

IT players opt for CSR



Work party: the Elan team on site in India



Work in progress: the school under construction

Microsoft and Manpower divisions chose itineraries and venues to reflect their CSR stance for events at home and abroad, as **Yasmin Razak** discovers

Company Elan Computing (part of Manpower)
Venues Purkal Youth Development Society, Ananda
Event Incentive
Group size 30
Agency Marketing City
Dates 14-19 March 2006
DMC Incent Tours
Budget Undisclosed

The brief Elan Computing, a division of Manpower, has flown its top performers to Rio, Hong Kong and the Monaco Grand Prix, so finding something suitably discerning for the Elan 25 Club is becoming an increasingly tall order. Burj al Arab in Dubai and South Africa's Sun City were mooted as possibilities for 2006. The club is made up of the top 18 sales performers, five of the best back-office employees and two of the strongest sales managers. This time, the Elan also wanted to add a charitable incentive.

Challenges Elan Computing's chosen agency, Marketing City, had a barrage of hurdles to overcome, starting with the choice of the charitable incentive itself. The client was interested in finding a sustainable project so that the legacy created by this year's incentive could be continued. It was also essential that the team could carry out work together as a group. Just reaching the decision alone was an arduous process so the final thumbs-up was only given

in December, not leaving Marketing City long to work through the logistics. Even after India was chosen as the final destination, other challenges presented themselves. The client wanted to combine a charitable incentive with a luxury reward for the group, but finding a hotel with the requisite 'wow' factor near to a suitable project wasn't an option. Furthermore, finding internal public transport for the final stage of the trip also proved a challenge.

Solution The short lead-time meant that Marketing City turned to DMC Incent Tours for the all important local knowledge. The DMC highlighted the The Purkal Youth Development Society (PYDS) and its aim to build a school, so Elan donated funds to provide this facility and the Elan 25 were able to assist with some of the construction work.

While not on the chosen village's doorstep, the reputation of the opulent Himalayan retreat Ananda provided the high-level backdrop for the delegates. "If you're going to incentivise a group to spend their time working for charity, then it won't work if you put them up in the wrong place," says Marketing City operations director Julie Williams. "They need a treat as well, as they have sold all year just to get themselves on the trip, so you need to still provide them with an incentive as well."

Coping with India's internal transport wasn't an option, adds Williams. "Scheduled flights are cancelled on a regular basis in India and it was a risk that the client wasn't prepared to take, so we arranged charters for the last leg of the trip."

Execution The group flew premier class on Jet Airways from Heathrow to Delhi and, after acclimatising, the delegates went to the village to see the conditions in which the school-children live. In the afternoon, there was a Q&A session with the pupils, centred around a large map of Europe, and plenty of jokes

about the cricket ensued. Elan's donation funded the construction of a block of classrooms and two additional support blocks, the costs of connecting them to both water and electricity supplies and the planting of 250 tree saplings to prevent erosion. Delegates helped paint and plaster the new blocks and a ceremony to unveil the school's logo, designed by the kids, but created by Elan Computing, marked the end of the project.

Dinner in the palace at the Ananda Spa, followed by trekking, white-water rafting and an afternoon by the Ganges helped delegates unwind before they chartered a plane to Agra, to see the Taj Mahal and enjoy a farewell dinner at The Imperial Hotel.

Verdict "The trip was a complete success. All the participants were moved by the unwavering strength and positive attitude of everyone involved in the project, but moreover, by the children," says Elan Computing managing director Sean Costello. "Corporate social responsibility extends well beyond just writing a cheque to a charitable cause," he says. "Our reward comes from knowing that we make a real difference – today and in the future."