



ARE YOU A GOOD GUY OR A BAD GUY?
The importance of brand integrity

If we start with the simple belief that social responsibility and profit generation are not mutually exclusive, then businesses can develop a culture of telling the truth and doing the right thing rather than creating "spin" to maintain a generated public face and reputation.

Business need to start becoming ethical guardians of their market place, not only considering issues such as workers within the supply chain, investment policies and carbon footprint, but intellectual honesty, openness and integrity.

Customers are placing more emphasis on trustworthy companies as can be evidenced by the recent class action lawsuits against Face book in the US, from members who found their data was used without consent. Other social networks have claimed a greater market share as a direct result of customers lost confidence in the market leader.

Today, we hear about politicians who have claimed expenses within what they understood to be the rules, but when looked at with a "reasonable" eye rent for a flat 50 yards from your main residence makes the public uncomfortable.

I suggest that the concept of reasonableness has never been more important in business and how the public builds its perceptions of who are "good guys" and who they see as "bad guys"

The public have a growing understanding and concern about the impact of local businesses on a global supply chain, or world pollution levels and in order for a business to create a culture of integrity and openness, it needs to develop the internal institutional structures and systems to lead with honesty from the top of the management tree.

So look within your business, can you be sure that you are acting as an ethical guardian within the business sphere that you operate in, or are there some aspects that you would like to "tipex" over? Is now the time to start thinking about investing in your competence to survive without PR gimmicks and allow your reputation to speak for itself?

As the economic agenda rises to the fore, contrary to pushing all else aside, it opens the consumer's eyes to other methods of evaluating company performance.

Never has brand integrity been more important.