



Solardome Industries is the pioneer and world expert in the design and development of aluminium geodesic domes up to 25m in diameter. It is also a refreshingly progressive and thoughtful company, who operate following a stringent sense of corporate social responsibility. Joe Bradbury of School Building Magazine talks to Solardome Managing Director, Pippa Bailey about the importance of operating a socially ethical and eco-friendly business.

A question of ethics

By definition, business ethics is "a form of applied ethics or professional ethics that examines ethical principles and moral or ethical problems that arise in a business environment. It applies to all aspects of business conduct and is relevant to the conduct of individuals and entire organisations." This is somewhat a vague definition. Perhaps a better way to understand what business ethics are would be to look at how they benefit a business when put into practice.

The sheer importance of strong business ethics cannot be overstated. When a business puts ethics at the forefront of their corporate identity, studies show that they can enjoy a greater degree of loyalty from staff and an increase in

overall morale, which results in a healthy, vibrant and proactive workplace. This in turn soon delivers a financial reward also; companies that behave in a responsible and ethical manner have displayed higher profitability as a direct result of their efforts. Whilst this boost in productivity is partly down to a healthy and happy workforce working efficiently towards a common goal, it is also largely down to how the company is perceived by customers and potential customers on the outside. The reputation you have as a business from the surrounding community, other companies and individual investors is paramount in the decision making process when a consumer chooses which company to do business with. Ergo, if a company's reputation has been sullied or tarnished through past

examples of poor behaviour, loose morals or unethical decisions, clients are much less likely to do trade with them in the future or support any of its operations going forward.

It is therefore vital that ethical behaviour becomes apparent within your business (if not already) should you wish to positively increase your public image, your working environment and your annual turnover. Successful American businessman Warren Buffett once said "it takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it." This is wise advice and to retain a positive image once you have one should be the highest of priorities. In order to do this, businesses must be committed long term to operating in an ethical manner if they wish to maintain a good reputation. This involves treating employees fairly, respecting the

surrounding environment, pricing your product or service at a level that is true to the market, ensuring it is of high quality and listening to the consumer in terms of future development.

Solardome is a ray of sunshine!

Solardome is one such company that put strong ethics at the forefront of their business plan. Based in Hampshire, UK, Solardome Industries has designed and manufactured Solardome® glasshouses since 1995 after purchasing the Solardome design rights from Rosedale engineers, who were based in Yorkshire from 1969. They engineer aluminium geodesic domes for homes, schools, and businesses across the UK and throughout the world. They can provide a full project management service for bespoke projects, from design concept to installation. As the leading dome designer and manufacturer in Europe, no other company has as much experience or expertise of working with glass and aluminium geodesic domes up to 25m diameter. A strong believer in ethical business practices, Solardome act responsibly in all that they do. Joe and Pippa discuss:

Q) Pippa, as part of your Christian ethical approach, Solardome commit annually to donating 10% of your profits to charity. This is a remarkable example of how industries can give back to the very society that provides them with custom. Which charities do you give to and what first compelled you to make such an earnest commitment?

Since we were founded in 1995 our Chairman set our ethics to reflect our Christian principles. In particular that business should be about more than just profit and we have a Christian duty to live out our beliefs every day of the week. Not only in the way we deal with our customers, suppliers and staff but to also try to change the world around us for the better. As such we see our profits as God blessing our work and it's only right we give back to Charities that reflect these Christian principles. One charity we support is London Institute of Contemporary Christianity who aim to encourage others to whole life Christian ethics. And with poverty and the need for basics banks increasing over the last few years the main charities that we support are Youth and Families Matter (YFM) and S.R.A.T.C.H, local Christian charities aimed at helping those most in need right here in Southampton. We have also supported Tearfund and Compassion, charities set up to support children and families in poverty worldwide. It's

also nice for the staff to see how their hard work helps others locally and worldwide.

Q) As well as donations to charitable organisations, you are also providing local trade and supporting British manufacturing. Your aluminium geodesic dome glasshouses and dome buildings are designed in-house and manufactured at one site in the UK, supporting the British economy and ensuring a smooth process from sale to delivery. All of your suppliers are also UK companies. How important is it to "buy British," and do the pro's outweigh the cons?



Pippa Bailey, Managing Director

We feel very strongly that it's important to support British suppliers and that we only deal with reputable high quality companies. We acknowledge that it is cheaper to buy materials from China or Eastern bloc countries or outsource our manufacturing to cheaper labour countries but it's not just about cost. It is about designing and producing a product where we know its entire supply chain and where we can control the quality and timescales of our production and innovation process. Also when you have a local supplier it is quicker and easier to make changes and go and see them in person to solve issues, it also helps them care about your product and business. This is better for our customers especially for quality controls and supports the British economy which is also a good thing for us all. We believe our product is high quality and yes it might be more expensive than if we imported more and perhaps we lose a few sales for those looking for the cheapest dome but quality, reputation and knowing your supply chain is at the heart of our business values.

Q) Running an environmentally friendly business helps to reduce industry impact on the environment and preserves natural resources. A business can help the environment in many ways. What measures do Solardome take to ensure you are eco-friendly?

When it comes to innovation we try to look for renewable materials or recycled materials. Aluminium may take a lot of energy to produce but we choose to source it from a supplier that uses more than 75% recycled aluminium. Also our glass and aluminium domes can be fully recycled at the end of their long lifespan. But more than that, our domes are designed to last decades and do not need replacing every few years. The domes have a low lifetime cost and maintenance is minimal. The dome shape itself is energy efficient as it will require 40% less heating than a similar

sized traditional shaped glasshouse. We also encourage staff to recycle our internal waste and any materials not used go for recycling.

Q) You talk of innovation - what does the future hold for Solardome?

We invest heavily in ensuring our outdoor classroom range is the best quality possible and any feedback from customers is fed into our innovation process. Over the last few years we have incorporated a host of extra features and bespoke furniture to accommodate the school market.

For 2016 we are also offering our Education customers add ons for teaching STEM and enabling our domes to be self-sufficient. This package will enable schools to have a range of eco features including automatic windows, rainwater harvesting, irrigation systems, lighting, and a weather station; all being powered by our own solar panels or wind turbine, making the dome a unique off the grid outdoor classroom.

Not only that since 2011 we started to invest in designing a new Professional dome system for dome buildings and glasshouses. These domes meet the requirement for modular permanent buildings which still have the dome shaped wow factor. Our PRO system is a scalable bespoke system for manufacturing domes from 7m - to host a single class up to 25m in diameter large enough to cover 4 tennis courts and create a unique performance hall or new block of classrooms. We created these domes to enable our customers to benefit from a variety of cladding options if they didn't just want a break away space but needed a whole new temperature controlled facility.

For more information on our range of outdoor classrooms visit www.solardome.co.uk/education or call 023 8066 7890



PRO Dome science classroom at Watford School for Girls