Communication Strategies of Competition Authorities as a Tool for Agency Effectiveness

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Introduction

• Competition authorities must balance transparency with the need to protect confidential information, preserve discretion and safeguard other enforcement interests

• Transparency and communication are key for:
  – Stakeholder understanding of competition authorities’ work
  – Competition advocacy
  – International cooperation

• Developing an appropriate communication strategy is important for prioritizing and planning competition authorities’ communications
The Canadian Approach

• The Competition Bureau promotes healthy competition through a balanced approach

• The Bureau’s 2014-15 Annual Plan includes “increase competition promotion efforts to advance a culture of compliance and competition advocacy” as a top priority

• The Bureau is incrementally increasing the use of advocacy to broaden awareness of, and support for, competition principles
  – Market studies
  – Regulatory interventions
  – Enhanced collaboration and communication with stakeholders

• The Bureau engages in a variety of compliance promotion efforts
Transparency

• The Bureau collaborates with its stakeholders – including the business and legal communities – to achieve more collectively

• The Bureau’s ongoing *Action Plan on Transparency* promotes the development of a more efficient and responsive agency

• The Bureau recently published the Information Bulletin on *Communication during Inquiries*.

• The Bureau has issued 14 position statements and published 86 news releases and information notices during the 2013-14 year
Communication Strategies

• Communication strategies are a tool for increasing agency effectiveness
  – The Public Affairs Branch is the Bureau’s dedicated communications unit

• It is important to imbed communication into an agencies’ organizational culture

• Competition authorities need to evolve and adapt communication strategies to remain connected with consumers, businesses, stakeholders and the media
  – Social media is becoming an integral part of the Bureau’s communication strategy
  – In March 2013, the Bureau launched a Twitter account; the Bureau’s Facebook page and YouTube channel followed
Communication Strategies Continued

• When developing a communication strategy it is important to establish measurements at the outset and track outcomes consistently – reporting frequently and regularly
  – The Public Affairs Branch performs daily and ongoing media monitoring on matters related to the Bureau’s work
  – The Branch also maintains an extensive database that supports the development of regular media analysis reports

• Communication strategies must align with clearly articulated policy objectives from the outset

• Media monitoring and analysis leads to more effective communication tactics and better targeted outreach
  – Monthly web metrics analysis reports allow the Bureau to identify areas or information that should be improved or promoted
International Cooperation

• **International cooperation is a critical aspect of competition enforcement and promotion**
  – The Bureau engages in informal cooperation in advocacy by promoting competition and compliance in international events
  – In November 2013, participation in an international conference at the Indian Institute of Management

• **Coordinating communication initiatives expands outreach to broader audiences**
  – In March 2014, the Bureau and the United States’ competition agencies issued best practices on cooperation in merger investigations
  – Canada issued a joint statement with agencies from the United States and the United Kingdom on caller identification spoofing in October 2013
Conclusion

• Finding the right balance between transparency and confidentiality is critical to preserving agency discretion and protecting other enforcement interests.

• The Bureau aims to create a culture of greater openness while maintaining integrity in its enforcement work:
  – Transparency initiative
  – Competition advocacy
  – International cooperation

• The Bureau’s communication strategy is a key to establishing and promoting Canada’s competition culture.