

# What does the S mean to you?

The S in ESG stands for Social. Many people make the assumption that it stands for sustainability but the S refers to our social responsibilities. But what exactly are social responsibilities? Does it mean responsibilities to employees/colleagues, the community immediately around where we operate, or can it even refer to people on the other side of the world? Speak to three different people and quite possibly you will get three different answers. Whatever your take on the S, at the heart of all the answers, is that you are making positive changes to people somewhere.

Our industry is hospitality, the art of taking care of people, and this is something that ASAP members excel at. In putting so much effort into the care of those that pass through our doors it sometimes all too easy to forget about taking care of those people that work within those walls, those that help make the magic happen. The unsung heroes of the industry, the housekeepers, the receptionists and all the other guest facing roles.

If we focus on the social referring to the people that work in our organisations it is about finding ways to make sure that we are providing happy and fun environments to work in. We should try to avoid overstretching staff or providing a lack of training and support leading to a toxic atmosphere. Are you providing flexible working conditions for those who's roles allow for it? Juggling family and work can be stressful, allowing for flexible working patterns or working from home can do wonders to alleviating that pressure. Are you providing career opportunities to staff or do you always look to recruit from outside? Showing trust and belief in staff and offering progression is a great way to maintain employee retention, which is a big issue right now.



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If we shift our focus to outside our front door and look at our local communities, what can we do for them? As a hospitality establishment we are attracting people to the areas that we operate in and can have a positive impact on the local economy. Take some time to research the businesses that exist around you and the community events that take place. You may uncover a great craft or food market, a local fundraiser or charitable initiative that you may want to support and promote to your guests. We know that the travel habits of Millennials and Gen Z show that they are open minded travellers motivated by off the beaten track experiences and sustainable initiatives. Promote a range of local points of interest to them and become an influencer in the community. It doesn't have to be things that help our local economies, perhaps you can install some nice window boxes or planters to brighten up the street or organise some litter picks to keep the neighbourhood looking good.

If we broaden our horizons even further, what can we do that provides positive change in developing countries far away from us? Maybe not a lot directly but we can look at supporting aid charities such as Oxfam, Unicef or Water Aid or a community interest charity such as JUST ONE Tree. Amanda Bronkhorst, C.E.O. & Founder says "Sadly, the world is a very different place in the areas where we're planting our trees. For most, it's a struggle to put food on the table, let alone access medicine and education, so we focus on providing fair and stable incomes to help improve the livelihoods of the local community members who are growing our forests. In doing so we're tackling so many other issues, such as gender equality, zero hunger, education, health and wellbeing.

If you look at one, two or all three of these points of views and do your own research as to what you could implement then the first seeds of social change will have been planted, it is important that they are then nurtured and cared for and the results will be appreciated by many.



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Today's Takeaway; Now, Better, Best

Have a think about what the S means to you. What areas of social change are the most interesting or pertinent to you and your business? If it is the staffing then think about the conditions, initiatives and opportunities that you currently offer. Why not take a poll from staff about what ideas they have, work together and implement changes that work for everyone.

If it is the community aspect the area that interests you most then again ask staff whether they have a charity that is close to their hearts that you could support. Research to see if there is local campaign or food bank that you can provide support to. Highlight local markets the showcase items that are unique to your region. Promote these at reception or on your website and look for ways that you can incorporate customer giving for charitable initiatives.

If you want to take action in areas in far away places then again, do your research, survey your guests to see what causes are important to them. Is it aid that you want to support or environmental projects. With a little bit of desktop research it is easy to find one that will appeal to you and your business.

Hospitality is a fun and sociable industry and we take care of our guests but let us not forget to take care of ourselves, our staff and our communities.