

Sharing Ideas and Best Practices in Business Ethics
26-27 January 2006 in Paris
Conference Report

The Institute of Business Ethics (IBE) of the UK, the Cercle D'Éthique des Affaires - Cercle Européen des Déontologues (CEA-CED) of France and the European Business Ethics Network (EBEN) held the third European conference for ethics and compliance practitioners, this year in Paris. *Sharing Ideas and Best Practices in Business Ethics* was held on 26-27 January 2006 at Hotel Sofitel Rive Gauche. Over 90 corporate ethics practitioners from 12 countries from Europe, Africa and the U.S. attended. The participants came from a range of industries, including information technology, telecommunications, oil and gas, defence, banking and finance, utilities, automotive, retail, and healthcare.

The conference provided an opportunity for ethics and compliance practitioners to meet their counterparts, share ideas and best practices, and form the basis for a continuing dialogue among ethics and compliance professionals in organisations.

As in previous years, the conference was designed to allow maximum time for discussion, debate, and networking. A plenary meeting was held at the start of each day. These were followed by a series of breakout sessions. Each of these were introduced with a case study by the speaker. A *rapporteur* (reporter) presented a summary of the group's discussion during subsequent 'report back' sessions. This approach ensured that all attendees could hear and discuss the main points from each of the workshops.

The opening plenary on the first day was led by Sir Robert Worcester, president of Ipsos-MORI on the question "Why is business mistrusted and what to do about it?" Sir Robert concluded that he felt there is no real crisis of trust but there is some decline in some sectors and the issue of information is an important one. Companies are not trusted where they are not interested in people's views and they have poor quality leaders and managers.

The second day's plenary addressed "Speak up policies (whistleblowing): law and practice around Europe" and was introduced by Guy Dehn, Director, Public Concern at Work. Guy led a lively discussion on the contrasting attitudes throughout Europe and the US as to whether there is protection for the whistleblower or the 'whistleblown'.

The breakout sessions addressed a number of key business ethics issues facing today's organisations, with the four main themes emerging as: cross-cultural behaviours; the legal implications with regard to ethics in organisations; making it work: embedding ethics in organisations; and a number of 'recurring issues' that practitioners experience. The breakout sessions were as follows:

Day 1 Morning

- Business ethics and 'corporate social responsibility' – do they fit together?
- Balance of power in the supply chain: Relations between large organisations and Small and Medium sized Enterprises
- Human Rights issues at the workplace
- Engaging the board in business ethics: Introducing ethical considerations into corporate strategy and communication

Day 1 Afternoon

- What works well in the use of electronic and other material in business ethics training?
- Measuring ethics policy effectiveness: The use of employee surveys and other techniques

Role of the ethics function/officer in mergers and acquisitions

- Dealing with harassment, discrimination and bullying at the workplace

A dinner was held in the evening for all delegates on the River Seine on board *The Evasion*, kindly sponsored by GlaxoSmithKline.

Day 2

Breakout sessions were as follows:

- Ethical sensitivity in marketing practices (advertising, PR)
- Ways of combating bribery and other forms of corruption
- Cross cultural ethics problems: 'Exporting' corporate values
- Misbehaviour at the top: what do you do about it?

Breakout session speakers were from Accenture, Adecco, BP, Dexia, EDF, ECOA, National Grid, Rolls Royce, Royal Dutch Shell, Suez and Total. *Rapporteurs* were from BAT, BP, Integrity Interactive, Meadwestvaco, Meggitt, Serco

A full report of the conference was sent to all attendees and is available to subscribers to the IBE.

Translation services were kindly sponsored by EDF.

Following the success of this year's conference, next year the Sharing Ideas and Best Practice 2007 Conference will take place in January in Brussels.

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