

This paper was entered in ISO's "What does social responsibility mean to you?" contest. ASQ has also posted this paper at their web site, with permission from the International Organization for Standardization, ISO Central Secretariat

Published: 23.03.2011

Contest ISO 26000: What does social responsibility mean to you?

It's important to have faith!

by Dragana Petrović, Serbia

Many people told me that a young woman consultant does not have much chance to succeed in a world where consultants are mostly men. And they told me that starting a new company with no pre-contracted projects was unlikely to be successful.

But I didn't want to listen. I strongly believed it was worth trying.

We established a company 2006. and started to work. We named the company *Victoria Consulting* as a reflection of our strong belief that we will succeed.

Soon after starting the company, many people told me that it is not normal to work so intensively for the minimum wages and that I must be crazy because I began to work free of charge in translation of standards for one of the national mirror technical committees.

I did not want to listen. I believed in myself and that this work would pay off one day. I continued to work even more intensively!

And I was right! Now I could say that every page translated and every hour of work on my voluntary engagement for the Technical Committee has paid off!

Our small company presently has five full-time employees and we have plans to broaden our business. The company is very well known on our market, people are interested in us, and we have more and more customers satisfied with our services. We are satisfied with the results!

I am realising my dreams and at the same time doing something positive for society. I have realised that those two things fit together very well.

Until a few years ago, I thought that, as a micro-organization, we do not have much to offer in terms of social responsibility. I thought that we are too small to be able to contribute something important to the community.

Then I joined the national Working Group for ISO 26000 and became more interested in social responsibility issues.

I believe that the new ISO 26000:2010 standard is going to help organizations recognise specific areas where they can contribute effectively.

My expectations are that ISO 26000 will contribute to a significant increase in the number of organizations engaged in social responsibility issues.

My biggest expectation is that ISO 26000:2010 will increase general awareness of social responsibility and understanding that social responsibility should not be considered separately from business issues, but as an essential part of a successful, sustainable enterprise.

Social responsibility is not about spending money – it adds value to our business, to our stakeholders and to us personally.

I quickly realized that there are many things that we can do as a micro-enterprise in our country – as long as we have faith in our success, pay attention to the issues and learn where we can contribute the most. After some analysis, we realised that we actually already performed some social responsible activities that we were not aware of. We have realised that our attitude toward the social community underpins our business success.

As a micro-organization, we do not have the financial resources to solve major problems in society, but on the other hand we do have resources and options to contribute.

We realised that our stronger contribution and impact is in the field of our core business activities: system management standards and environmental protection. We were surprised how much can be done, with just a little faith and lot of enthusiasm and effort.

These are some of our activities achieved in 2010 with no extra budget, but merely through application of internal resources and the voluntary engagement of our employees:

1. Initiated the translation of new standards in energy management (EN 16001:2009 and ISO 50001) and formation of the national mirror committee for energy management in Serbia (KS A 242).
2. Participated in an awareness-raising campaign in standardization carried out by the Institute of Standardization of Serbia (our employee participated as lecturer in six regional Chambers of Commerce in Serbia).
3. Continual participation in the mirror national committees for standards at the Institute for Standardization of Serbia (environmental management, quality management, social responsibility).
4. Initiated free-of-charge seminar for more than 100 participants on energy management and introduction of new EN 16001:2009 and pending ISO 50001 in cooperation with the Serbian Chamber of Commerce and Serbian energy efficiency network.
5. Participated in the organization Eco Show's "Plastic bags are so 2000" on replacement of polyethylene bags with reusable bags.

We have decided to participate in two competitions for social responsibility project awards. Regardless of the results, we are happy that we can share our experience with others. It encourages us to continue to do even more in the future.

Social responsibility to me means the following: *To do a job that I love, in the best possible way than I can and, by doing so, to strive to make some small, personal contribution that benefits society and the environment. I strongly believe that each of us can make specific contributions to improving the world, and all of us together can change the world for the better!*

Published, 2011:
www.asq.org/social_responsibility/index.html
www.iso.org/sr

About the author – updated (2014)



Dragana Petrović (Serbia) has about 13 years of professional experience (production, marketing&sales, management, consulting services). She is co-founder, managing partner, quality and environmental management representative and one of the leading consultants at Victoria Consulting, Serbia. She is chairperson of Serbian national committee for energy management system standards and also an active member of several other national mirror committees for management system standards within the Institute for Standardization of Serbia (KS A 176, *Quality Management Systems*, KS A 207, *Environmental Management Systems*, Working group for Social responsibility/ISO 26000). She won second place in the competition for the most successful young entrepreneurs of Belgrade, 2008.

Contact data: kallis@orion.rs; dragana@victoriaconsulting.co.rs
www.victoriaconsulting.co.rs