

# Talking Technology

## Taking the moral high ground

By Steve Burns, Capital News contributor



Corporate responsibility is a hot topic these days in the technology industry as the integrity of financial reporting is questioned and challenged.

However, what about social responsibility?

According to recent studies, social responsibility is becoming more and more important to high technology companies and their employees.

Employees desire to be part of an organization that takes its social responsibility seriously.

It is a challenge to think about whether your business is being socially responsible.

Are you doing enough, whether in your community or beyond?

Social responsibility goes well beyond a donation of time or money to your favourite charity.

Experts tell us that being socially responsible means that your company needs a definitive plan and, like a business plan, needs to stick to its social responsibility plan.

However, even if you have a plan, how flexible is the plan? How many opportunities is your company missing out on?

I was interested to hear recently about how a local library automation software company, Kelowna Software Ltd., extended a helping hand to a small library in Ontario, Canada, called The Diamond Library.

The company does have a social responsibility objective of improve access to resources for children.

But how exactly does this objective get implemented?

In December of 2002, the company's sales department received an Internet request for additional information on their library product, named L4U ( [www.L4U.com](http://www.L4U.com)).

The request was processed, and brochures and a standard demonstration CD were sent to the site.

During the subsequent follow-up call the company was introduced to Mr. Diamantides, who was requesting information about setting up a small library in his home.

Although the company's product is more than capable of managing a small home library, the company normally sells its product to K-12 schools and school districts so the sales lead was not pursued.

In January of 2003, the company received an order for barcode labels from The Diamond Library.

A few days later they received a second order for barcode label protectors.

As fate would have it, the Account Manager for the region was not available on that day and the president, Braden Messenger, walked by the front desk to see the order waiting to be shipped out.

It seemed unusual that the company would be selling labels when they had not sold the software. As a result, the president placed a call to the Diamond Library to confirm the order. What he learned was quite a story...

The person in charge of The Diamond Library is actually Mr. Nicholas Diamantides, who is 11 years- old.

The young Mr. Diamantides has always had a fascination with books.

He is an aid in his elementary school library, which uses the company's L4U product.

He found the company on the Internet and requested the information package on L4U, which included a price list.

Undaunted by the price of the software, he began to save his money with the goal of purchasing L4U for his library, The Diamond Library.

The Diamond Library currently has over 1,000 books. Mr. Messenger spoke with Mr. Diamantides Sr. about his son and the library that he was operating.

After school that day he also spoke with the younger Mr. Diamantides and learned of his passion for books and technology.

Mr. Messenger told the younger Mr. Diamantides of his desire to improve access to resources for children.

He also told him that Kelowna Software Ltd. would provide free of charge to The Diamond Library a full version of its L4U library automation software product, a CheckMARC database subscription and technical support.

The only requirement to the deal is that Nicholas continues with his studies and always applies himself to the best of his abilities. He committed to doing just that!

After receiving the software and getting everything up and running, Nicholas expressed his appreciation by sending a number of thank you gifts to the Kelowna Software staff for their kindness to him.

He said: "I really appreciate all that you have done for me. The software works really well and I will keep my promise to continue to work hard in school. You are such a great company – can I work for you someday?"

While the job offer isn't in the mail quite yet, this is an example of how we need to seize the opportunity in our businesses to be socially responsible.

In the end, very little could have been done to plan this – being alert to opportunities and responsive is the key.

As for what is next for Nicholas, if this story is any indication of what this young man is capable of, I am quite certain that this is simply a chapter of a much larger book that has yet to be written.

Steve Burns, CA, CMC, CFP, is the president and CEO of the Burns Innovation Group Inc. If you would like your company profiled in the column, contact Steve at 763-4716 or e-mail:

[steve@burnsinnovation.com](mailto:steve@burnsinnovation.com)