



Integrity and anti-corruption compliance for SMEs



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Anti-corruption compliance doesn't have to be complicated. Even small and mid-sized companies can easily build the basics of an effective anti-corruption compliance programme.

Start by asking yourself: are you doing these five things?

1. Do you take every opportunity to talk about your company's values to your employees?

As the CEO, senior manager or board member, talking about what doing the right thing means to you and the company is a great way to develop the company's culture of integrity. Providing that you mean it – and you're prepared to lead by example.

A quick start to get the 'anti-corruption compliance programme' going is to invite discussion. As a leader, you have a unique responsibility that can

turn the company into an example for other companies and make integrity a competitive advantage when it comes to attracting customers, employees and access to finance.

2. Are you really listening to the concerns, ideas, innovations and expectations of your managers and employees?

Companies that have a strong speak-up culture, where discussion, constructive criticism and questioning are welcome, are more likely to have a good grasp of their strengths and weaknesses. This can help in identifying where efforts and energy need to be focused when developing the anti-corruption compliance programme.

Companies that encourage discussion tend to have employees willing to collaborate – and this can result in new ideas, innovations and increased productivity. Try it!

3. Does your recruitment procedure include background checks and tests for values and behaviours?

Your employees are the company's most valuable asset. Investing in excellence will pay off in the long run.

Integrity means doing the right thing even when no one is looking, so when you hire new employees, make sure their values and behaviour match the high standards you expect. Making sure you have the right personnel is key!

4. It's not old-fashioned to do the right thing always: obey the law, don't pay bribes, don't accept or ask for bribes, pay taxes on time, and treat employees fairly and with respect.

Being trapped in legal disputes is a waste of money and diverts attention away from your business. It also damages reputations, which can ruin a business.

An attractive workplace where acting with integrity is rewarded will create loyalty and make your company into a sought-after employer – especially with generation Z.

5. Do you *really* know your business partners?

Don't let anyone, whether a customer, supplier, agent or anyone else working on your behalf, ruin your business or reputation through their poor decisions or bad behaviour.

Invest time and money in training your employees to ask the extra questions before signing a contract or paying for a service. Get the right documents, conduct proper due diligence and don't be afraid to say 'no' when things don't look right.

Looking for more advice on anti-corruption compliance?

- The Basel Institute is offering subsidised guidance on anti-corruption compliance, bribery prevention and Collective Action to eligible SMEs under the UK government's pioneering Business Integrity Initiative.
- Led by Gemma Aiolfi, the Institute's compliance advisory services and custom-designed training programmes are tailored to the needs of organisations of all types and sizes – including small and medium-sized businesses with few resources.

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