

## Reputation Institute launched in South Africa

Scandals that have reverberated around the world in the wake of corporate governance debacles such as those suffered by Enron, Vivendi and Parmalat, have catapulted reputation management to the forefront of executive responsibility and accountability, said Charles Proudfoot, at the launch of a South African chapter of the Reputation Institute last week.

The Reputation Institute, headquartered in the United States, is a global network of companies, academics and professional practitioners committed to advancing knowledge about corporate reputation and to improving the practice of reputation management.

"How to assess and manage the reputational risks that companies face from unexpected developments or even routine operations is a discipline that commands understanding and focus," says Proudfoot.

"The institute has, over the last five years developed empirical research projects, forums, journals, and other forms of knowledge-building that focus on measuring corporate reputation and how to estimate the tangible value that derives from corporate reputation," says Proudfoot.

The South African chapter of the Reputation Institute was launched at a one-day seminar at Gallagher Estate, Midrand on 26 February.

"The groundwork leading to the official launch of the Reputation Institute in South Africa has solicited an overwhelming response among several of the country's major public sector and parastatal enterprises.

"Corporate governance is taken extremely seriously by executives in this country. Reputation management is seen as a critical tool to be used in corporate governance that brings objectivity to how corporate reputations are measured and managed," Proudfoot says.

With headquarters in the United States, the institute is represented in 11 European countries including the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Greece and Switzerland with activities extended to more than 30 other countries, including India, Australia, Japan and now, for the first time, in South Africa. Currently there are over 400 academics and professional practitioners worldwide who belong to the network - making it the single largest body of knowledge on the subject of reputation management.

The Reputation Institute's activities are funded by annual contributions of member organisations.