

unseen and achilles: collaborating to make business a better place

Improving relevancy, accuracy and
responsiveness across the board.

who is achilles?

Achilles is the global leader of choice when it comes to delivering ethical and sustainable supply chains, with more than 30 years of experience working with the world's largest organisations.

Achilles helps organisations to identify and mitigate their supply chain risk under these three main pillars of sustainability: Financial, ESG and Health & Safety. Its collaborative and data-led approach helps buyers to source responsible suppliers, manage their relationships, and enjoy increased levels of visibility and control over their entire supply chain.

THE CHALLENGE

moving from reactivity to proactivity

The challenges that the Achilles team faces are slightly different from those of the companies that usually seek Unseen's services. Using market leading assessments and audits, Achilles enables businesses to tackle unethical business practices within their supply chains, including exploitation or labour abuses.

The team at Achilles were looking to put together an Ethical Business Programme not only to ensure customers' ethical principles could be met in every part of their operations but to also provide a holistic view across labour practices.

They knew that their approach was reactive, not proactive, responding to issues as soon as they found out about them, as opposed to preparing the right material ahead of the game.

Being able to recommend the best next steps for customers after identifying issues in their audits was crucial for the Achilles team.

"A lot of our clients, particularly the large construction companies, want support with the solutions to the problems they find. We didn't want to just give them the report and the problems and then wave them off."

Adam Whitfield, Head of Assurance Strategy at Achilles.

"Unseen can provide us with that support, and complete that circle. That is key for us."

Through their expert advice, supported by market leading data on the modern slavery landscape, Unseen helped Achilles' customers solve issues around improving ethical labour practices.

THE SOLUTION

a trustworthy partner

The way forward was to take a more proactive approach, using a partner that could help identify emerging trends, access relevant data, and use this to change labour practices across the supply chain.

After reading Unseen's annual reports and having used these to inform their approach for some time, Adam knew that Unseen could make that difference, and wanted to collaborate.

Working with Unseen gives the Achilles team access to Modern Slavery & Exploitation Helpline data and provides updates on key trends seen through the Helpline's Business Portal. This helps Achilles' customers stay one step ahead, responding to industry issues in a proactive and timely manner.

Unseen's Helpline Business Portal is a platform where members can access exclusive, first-hand data on labour abuse and exploitation reports and cases happening nationwide.

spot the signs pocket cards

As an Unseen Business Helpline Portal member, Achilles has access to a number of printed awareness raising resources that they can hand out to clients on site. As well as creating bespoke "spot the signs" materials for workers.

This enables Achilles' customers to really understand and put into practice the safest and best approaches to avoid issues relating to modern slavery. The team at Unseen also reviewed Achilles' customer questionnaires to ensure they were up-to-date and reflecting any issues in their respective industries.

establishing a significant programme

Having Unseen as a member of the **Ethical Business Working Group** is beneficial for the Achilles team, too, by providing honest, expert and neutral support in any decision-making and planning, ensuring its work around improving working conditions across UK infrastructure is as effective as possible.

"Last year we set up the Ethical Business Working Group, comprised of leading construction and infrastructure companies from across the UK, and Unseen now sits as a member of that group. Together we have set up training and support packages as part of that initiative, and Unseen is there to support and advise companies on the programme."

Exceptional support

"I quite like the fact that they've been like a friend that's not been afraid to say, 'That's not right.'"

"We've been so pleased with the high levels of support they continue to provide for us and our customers!"

Unseen is willing to challenge us but in a good way. They're making sure we're all doing things that are going to improve the situation, as opposed to just making the same mistakes that others have done before."

THE FUTURE

joining forces for good

"Having Unseen sit on the [Ethical Business Working Group], their honesty and efforts to make sure we're doing the right thing and avoiding mistakes, and their willingness to work alongside us and develop our offerings ... has all been so good," Adam says.

"The team at Unseen is always open to discussing ideas and our approach, and they don't limit these discussions due to time constraints – they are responsive and really up for co-operating."

Adam explains that around 80% of people on sites that Achilles visit aren't aware of modern slavery and the key indicators of potential issues, but with Unseen's new guideline cards, he hopes this will change.

"We're keen to talk about the good stuff Unseen is doing and the difference they are making. I want our work to be seen as interlinked with that. As part of our Ethical Practices Audits, we have to go out and do a lot of interviews onsite. If we are working with a company that wants us to go out to conduct those, I want it to be so that they are also using Unseen to provide ongoing support, the kind of support that can continue after we leave."

and for the future of their partnership?

"I think there's much more to come over the next couple of years, such as supporting big industry."

"The Working Group includes some 13 construction companies – those projects are huge! Unseen is best placed to support those companies, making sure they're on the right path."

The relationship between Achilles and Unseen has been a promising and successful one, and holds much potential for improving labour practices and eradicating modern slavery across the UK and further afield.

