

<p>Read the article below by Ted Pincus</p> <p>Pincus is discussing what US businesses need to do in order to regain lost credibility and good will with partners and customers abroad. Identify the US key values that motivate Pincus and the key values behind what he urges US business people to do. Add your own opinions on what would restore confidence in US values for business people in your country.</p>	<p>up to \$25.00</p>	<p>facilitator evaluation</p>
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TED PINCUS

Business works to revive image of America abroad

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BY TED PINCUS

Even though we're nicely insulated deep in mid-America, Chicago has more to lose than most U.S. cities in the current freefall of our nation's reputation abroad. The slide may soon begin affecting Illinois' \$26-billion-plus exports, and kick us in the pocketbook.

Now comes a wake-up call. The erosion of world esteem stems not just from our foreign policy, but from our lack of manners and communications savvy, a top adman, DDB Worldwide Communications Chairman Keith Reinhard, told a congressional subcommittee in Washington. In testimony before the Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats and International Relations, Reinhard, speaking for all of us on the Business for Diplomatic Action board, warned that the sharp rise in anti-American sentiment has affected trust in our brands, and poses a threat to export sales, risk of boycotts and adds to the cost of security.

While government has short-changed efforts in public diplomacy in recent years (with the emasculation of USIA and other programs), it's not just a government task, he said. "U.S. corporations, especially multinationals, have a responsibility to leverage their enormous reach and influence to improve the overall reputation of our country," Reinhard said.

Countering a negative image

BDA is a private-sector task force directed by top U.S. pros in communications, marketing and political science. Its mission is to sensitize American companies and citizens to the problem, and enlist support for initiatives to counter it.

Reinhard told the legislators that BDA research, including Roper surveys, has identified three causes for the rise of global antagonism that goes far beyond the obvious foreign policy differences. They are: Effects of globalization, the pervasiveness and dominance of American culture and the perceived collective American personality, regarded as arrogant, ignorant, lacking in humility and unwilling to listen.

In my opinion, one of Reinhard's Cairo staffers said it best: "In investment, America must be presented as the facilitator, not the patron. In the realm of charity, as the partner and not the philanthropist. In business, as the courier of progress, not as the preacher of Westernization."

Mounting a pro bono effort to begin changing attitudes, BDA has launched these initiatives, Reinhard said:

* A World Citizens Guide. BDA has collected advice from around the world for Americans traveling abroad. That content became the basis for a passport-sized guidebook and CD alerting our citizens to sensitive topics and behavior guidelines, nation by nation, plus a miniglossary of each language to encourage communicating in local vernacular. The guides are being distributed this summer, under a Pepsico grant to 200,000 young Americans studying abroad. Then it will be available through airlines and travel agents to all 55 million Americans traveling overseas in the coming year.

* Best-practices sharing. BDA is collecting the best techniques of U.S. multinationals in becoming good "local citizens" abroad, and offering these on a special Web site.

* Locally produced children's TV. BDA intends to enable local broadcasters, beginning in Muslim countries, to produce "Sesame Street"-style programming under guidance from Sesame Workshop, whose CEO, Gary Knell, is on the BDA board.

* Mass professional exchange through corporate-sponsored internships. One highlight, Reinhard said, is "The Exchange," a new reality TV series depicting U.S. and foreign interns in multinational companies.

* Collective listening through programs to enable top management to hear candid feedback from their overseas employees, and a collective CEO Global Listening event where a teleconference can present frank perspectives on U.S. business from academicians, editors and other opinion leaders abroad.

Shouldering the burden

Why is the private sector carrying this initiative? "Because," Reinhard told the subcommittee, "I respectfully submit that the U.S. government is simply not a credible messenger. It isn't trusted, and in the commercial world, we know that people don't buy things from people they don't trust."

Reinhard called for strong congressional support of a program of research, positioning and communications spearheaded by American business. He lambasted attitudes of helpless hand-wringing, saying, "There is nothing wrong with America that can't be cured by what's right with America."

Ted Pincus is a finance professor at DePaul University and an independent communications consultant and journalist.

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