

C..hristmas S..eason R..eflections

By Wayne Visser

Now that we're all winding down (or is it winding up?) for the festive season, as a CSR person (whatever that is) I find myself being revisited by the three "ghosts of Christmas past", whose names are Commercialism, Consumerism and Complicity.

The ghost Commericalism is the unease I feel with the way Christmas is trivialised by business, turning sacred symbols into marketing gimmicks and the Christmas message into catchy jingles. The ghost Consumerism, clearly a close relation to Commercialism, is the shopping frenzy that business whips up around buying Christmas gifts, with the disturbing subtext that we need to buy happiness/love/freedom from guilt. The ghost Complicity is the most disquieting of all, reminding me that I am part of this circus of materialism - I buy into it, literally, even if it makes me uncomfortable.

Is it only CSR professionals who are visited by the 3-C Christmas ghosts, I wonder? And what do I think is the responsible thing to do anyway? Am I suggesting commercial suicide ("hey guys, time to close shop, Christmas is coming!")? Clearly not. Am I suggesting family warfare ("sorry kids, no presents this year; it's for you own good, I promise!")? Not that either. And what about personal ascetism ("gosh, this seems like a good time to become a monk!")? I think not. Scrooge is not really my style.

For me, I guess a "sustainable and responsible" Christmas is all about consciousness. Not Zen-chanting, cloud-surfing consciousness. More like "drifting in awareness". Being conscious of what I'm buying, for who and why. Being conscious of all the "invisible gifts" of Christmas - spending time with loved ones, taking time out to reflect, remembering the message of the child. And also being conscious that more than half the world's population doesn't celebrate Christmas, and for several billion people, it will be the gift of life - of clean water, health, safety and warmth - that they will be hoping for. I'm not suggesting that we all sink into a Christmas depression; simply that we count our blessings and be aware of what Christmas is all about.

So it only leaves me to wish you all, friends and colleagues in the CSR community, a Conscious Christmas. I hope you return in the New Year as passionate and energised as ever to make a positive difference in the world.

Source:

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