



Nestlé UK:

Establishing transparency and leading the way for social change with Unseen

Company background

Established in 1866, Nestlé began as a condensed milk company in Switzerland. Founded by Henri Nestlé, the company has seen continuous growth ever since its initiation during the industrial revolution.

Starting out with an ambition to provide a long-life alternative to fresh milk, Nestlé is now known for a variety of its perishable goods including brands such as Nescafé, Nesquik, Quality Street, Hägen-Dazs and KitKat. Operating in 187 countries, Nestlé owns over 2000 brands producing chocolate, baby milk and food, coffee, dog food, water and other soft drinks.

THE CHALLENGE

Realising the reality of modern slavery

There was a concern at Nestlé UK that employees were not aware of the scope of modern slavery in the UK. Often seen as something that happens elsewhere across the globe, Robin Sundaram, Responsible Sourcing Manager, wanted to get the message across that modern slavery is a real issue in this country, too.

“Like any business that has a supply chain, we should be thinking about the people involved in our production processes and their human rights. It’s not only something that impacts us as a business; it impacts us as consumers and as citizens as well,”

Robin says.

One of the biggest challenges Nestlé UK has is getting their suppliers, and their suppliers, to really focus on the issues around modern slavery and forced labour. This is where the biggest risk is, further down the supply chain.

“That transparency... we don’t have it. On the one hand, we can work with a dairy farm in the UK, and I can go and have a coffee with them. That’s as short a supply chain as you can get. However, sometimes you’ve got three, four or five tiers before you, and that same transparency just isn’t as easy.”

THE SOLUTION

Strengthening modern slavery strategy and engaging employees

Robin heard about Unseen through one of Nestlé's suppliers, who informed him of their ongoing partnership and asked if he would be interested in working with them, too. After an initial meeting between Nestlé and Unseen, it became clear that the Unseen team had something valuable to offer Nestlé.

To tackle the lack of awareness around modern slavery, training was a necessary step to take in forming a solution.

Expert training and virtual reality resources

Unseen worked with Nestlé to develop a tangible training framework. They engaged teams in educational workshops and created a series of virtual reality videos that gave a realistic portrayal of what it's like to be a victim of modern slavery. These are now open source, so they can be shared with anyone in the company.

“Unseen were able to help pull together a good training plan which they deliver really, really well.” Whatever the next challenge Nestlé needs expert support with, the team at Unseen are capable and willing to help.

“Unseen is responsive, and always willing to help us out with the various challenges we ask for help with. It's quite bespoke,” Robin explains.

Taking Nestlé's modern slavery approach further

Alongside having trained over 150 employees, Nestlé has now joined Unseen's business portal.

“You have to find a way to give [senior leadership teams] the business case. Justine has been able to do this, because she's been able to present to these leaders, fostering engagement at that level.”

The business portal is something Robin was really keen for them to get on board with. Thanks to Unseen's ability to engage senior management, through their ability to present in the way that they did, Nestlé is now utilising the platform to leverage their modern slavery strategy.

High-level training for exceptional outcomes

Nestlé now has access to training resources as and when they're needed, and the online training will soon be available to the company's extensive list of suppliers. When discussing other outcomes of working with Unseen, Robin says; "We had one person who has been in the business for 30 years and she said it was the best training she'd ever been on... and we do a lot of training at Nestlé! So, that was good to hear."

THE FUTURE

Leading the way for companies across the globe

Nestlé is a huge company operating in many places around the world. After presenting to the global team who are working on human rights, one member was amazed by what Nestlé UK is doing.

"Why can't other teams be doing what the UK are doing?" quotes Robin as he goes on to say; "This statement from a colleague from the global team has essentially given us permission to continue to work strongly with Unseen – because it's seen as really important in the Nestlé world. It's seen as leading-edge."

Nestlé has an amicable relationship with Unseen and Robin speaks highly of everyone they have been in contact with. The relationship is only set to strengthen as the work between the two organisations continues.

Despite the economic issues the UK is currently facing, now more than ever we need to work to erase modern slavery.

Broaching a difficult subject with discernment

"We're all surprised when we go through the training to learn the extent of modern slavery, the different types, and how people are exploited. The biggest surprise for a lot of people is that it happens in the UK and happens to this degree. It's shocking more than surprising."

This shock factor is handled very tactfully by the team at Unseen. There's no denying that the issue is a very serious crime, however Unseen can convey the importance of the issue without making it too downbeat. "They get the tone just right," says Robin, explaining that they manage to find a balance in how they deliver the training, keeping employees effectively engaged.

"It's a dangerous time because costs are going up. All businesses are still trying to make money. It's hard, but that's why you need people in every business to make sure that's what they're doing, and Unseen is reminding us."

Throughout these hardships, Robin reflects, "Investing in modern slavery support...it's just too important to drop."

Want to be a part of something bigger? Join our growing business community and help to create real change. **Get in touch for a chat about how we can help your organisation.**