by staff each week that allows them to rate how they are feeling.

Our career progression framework clearly communicates progression opportunities and shares in-depth, internal job descriptions to describe each role and the steps an individual would need to take to get there. We have also made our salary bandings visible, providing transparency to managers and the wider team. Throughout COVID, regular goal setting via our usual OKR methodology still progressed as it always has, allowing our staff to continue to develop and even gain promotions during this time.

Impression has long allowed experienced staff to regularly work from home, and for all staff to work flexibly to fit in with their lives e.g. for irregular appointments, so when the pandemic forced the closure of our office, we were already set up for full-time remote working. The effects of the pandemic will see us evolving our working practices in the future, allowing our staff full flexibility in terms of where they choose to work.



Diversity and Inclusion

Last year, we launched a range of internal initiatives to specifically address the challenge of diversity and inclusion within our industry.

The first step we took was to merge our existing CSR and wellbeing teams to handle wider issues beyond those which we have engaged in previously. The new team tackles the barriers built and reinforced by privilege in the hope of a more representative workforce for the future.

Next, we engaged an external consultancy to deliver a five-day project to audit our current approach to diversity and to provide us with actionable recommendations so that we can improve this moving forward.

Our efforts to support a more diverse and inclusive working environment have been as follows:



STAFF DIVERSITY

We regularly partner with schools and universities, working with them in different ways as part of our ongoing efforts to inspire the next generation of digital marketer and to ensure a strong and diverse recruitment pipeline into the future. In January 2020, for example, we partnered with Ellis Guildford School in Nottingham to provide mock interviews. This experience was invaluable as it allowed the students to gain real-life experience of an interview process. Taking part in initiatives like this is something that Impression is really passionate about. With so many exciting opportunities available in the sector, we want students to know that a career in digital is always an option, regardless of background or experience.

Last year our line managers undertook unconscious bias training to ensure recruitment is fair, and a new recruitment process was launched. As part of our new process, we used gender decoders in all of our job descriptions, ensured all of our adverts clearly

show our diversity and inclusion statement and advertised roles on a wider range of platforms than we had done previously. We continued to make sure our recruitment was targeted to reach new and diverse demographics and the requirements for our job roles will continue to be linked to potential and competencies, and not qualifications.

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

Impression supported four of its female leaders in studying for a Women in Leadership course delivered by Nottingham Trent University. The course was designed for women in small and medium-sized enterprises working in management or leadership roles, or aspiring to be, who want to develop their capability to manage and lead. The time requirement was 3 days, plus additional time for mentoring, developing a personal development plan and completing an assignment. Impression offered as much time as required within working hours to complete the course.

INCLUSION SPONSORSHIPS

Last year we sponsored three initiatives that were directly aligned to our commitments to promoting representation in tech and supporting diversity and inclusion:



We became aware of an initiative driven by Aleyda Solis which aimed to support SEO women who were seeking personal development. Aleyda gave entrants the opportunity to win 6 months of access to a course offered by Kirsty Hulse: ROAR! Together online accelerator. We were pleased to support this by sponsoring two of these spots, creating an additional two opportunities for women working in the digital sector.



Women in Tech SEO is an excellent platform used and advocated by many at Impression. We regularly support their community and we're pleased to be a part of various initiatives they run. Last year they launched 'WTS Workshops', a series of fortnightly workshops open to their community members. Founder Areej AbuAli is on a mission to empower women to share their knowledge and was seeking support in the form of sponsorship to be able to pay speakers and invest in better tech. The idea of paying speakers for their time seemed like a no-brainer, so we were delighted to sponsor one of these sessions.



We also proudly sponsor The Unicode Consortium, a not for profit organisation which has standardised computer character definitions and continues to innovate these through emojis to this day. One of the objectives of the consortium is to promote accessibility and inclusiveness through communication. When we heard there was an opportunity to sponsor this by adopting a character, we were excited to claim the 'link' emoji 📄 (U+1F517). We chose the link emoji as we frequently use it to communicate links our PR and SEO teams have built for our clients, and for sharing great readworthy industry content internally.



Charitable Giving

Donations

Each year Impression engages in charitable actions with cash donations contributing towards this activity. We carry out company-wide surveys to gain insight into charities close to our employees' hearts, helping us to align our team values with our charitable donations and impact efforts. In 2019-2020, we donated to charities on both a local and national level and also sponsored various initiatives that supported inclusion:

Charity / Organisation	Amount Donated	Type
Muslim Hands	£750.00	Local charity
Cancer Research UK	£165.00	National charity
Nottingham University Hospitals Charity	£52.50	Local charity
Cancer Research UK	£100.00	National Charity
Macmillan Cancer Support	£115.00	National Charity
Unicode Inc. - Unicode, Inc. Character Adoption, Silver Level	£773.55	Inclusion
Robin Hood Fund	£2,000	Local charity
Women in Tech SEO sponsorship	£500	Inclusion
Mentoring sponsorship (via Kirsty Hulse)	£500	Inclusion
RSPCA Radcliffe	£500	Local charity
Nottingham Women's Centre	£500	Local charity
Mind	£700	National Charity

Despite the year disrupting many of our fundraising plans, we did just reach our target, donating a total of £6,695 to charitable initiatives. Of this, £5,656.05 was to registered charities and the final £1,000 was in donations to valuable inclusion initiatives.

During the lockdown period, many charities were forced to close but as restrictions started to ease and charities began to reopen, our CSR team reached out to staff at Impression to organise food and clothing donations. Donations to local Nottingham charity Emmanuel House had been incredibly thin as a result of COVID-19. The charity was lacking the absolute essentials needed to support the sharp increase in demand for homeless and vulnerably housed people in Nottingham after reopening services. We volunteered 3 hours of our time to arrange collections and donate to clothing and food banks.

Pro-bono work

In addition to monetary donations, we also actively engage with and support local charity initiatives by donating our time. The reporting period, with Impression's leave allowance removed, gives us 235 working days per annum per person.

During this time, Impression had an average monthly headcount of 46.8 full time equivalent employees per month. That means each month, on average, Impression staff worked ~156 hours each, or 7,332 hours combined per month.

We didn't have a target this year but we have one moving forward. We want to commit at least 0.1% of all of our time to volunteer service. Based on our headcount growth that means we're likely to volunteer over 100 hours of volunteer service!

By the end of November 2020, we had carried out 74 hours of voluntary work delivered during work time. This equates to roughly 0.08% pro bono time in hindsight.

In the specified time period, we proudly support the following charities by donating our time:



THE ROBIN HOOD FUND, APRIL-MAY 2020

The Robin Hood Fund launched in response to COVID-19, aiming to raise £25,000 to enable many of Nottingham's great community-based projects to continue to operate throughout lockdown, from food banks to food delivery for the vulnerable and more. Proud of our Nottingham roots, we were inspired by this initiative and keen to offer our support in any way that we could.

Prior to COVID-19, Impression won a £2,000 cash prize after winning a competition run by Microsoft. As soon as we became aware of The Robin Hood Fund shining the light on the community issues here in Nottingham, we knew that donating the full £2,000 was the best way to spend this money. This was something the whole team felt strongly about.

Following our donation, Impression was approached for advice on how to spend an advertising grant. Eager to continue to support in any way possible, we created and managed a Facebook Ads campaign. All work was delivered pro-bono and the advertising grant provided media spend on Facebook ads. We volunteered over 14 hours to this initiative.



UGANDA COMMUNITY FARM, SEPTEMBER 2020

Anthony Kalulu turned to farming in 2012 as a way to support his family. A year later he set up a social enterprise called the Uganda Community Farm, in a bid to help other rural farmers in Kamuli, Eastern Uganda. Anthony asked for Impression's help to raise awareness of his fundraising campaign, which aims to generate money towards an agro-processing plant at the UCF. The intended plant will process six different crops including cassava starch, high-quality cassava starch and threshed and graded cereals, which can be supplied to breweries, paint manufacturers, pharmaceutical companies, adhesive and paperboard industries and yoghurt and biscuit producers. Our digital PR team supported UCF by opening up conversations with national journalists and securing coverage in relevant publications in the food and drink sector. We volunteered at least 35 hours to Uganda Community Farm.

OTHER PRO-BONO TIME

In addition to donation and pro-bono work, there are several miscellaneous charitable activities our team were involved with throughout 2020. Prior to the pandemic, in February, we were delighted to host an in-person training morning for over 40 young people involved in The Prince's Trust scheme at our office. Speakers from Impression delivered presentations to introduce the core foundations of digital marketing. The sessions also highlighted ways that smaller businesses can apply techniques to get the most out of their marketing strategy if working with a lower budget. With the UK youth unemployment rate increasing, this day was valuable in supporting those seeking employment in our industry.

Mirroring an event that was held at Impression HQ in 2019, part of our 2020 plan was to host an in-person charity conference to support smaller businesses excel in their marketing efforts. Unfortunately, the pandemic hit and meant this could not go ahead. Our team still felt passionate about upskilling those working in the industry, especially after learning that charities across the UK had faced a significant loss due to the pandemic. Uncertain at the time as to how much longer we'd be under lockdown restrictions, we opted to deliver training virtually in May. The benefit to this was that we were not limited to a certain number of attendees we could invite and we were pleased to have supported over 100 viewers!

To continue to offer our support following our online event in May, our digital marketing experts dedicated more of their time to creating a free downloadable training resource for not for profits. Our guide aimed to help those working in marketing in the third sector to enhance their digital strategy and connect with their target audience.

We volunteered at least 25 hours to these miscellaneous charitable activities.



Environmental Issues

Our Carbon Footprint

Creating a positive impact on the environment and our planet has been one of Impression's long-standing aspirations, a difference we have been really determined to make. So in 2020 we decided to begin the process to calculate our direct carbon emissions. Admittedly, these measurements were difficult to come by in a robust manner – especially if as an SME, like us, you're "marking your own homework". We calculated that our Scope 1, Scope 2 and some (but not all) Scope 3 emissions were around 3.5 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions per month, in pre-Covid-19 months.

Scope 1 typically includes all fuel and direct emissions directly resulting from the business operations on site. Scope 2 includes all purchased energy and its emissions, such as heat and electricity. Scope 3 then includes the supply chain of all materials used in the company. Outside of these scopes is then all employees' own carbon emissions, which aren't necessarily in the control of the company so are excluded.

We then started to look at how we could offset this, and tree planting seemed like a sensible and popular way of doing so. The trouble is, trees take a long time to grow and so the efficacy of tree planting to immediately offset carbon emissions here and now is almost null.

Continuing our research, we came across a far better solution than us calculating our carbon footprint ourselves. We became aware of Ecologi, a business that makes buying carbon certificates and tree planting simpler, and easier to talk about. They work with reputable reforestation partners with robust annual reporting and auditing, and purchase carbon certificates only from Gold Standard accredited schemes, so we know our donations are going to only good causes around the world.

Ecologi

The Ecologi model was different to our original plan, in that through Ecologi's methods the calculations cover the carbon emissions created by our employees' entire lives (based on UK averages) – plus a 15% overage. This is why we can now proudly say we have a 'climate positive' workforce!

Based on our line of work versus the UK average, we're confident this only makes us more of a carbon-negative business!

Offsetting is one thing, but having a true commitment to reducing our overall carbon footprint is another. This was and still is a key element in our ongoing work to become a more impactful business in the months and years to come.

Ecologi proved to be an excellent solution for us in that we were actually able to back-date our donations to include the whole of 2019, too. So far, we've planted 9,235 trees (and counting) and we've helped to remove 366 tonnes of CO2 from the atmosphere by supporting numerous carbon projects each month.





Reflections and next steps

We're a little biased but we think for a business of our size we're doing more than average.

However, driven by our mission to 'Push Boundaries' we want to do more.

We've set ourselves a number of goals and numerical targets across a number of impact measures, and we look forward to becoming a better, more impactful, diverse, mature, inclusive organisation as we continue to work on this.

The B Corporation framework gives a numerical score, and at the time of writing this was in the region of 84, though we are yet to undergo formal assessment. This is based on a minimum threshold of 80, and a maximum score of 200. We look forward to getting this score closer to 85 and then 90 over the coming years.