

WELCOME TO McBRIDE ASSOCIATES

McBride Associates offers Ombuds consulting services to help boards and senior management leaders create a culture that fosters sustained high performance

Businesses and nonprofit organizations are accelerating their efforts to improve organizational effectiveness and credibility after a series of highly-visible systemic failures brought substantial enterprises, e.g., Enron, Tyco, WorldCom, etc., virtually to their knees. When focus is on protecting an organization's reputation, defensive thinking can prevail. Risk-management strategies often emerge, such as ethics programs, compliance programs, utilizing mechanisms such as employee assistance programs or confidential hotlines. Financial auditing procedures get tightened up. A premium is put on "managing" information and conflict; everyone is on notice to be alert for waste, fraud and abuse and to report potential problems, ideally confidentially.

But what might be done before problems start getting out of hand? Is there a way a "cultural" audit can be conducted and an organizational context fostered that encourages improved communications as well as ethical conduct in the first place?

An innovative emerging best-practice to achieve enhanced organizational performance is to create an Office of the Ombuds , an organizational Ombudsman . To foster an ethical work environment, while at the same time mitigating risk and ensuring transparency, it is essential to have multiple channels of communication, both formal and informal. A properly structured Ombuds program creates a context within which formal channels such as the Board of Directors, the Audit Committee, Ethics and Compliance Offices, Human Resources, Employee Assistance Programs, and "confidential" hotlines function measurably more effectively.

Going to a formal channel can raise fears for people that they could appear uninformed, antagonize a supervisor, or experience retaliation. The Ombuds function offers confidentiality and neutrality that mitigates fears such as these.

Putting an Ombuds function in place also can offer substantial benefits including more efficient operations, improved retention, increased commitment to the organization, reduced reliance on

formal structures, and avoidance of legal expenses because more issues get surfaced and resolved sooner.

We are skilled in the art of establishing and monitoring an organizational Ombuds function, and we welcome your inquiry.

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