

Sharing ideas and best practice in business ethics 2007

Crowne Plaza Hotel, Brussels, 25-26 January 2007

The Institute of Business Ethics (IBE) of the UK, the Ethics & Compliance Officers Association (ECO) of the US, the Cercle D'Éthique des Affaires - Cercle Européen des Déontologues (CEA-CED) of France and the European Business Ethics Network (EBEN) held the fourth European conference for ethics and compliance practitioners, this year in Brussels.

Sharing Ideas and Best Practices in Business Ethics was held on 25-27 January 2007 at 'Le Palace' Crowne Plaza Hotel. Over 120 corporate ethics practitioners from 12 countries from Europe, Africa and the US 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 a unique opportunity for ethics and compliance practitioners to meet their counterparts, share ideas and best practices, as well as experiences and different approaches. This conference forms the basis for a continuing dialogue among ethics and compliance professionals in organisations. The conference agenda was designed to allow maximum time for discussion, debate, and networking and it began with an informal cocktail party for participants to get to know one another.

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 from a participating company. A rapporteur presented a summary of the group's discussion during a subsequent 'report back' sessions. This approach ensured that all attendees could hear and discuss the main points from each of the workshops.

The first plenary session was on the subject of **Doing business in a difficult part of the world**. Two speakers shared their personal experiences of doing business ethically in Asia. **Peter Verhezen, CIMAD Consulting** (Indonesia) began by comparing relationship based governance in Asia with the contract-based governance of the west and the significance of this for reputation. **Michael Hougard Pederson, Novozymes** (Denmark) also spoke about the Chinese perception of corruption and what makes anti-corruption measures effective.

The morning's breakout sessions were as follows:

- **Evaluating the effectiveness of an ethics programme:**
Using employee surveys and other ways of measuring effectiveness of corporate ethics programmes
- **Integrating the ethics function into an organization:**
Making ethical values relevant to different functional areas
- **Experience with Board – Executive level – ethics committees**
Examples of good practice concerning reporting and monitoring on ethics policies
- **How to raise and sustain ethics awareness:**

Effective ethics awareness raising techniques; including using case studies and ethical dilemmas in ethics training

The afternoon's breakout sessions were on the following topics:

- **Can you really avoid facilitation payments in parts of the world?**
How does it work in practice? Controlling agents, reporting requests etc.
- **Ethical issues arising from business relations between large and small organisations**
How can smaller companies sustain business ethics policies in partnership with larger companies in their supply chain?
- **Ethical due diligence: a way forward**
Assessing ethical standards of joint venture partners and contractors
- **How do ethics and CSR come together?**
How do different companies relate their different policies? Is CSR an easy option?

That evening a reception and dinner was held at the **Belgian Centre for Comic Strip Art**, considered to be one of the masterpieces of the most famous Belgian Art Nouveau architect, Victor Horta. **Sue Bird, Policy Coordinator at the DG of Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities** of the European Commission spoke of the Commission's approach to CSR and the mechanisms in place to support it. She explained that the DG would be responsive to the demands of business in this area. She also felt the need for a clearer understanding of the relationship between ethics, CSR and sustainable development.

The next day, the second plenary session was on the topic of **The Role of Ombudsmen in Business Ethics**. **Steve Cordery from United Technologies Corporation (USA)** gave a background to the role of the ombudsman and explained how his role fits with other Speak Up programmes at UTC. Steve talked about the need for managers to have a good radar system fuelled by excellent information systems. Ombudsman can supply very early warnings on the radar. The ombudsman is distinctive in that he is independent of all management structures and is neutral, guarantees confidentiality, and is available to any stakeholder. **Jadu Sen, British Petroleum (UK)** stepped in at the last minute to present the role of OpenTalk, BP's compliance and ethics helpline, which is supported by 8 regional ombudsmen. The ombudsman's role is to address concerns in connection with the code, independently and according to a set of standards that protects from retaliation.

The final breakout sessions were on the following topics:

- **Ethics and the multi-ethnic workforce within companies**
Issues that arise from implementing a policy. For example: diversity; cultural norms; anti-discrimination
- **Crisis management: What happens when things go wrong?**
The role (if any) of the ethics function
- **Integrating adherence to codes of ethics into European employee contracts-benefits and drawbacks**
Examples from continental Europe

Breakout topics were introduced by the following companies: Allied Irish Bank, Deutsche Telekom, T-Systems, EDF, Kraft Foods International, Van de Velde NV, Shell International, Novartis AG, Total, Merck & Company Inc, Solvay.

Rapporteurs were from BP, Shell International B.V, ag2r, Avaya , EBEN, IBE, Serco, GSK, KPMG, Fortis

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The conference was conducted under the Chatham House Rule. A fuller conference report is available to participants.

The 2008 Sharing Ideas and Best Practice Conference will be held in London in January 2008.

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