

Business Ethics

Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility

I am proud to report that I have been elected the Chairman of the Board for the Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility. This position means a lot to me, since it reflects a lifetime of commitment to building different business concepts. The mission of VBSR (<http://www.vbsr.org>) is to foster a business ethic in Vermont that recognizes the opportunity and responsibility of the business community to set a high standard for protecting the natural, human, and economic environments of our citizens.

VBSR is made up of over 400 business ranging from solos to start-ups to some very well-known larger businesses, such as Ben & Jerry's, Vermont Teddy Bear, King Arthur Flour, and Vermont Pure Springs. We represent about 20,000 employees and over \$1 billion in annual sales.

For Hapy and me, being a socially responsible business is natural. We find more self-fulfillment from our commitment to a multiple bottom line than we find from the financial success of Small Dog Electronics alone. We started Small Dog Electronics to make good jobs for ourselves here in Vermont and as we grew it was a natural progression to make our workplace the best it could possibly be.

One aspect of being a socially responsible business is the social contract which we call a livable job. The concept is pretty simple. *Anyone* who works full-time should be able to meet his/her basic needs without resorting to public financial aid. A livable job is a combination of wages, benefits, and workplace practices that enables a worker to be financially self-sufficient. At Small Dog, we make a commitment to our employees to provide competitive wages, extraordinary benefits, and a safe and healthy workplace.

I said it was a contract, and the other side of that contract is that as a result of our commitment we expect — and we receive in every case — a high level of productivity, commitment, and loyalty from our employees. We will generate \$20 million in sales this year with just 20 employees. We work hard and play hard, but we are very much committed to community involvement as well.

To learn more about livable jobs, download the Livable Jobs Toolkit from the VBSR website:

<http://www.vbsr.org/pdf/Toolkit.pdf>