

The Body Shop attempts to defend its sell-out

The Body Shop have issued the following letter which, although it's quite lengthy and despite assurances that all is well, doesn't answer the most pressing questions. Can you spot the omissions?!

From: UK Customer Relations
Sent:
To:
Subject:- The Body Shop

Dear Ms

Thank you for your email.

For 30 years The Body Shop has been a force for positive social and environmental change across the world. In more than 2000 stores across the world we operate our business according to five core principles: Support Community Trade, Defend Human Rights, Against Animal Testing, Activate Self-Esteem, and Protect Our Planet.

The news that the boards of L'Oreal and The Body Shop have reached an agreement on the terms of a recommended cash offer made by L'Oreal will not alter the principles of The Body Shop. The Body Shop intends to remain a pioneering ethical retailer offering affordable prestige quality products and campaigning for social and environmental change.

Let us be clear, The Body Shop is an ethically-driven company. For example, through determined campaigning and with the support of over four million customers, The Body Shop was instrumental in securing UK and European bans on animal testing for cosmetic purposes. We were the first international cosmetics brand to be awarded the Humane Cosmetics Standard for our Against Animal Testing policy, which is viewed as best practice by leading animal welfare groups. Our policy ensures that we will not purchase any ingredient that has been tested or retested on animals for cosmetic purposes since at least 31 December 1990. We intend to continue to demand that all of our suppliers adhere to our standards, and our strict audit systems will remain in place to safeguard the integrity of our Against Animal Testing Policy.

In 2005, the Royal Society for Prevention of Cruelty Against Animals (RSPCA) applauded The Body Shop for its commitment to this principle. This month (March 2006) The Body Shop was selected as "Best Cruelty Free Cosmetics" in the first PETA Europe Progress Awards. We are incredibly proud of both these honours. We have never tested our products or ingredients on animals, nor commissioned others to do so on our behalf. *More...*

ETHICALLY DRIVEN

Makes no mention to how profits from Body Shop sales may be used by the parent company L'Oréal.

BAN

It is widely believed that L'Oréal were one of the main driving forces behind the legal challenge brought by the French government in 2005 to overturn legislation that will introduce a phased ban on animal testing for cosmetic purposes

"AGREEMENT"

The agreement does not put any obligation on L'Oréal to cease their use of animal tested ingredients.

CAMPAIGNING

Makes no mention of continuing their commitment to campaigning for animal welfare.

Over 15 years ago The Body Shop created its own fair trade programme called Community Trade. By satisfying our demand for ingredients, gifts and accessories in a fair way we help create sustainable trading relationships with marginalised communities around the world. Working with 30 suppliers across 23 countries Community Trade benefits the lives of more than 15,000 families. From Australia to Zambia, we source ingredients such as tea tree oil, sesame oil, babassu oil, honey, beeswax and cocoa butter from small scale farmers who secure a fair price for their goods, and in many cases a social premium to benefit their whole community. Community Trade has supported the building of wells, schools, community centres and the supply of educational materials across the world. We are deeply proud of the positive impact Community Trade has upon our suppliers.

The Body Shop is also campaigning to Stop Violence in the Home. In 2005 the campaign reached 35 markets across the four The Body Shop Regions. The campaign raises funds and awareness about domestic violence helping to protect the victims of domestic violence. Our approach is positive, empowering and ultimately seeks to change peoples' perceptions of domestic violence all over the world.

From our on-going commitment to end animal testing in the cosmetics industry and the launch of our first Community Trade product to our global campaign to Stop Violence in the Home, running in more than 35 countries across the world, The Body Shop has shown consistently that business has the power to make the right kind of difference to the world. Now we have an amazing opportunity to influence the world's largest cosmetics company on these issues.

L'Oréal has stated that it has great respect for The Body Shop identity as a successful, global, naturally-oriented company with a distinct heritage based on strong and well defined values. Furthermore, L'Oreal have stated that, should the offer succeed, The Body Shop would retain its existing identity and values and use this transaction as a platform for further expansion of The Body Shop's values with support from L'Oréal. We applaud their intentions and hope that our customers will do the same.

We are not in a position to comment on L'Oréal's policy. Customers wishing to talk to L'Oréal about their policies should call L'Oréal directly.

The Body Shop UK Customer Relations

INFLUENCE

The Body Shop value is 1/50th of L'Oréal – isn't it clear who'll have the upper hand in this partnership.

CUSTOMERS

In March this year L'Oréal was fined a record €4.1 million in France for illegal price fixing to the detriment of its customers. The UK courts view such actions so seriously that it would disqualify the directors! What a nice way to treat customers!

L'Oreal's policy

L'Oreal are on record as saying it will be some 20 years before there is an end to animal testing!