

New anti-corruption laws in UK danger to hospitality industry?

Corporate hospitality costing as little as £100 a head could be considered bribery under new anti-corruption laws...Jean-Pierre Cornelis of Flanders B-2-B has sent us a very interesting article on new legislation in the United Kingdom that can seriously affect our business with that country...worthwhile taking a few minutes to read and digest.

Corporate hospitality costing as little as £100 a head could be considered bribery under new anti-corruption laws, legal experts have warned.

The Bribery Bill, designed to tackle serious corruption, is expected to become law at Westminster later this year and could jeopardise inviting clients to watch a sporting event or even play a round of golf.

Barbara Bolton, a senior solicitor at Tods Murray, told the Scotland on Sunday: "Our whole corporate hospitality culture is about giving advantages or perks with the intention of getting or retaining business. This bill could potentially cover tickets for the rugby, a free round of golf and lunches. Although it is not openly said, these are all things we do with the intention of winning business."

The Government has said it will issue guidance on what will and will not fall foul of the law, but Angus MacLeod of Wright, Johnston & Mackenzie solicitors said firms were likely to be far more cautious in future about how they woo clients.

He said: "The whole point of corporate hospitality is it gives you an opportunity to meet people and you might win business as a result of that. It's also an opportunity to give a 'wow factor', but if you make too much of a wow, you may end up in the clink."

At present, companies found guilty of bribery face an unlimited fine, while individuals can get up to ten years in prison.

A spokesman for the Ministry of Justice in London said: "Whether hospitality will amount to bribery will depend on the facts. If lavish hospitality is provided in a manner in which it is reasonable to conclude that it is intended to induce a person to improperly perform a relevant function as defined in the bill, it will amount to a bribery offence."

A day at the races could become a thing of the past!