Social Impact is the impact, positive and negative, that a business has on people within the business, in the value chain and in the wider world. These impacts may be physical, mental, emotional or spiritual.

The social side of sustainability is often ignored or avoided. It is difficult, inconsistent and complicated. It isn’t easy to measure so it doesn’t sit well alongside bottom-lines and carbon-footprints.

But many people really care about it. Those people are your employees, customers, investors and other stakeholders, so you need to care too.

**Why**

Having a negative social impact can cause irreversible reputation damage. Have you or anyone you know ever boycotted a brand? If you have it was probably down to a social breach; what’s more they stick for many years, often long after the issues have been rectified. This may stop potential customers from doing business with you and potential employees may choose to work elsewhere.

There is also the risk of prosecution – there is an increasing volume of legislation focused on social impacts including the Social Value Act, Dodd Frank Act, impending EU legislation on conflict minerals, Modern Slavery Act, Californian Transparency in Supply Chains Act and the UK Bribery Act amongst others.

The counterbalance to the risks is obviously the opportunities; those same staff and customers will respond positively with the following benefits:

- Staff are motivated and will go the extra mile
- The business will be able to attract the best talent
- Reduced costs as statistics show that people are prepared to take lower income to work for an organisation with a strong ethical reputation
- Attract ethically concerned customers
- Attract customers who are concerned about their reputation
- Attract public sector customers who are required to consider social value in their purchasing decisions
- Long term business security by investing in the future
- Goodwill reservoir protects the organisation if things do go wrong

So there are significant economic benefits to managing your social impact, as well as being the right thing to do.

**UN guiding principles**

In 2011 the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights were endorsed by the UN Human Rights Council. Whilst they aren’t mandatory there is an expectation that businesses will follow the guidance and carry out due diligence on their human rights impacts through their business and their supply chain.
The Anthesis Offer

Measuring and managing social impact can be a tricky and nebulous thing. It is not as well developed as, for example, measuring a carbon or water footprint. But that doesn’t mean that it not worthwhile, nor that the expertise doesn’t exist. Anthesis has developed a comprehensive service offering to help you understand your social impact and then act to manage it, improving the benefits to people and the business.

- Social impact assessment – we will assess your current social impact using ISO 26000 and the UN Guiding Principles.
- Gap Analyses - we then review where the organisation is vs where it wants to be and the organisation’s perception vs the staff and customer perception
- Social Impact Strategy - developed based on the gap analysis, this will be closely linked to the Business Strategy and will incorporate the means to address social impact challenges and opportunities.
- Monitoring and measuring social value – we will help find the best way of measuring social value that builds on external best practice but works for the unique situation of your business.
- Promoting your social impact message - stakeholders internally and externally will appreciate your efforts to manage your social impact, however social impact can be a delicate area to talk about. We will help you communicate with stakeholders effectively and transparently.
- Maximising social value in government contract bidding and delivery - through SV strategy development, quantifying SV impact of your bid and preparing high impact bid responses and method statements through innovative thinking and local engagement.
- Support to respond to the Social Value Act, including:
  - help to strengthen due diligence mechanisms and develop robust monitoring and management systems
  - provide in-depth country analysis to provide a view of your exposure to modern slavery
  - use of our RiskHorizon™ tool to help you meet responsible and strategic sourcing objectives across the entire supply chain.

About Anthesis

Anthesis is a specialist global consultancy founded on the belief that commercial success and sustainability go hand in hand.

We have helped many clients to understand their social impacts; put steps in place to improve them; ensure they link to the business values and strategy; and deliver commercial benefit.

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