

Ethical business - what now?

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In the run up to OUTLOOK™ Pierre Wiertz caught up with guest speaker Ruth Steinholtz, founder of ethical business advisors AretéWork.



You are joining us in Dubrovnik to look at changes in ethical business practices and ethical business regulation. What do you think is the biggest single driver of change in this sphere? And is the current demand for a more transparent and ethical approach to business new or something more cyclical? Are there historical precedents?

My career spans decades and I have not seen anything like the current focus on ethics and values in the corporate world as I have recently.

I don't think it has happened all at once. Rather, it has been gathering speed as a result of the different types of corporate scandals that we have experienced. Scandals which have undermined trust and confidence in large companies.

Globalisation, the media, and social media in particular have no doubt contributed to the number of people who are aware of issues. An early example would be Bhopal for example (remember that?!) but since then there are plenty more. The financial crisis of 2008 was the most significant recent event but the demand for a more ethical approach has been growing for a long time.

As for historical precedents, you could look at the Muckrackers in the US, and the reactions to the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in 1911. That was the worst industrial disaster in the history of New York at the time. Sadly we have seen similar events in Bangladesh and elsewhere in more recent times.

