

CRSA Forum: Incentives, Corruption and Mission Command 29 March 2016 at Norton Rose Fulbright

The CRSA Forum met to hear from Brigadier John Deverell CBE, Dr Marc Schelhase, Peter Walker and Prof. Paul Moxey and to discuss Incentives, Corruption and Mission Command. The forum was kindly hosted by Norton Rose Fulbright and was fortunate to have the use of a 'Turning Point' real-time voting system provided by Prof. Moxey, each vote had between 30-40 responses which were recorded anonymously.

The forum started at 11am with introductions by the day's speakers and the 45+ attendees followed by a stimulating talk by John Deverell. John, Director of Deverell Associates, discussed the core tenants of Mission Command, as drawn from his career in the British Military. He led on to an interactive scenario featuring a hypothetical biomedical company. We discussed the CEO's priorities and whether we thought his company management structure lent itself to Mission Command. In the second part of the scenario an order shipment was being held in India by a customs officer who suggests a bribe would be needed to ensure release of the shipment before its medical content expires. John invited discussion on the situation which prompted an interesting range of responses from the floor based on their industry experience, it was largely thought that the situation could be avoided by effective planning but if necessary a "legal and official fast track payment" could be made to expedite the release of the shipment. The talk cumulated with a vote which gave strong support on whether Mission Command lends itself to commercial life. 35% said "Yes Definitely", 29% to "Probably" and 26% "Possibly".

Peter Walker, Senior Partner in Pielle Consulting, gave a brief but rich talk based on his extensive experiences in anti-bribery and corruption working in the UK, Nigeria, Pakistan and elsewhere with BOC and other organisations. Key points were that senior staff are not willing to trust and that can be poisonous to corporate life as less senior staff will not want to trust upwards; the concept of corporate hierarchies needs to be explored, in particular whether staff can or should challenge decisions taken by more senior people; and too much of non-executive directors time now is spent in detailed dialogue with regulators who seem to want proof of everything - as a result, people are less willing to serve on boards.

Prof. Paul Moxey, Visiting Professor of Corporate Governance at London South Bank University, followed with an interacting discussion on Incentives and Corruption. Participants were asked to vote on some searching questions. 47% disagreed (13% strongly) with the statement there was nothing going on in their company which could be embarrassing if it became publicly known. He then asked where people thought most large organisations were in terms of focus on self-interest or public interest. The votes were heavily skewed towards Self-interest with 9% saying complete self-interest and 63% saying much more self than public interest. Votes were also taken on where most large organisations are on scales of legal to illegal and ethical to unethical. Responses were strongly skewed towards legal but less strongly towards ethical, this suggest that the floor thought rules may be followed to the letter but not always in spirit.

Discussion then moved to considering the systematic causes of corruption, and the beliefs and metaphors which may be behind them. These were listed on Post-it notes and clustered. Votes were taken on which were the most important influences. The Forum then considered, and then voted upon, how beliefs or myths could change to lead to no or much less corruption. The simple belief in the importance of doing the right thing was seen as the most important.

The CRSA Forum is very grateful to Norton Rose Fulbright who kindly hosted the meeting and provided a very enjoyable lunch and refreshments throughout the day. Copies of the day's PowerPoint presentations with the results of the voting can be seen at <http://www.crsaforum.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/29-March-CRSA-Forum-with-votes-PDF.pdf>