Assumptions can hinder effective corruption prevention. ACLEI has identified 5 common assumptions, or corruption prevention myths, that can limit the ways we might approach managing corruption risk.

**MYTH 1**

**BAD APPLES**

Thinking that corruption is always the domain of a ‘bad apple’ or rogue employee— a corrupt individual acting alone— can draw attention away from considering organisational vulnerability and integrity systems as a whole.

While risk exists from the ‘malicious insider’, corruption also arises from unguarded opportunity. Relying on the belief that corruption risk resides entirely within the individual might mean that organisations concentrate on catching and removing offenders without a corresponding focus on risk management and prevention.

Organisations can further protect themselves by providing a work environment in which professional standards are valued and integrity measures are easy to follow, essentially becoming their “governing ethos”.

For more information about considering broader risk, see our page about Corruption Resistance:

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**MYTH 2**

**IT’S ALL ABOUT THE MONEY**

Assuming that vulnerability to corruption is always driven by financial gain can mean missing possible indicators. Personal benefit might take other forms, such as social reward, ideological satisfaction, or excitement.

Corruption vulnerability may increase where an employee’s personal values do not align with an organisation’s professional standards. Risk may also be heightened during periods of significant change, industrial action, or during the implementation of new policy or strategy.

Robust pre-employment screening is a key mechanism for identifying potential employees whose values may not align with an organisation’s expectations. Clear policy on managing and declaring conflict of interest is also important, as it encourages supervisors to get to know their staff and confidently ask them appropriate questions about risk.

For more information about ensuring Values Alignment, see our website:
IT'S ALL IN THE FRONT LINE
Supposing that 'Back office' staff could not be as vulnerable to compromise as front-line operational staff can create blind spots. Non-operational staff may be as vulnerable, and less prepared to respond, to improper approaches. Many have similar or higher levels of access to sensitive information and systems as their operational colleagues do. Organisations should understand and communicate to their staff the value of the information they hold, and provide them with the tools to identify grooming and inappropriate approaches for information.

For an example of a case where 'super-user' access created corruption vulnerability, see the Operation Galaxy Investigation Report. For more information about ACLEI’s Asset Protection Model, see our website:


THE TRAINING FIX-ALL
Limiting corruption prevention to formal training as a sole prevention mechanism might lessen impact. Learning theory tells us that the overwhelming majority of adult learning happens on the job and through interactions with others.

Formal training and education is often the first solution offered when issues become apparent—because it’s measurable and quickly implementable. However, organisations should appreciate the influence that informal situations have on establishing a desired culture.

Where training is necessary, factor in the risk of creating a program suited for the ‘average’ employee, which may ultimately be of limited relevance to your target audience. More importantly, it is essential that frontline supervisors and senior staff model desired behaviour to foster a culture of integrity.

For more information about ensuring Leadership and Culture, see our website:


1 Tracey, R. (2016) Blending training with 70:20:10. Training and Development

THE SLIPPERY SLOPE
Believing that the ‘slippery slope’ to corruption is inevitable because of making one mistake or poor decision can be self-perpetuating. Early intervention is possible, if organisation integrity systems are strong, fair and employees have trust in them.

Supervisors and senior staff should foster a culture which acknowledges the inevitability of mistakes and doesn’t punish those seeking assistance to correct them. This empowers staff to take accountability for their decisions, and to report risks rather than attempting to manage them alone.

For an example of a case where poor behaviour escalated into corruption, see the Operation Marlowe Investigation Report, available on our website:


MYTH 3

MYTH 4

MYTH 5

IT’S ALL IN THE FRONT LINE

THE TRAINING FIX-ALL