



# Let's talk Ethics!

In today's interconnected world, transparency and ethical conduct are more visible and valued than ever, but we still face a critical challenge: the persistent issue of corruption. Corruption, in all its forms, undermines progress, erodes trust, and hinders economic development across the globe. As part of our commitment to integrity, UE follows an uncompromising principle—our fourth ethical commitment: to refuse to elicit, accept, or pay any bribes and to encourage others to do the same. Upholding this principle is not only essential for our organisation; it's a shared responsibility for all of us in the pursuit of a fairer, more just world.

Corruption is a pervasive problem with wide-reaching consequences. It diverts resources intended for essential public services, increases the cost of doing business, and entrenches inequality. According to Transparency International, over \$1 trillion is paid in bribes each year worldwide, with millions more lost in embezzlement and fraud. This staggering figure underscores a harsh reality: corruption destabilises economies, leads to poorer living conditions, and fosters distrust in both government and business.

Consider the impact on healthcare. In countries with high levels of corruption, vital resources are often diverted from public health programmes, leading to inadequate medical supplies, compromised care, and avoidable suffering. Education, infrastructure, and environmental conservation similarly suffer, with consequences that ripple through generations.

Faced with such a vast issue, it's easy to feel powerless. But the truth is that every individual decision to act ethically has a meaningful impact. When each of us chooses to refuse, elicit, accept, or pay any form of a bribe, we contribute to a culture that values transparency and integrity. Our decisions influence those around us, creating a ripple effect that can ultimately shift societal norms. Imagine if each person in your organisation pledged to uphold this principle. Not only would this create a culture of trust and accountability within your workplace, but it would also inspire others in our communities, partners, and clients to reflect on their actions and make ethical choices.

Imagine a world where each individual refuses to participate in corrupt practices... this shift would have profound consequences:

**Economic Growth:** Transparency builds trust, which is essential for attracting investment and fostering economic growth. A society that rejects corruption has the potential to grow sustainably and fairly.

**Social Equity:** Without corruption, resources are more likely to reach those who need them most, reducing inequality and supporting vulnerable communities.

**Environmental Protection:** Corruption allows environmentally destructive practices to go unchecked. Acting ethically promotes responsible use of resources, which is crucial for sustainable development.

I will admit, upholding our fourth ethical commitment is not always easy. Ethical dilemmas—situations where the right choice is not always clear—can complicate our decisions. Corruption often becomes so ingrained in everyday interactions and business practices that it is viewed as a "normal" or even expected behaviour.

In some regions, corruption is a survival mechanism, where giving a bribe is the only way to access basic services, expedite processes, or secure fair treatment.

People often find themselves caught in a system where refusing to participate in corrupt activities might result in isolation, slowed business growth, or lost opportunities, creating a pervasive sense of "no other option." This cultural pressure can discourage individuals from upholding ethical principles, especially if they fear that standing alone against a corrupt system will jeopardise their personal or professional wellbeing.

Standing alone against a corrupt system can indeed feel daunting, with real concerns about the potential risks to one's business, personal, or professional wellbeing. However, being part of a global community like Unashamedly Ethical provides a powerful source of support and encouragement. Knowing that thousands of individuals worldwide are committed to upholding ethical principles every day reinforces that we are not alone in this journey. This community is built on shared values and a collective vision for a world free from corruption, where integrity forms the foundation of all interactions. By connecting with others who are equally dedicated, we gain strength and courage, knowing our actions contribute to a larger movement. Standing together with like-minded people reminds us that change is possible and that every ethical choice we make adds momentum to a global shift towards a fairer, more transparent society. With the backing of such a committed community, by doing business and life with ethical people, we can overcome the fear of standing alone and focus on the powerful impact we're making together for a corruption-free world.

It's also essential to remember that while change may take time, every step we take towards ethical integrity moves us closer to a world where corruption has no place. Here are 3 examples that can assist you to create a corruption free world:

**Encourage Open Dialogue:** Be open about your commitment to ethical behaviour and encourage others to do the same. Create a culture where people feel comfortable discussing integrity and reporting corrupt behaviour.

**Report Unethical Practices:** If you witness or suspect unethical behaviour, take the necessary steps to report it. Many organisations have anonymous reporting channels to ensure safety and confidentiality.

**Lead by Example:** Your actions speak louder than words. By consistently demonstrating integrity, you show others the importance of ethical behaviour and encourage them to act accordingly.

Each of these actions may seem small, but together they make a difference. Each individual refusal to participate in corrupt practices strengthens the foundation of a society based on trust and accountability.

A world free from corruption may sound idealistic, but every great movement begins with individual commitment. By refusing to elicit, accept, or pay bribes, we not only protect our own integrity but also contribute to a broader movement towards a fairer, more sustainable world.

Let us each commit to being part of the solution. Together, we have the power to set an example, inspire others, and create a lasting impact. Through our ethical actions, we can collectively work towards a world where integrity and trust are the cornerstones of progress and prosperity.

Yours in Ethics,

*Hlene Power*