

2nd EABIS – PLEON Dinner 2009: “Integrating Social Responsibility into Business Strategy”

20 January 2009 - The Hague

On the day President Obama of the United States took office, and declared “*the dawn of the age of responsibility*”, forty-five senior business practitioners from marketing, public affairs and communications and academic experts came together in the Hague at the second annual EABIS – PLEON Dinner to discuss the role and responsibility of business in society. While it is not an easy task to convey the richness of the evening’s discussion, there were a number of key findings:

Firstly, the agreement among participants that a strong “responsible brand” depends to a great extent on the ability to successfully align CSR, public affairs and communications with the core business activities and overall corporate brand. Such alignment must go beyond mere “communication campaigns” - reaching into the very core values embedded in corporate culture; its shared belief system and purpose of activities. Only such a comprehensive approach will build sustainable credibility with employees, public stakeholders and consumers.

Secondly, the agreement among participants that socially credible companies create better business – an intuition supported by a clear trend among consumers to increasingly buy brands that reflect shared values with respect to societal responsibility.

Thirdly, the agreement among participants that the current crisis constitutes a real life test to companies’ ability to act socially competent, not least as concerns difficult re-organisations and subsequent staff reductions.

While no one present was oblivious to the challenge society and business face in view of the worst crisis for decades, a positive commitment among participants was noticeable to seize also the opportunities brought about by the current situation. There was little doubt that participants’ commitment to positively contribute to society stands as firm as ever – as does EABIS’ and PLEON’s commitment to support those endeavours.

In terms of next steps we can already inform you that the third EABIS – PLEON Dinner meeting will take place in Milan in autumn 2009. We are also conscious of the participants’ positive reaction to Professor Gary Davies speech during the dinner. Therefore, Pleon and EABIS are jointly exploring a business focused initiative with Manchester Business School around “responsibility-reputation-trust”. More information on this will follow shortly.

It is where thinking meets practice that progress is made. We are all part of this process, and we thank you for your open sharing and look forward to a continuing exciting journey together.



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Member of the Pleon Board of Directors



Professor Gilbert Lenssen
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