

Anti-corruption stance offers PR opportunity

By [Lorraine Robertson-Tarr](#)

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Following on the World Economic Forum meeting last week in Davos, the Partnering Against corruption Principles for Countering Bribery guideline has been published on the World Economic Forum website. For communication consultants this offers an enormous opportunity, since there will shortly be a widespread awareness campaign to encourage enterprises across the world to commit to these principles and design and implement internal processes and monitoring to apply these rules to their business.

This initiative, first tabled in 2002, will become a business imperative and those firms which move to be early adopters of these principles will gain a business advantage.

Advising your clients to take a stance on anti-corruption - and encouraging them to do so publicly - demonstrates vividly that company's commitment to integrity, ethics and transparent business practices. In the hearts and minds of consumers and clients, this will strike a chord, and those that value their own sense of integrity and ethics, will take this into account when making a decision regarding their dealings with firms that have not committed to these principles.

No matter which way you look at it, corruption is dishonest. Ask most people whether they think they are dishonest or not and I guess that you will find the most common response to be: "Who me, never!" The irony is that if you then ask whether or not they have received expensive gifts, entertainment, overseas trips and the like, some of them may very well have done so. This is what is defined as corruption.

The Oxford dictionary says that, "corrupt is when you are willing to act dishonestly in return for money or personal gain." This then includes personal gain in the nature of any type of expensive gift which one could not afford oneself or even heavily discounted purchases. Like perhaps motor vehicles?

On another level, this raises questions for consultants when designing and implementing networking and relationship building events for their clients. How does one take into account these principles, when you need to ensure that your client meets and mixes with key industry influencers?

Ask: what is the intent?

I think that it requires a new approach and it requires consultants to think carefully which strategy and tactics they employ. Perhaps I am naturally suspicious of the proverbial gift horse and the too-good-to-be-true opportunity, but I have always been a great believer in asking one key question - what is the intent? Because by establishing and defining intention, you are in a better position to make a moral judgement as to whether or not the intention is good or bad, without allowing the

offer to become tempting.

Coming back to introducing your clients to key influencers. We know that it is critical from a business point of view that we identify key industry bodies, key influencers, government officials involved in legislative processes which may impact the business, and the like. We identify them because we know that by not identifying them and not establishing a relationship, we are not managing risk. The risk is really that the client is not up to date on what is happening in his industry, and does not hear key developments from the source. By developing relationships with the sources, we ensure that our clients get information which is accurate, timeous and of advantage to their business. Without these relationships, they lose opportunities to be early adopters or to offer their input and knowledge to developments.

Our intent then must clearly be to ensure that the relationships we build on behalf of clients is for that reason - improving communication, creating awareness, increasing involvement and for the purpose of furthering his industry.

Consultants with initiative will be able to create events, meetings and forums, with suitable good intentions, initiatives or opportunities to discuss industry developments, without this being on a beach in the Seychelles. Let's face it, how much work would you do if you were in the Seychelles?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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