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Karmasin:

“Corporations seem suspicious from the outset”

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Max Ruhri, founding member of the “Vienna Group for Integration Management and Corporate Responsibility,” said the Tchibo Corporation, that supplies inexpensive textiles along with its brand name coffee, has a communication problem. Tchibo received media attention in the past few weeks when it came to light that one of Tchibo’s suppliers in Bangladesh had taken advantage of its seamstresses, paying them slave wages. Ruhri’s group offers businesses advice on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), a fast growing concept in today’s business. Unfortunately, according to Matthias Karmasin, professor of communications at the University of Klagenfurt, when a company talks of its CSR activities, it is often thought they are merely using PR to distract from other problems. “Corporations seem suspicious from the outset,” said Karmasin. “Corporations, on the other hand, often get defensive when they hear CSR,” said Michael Bockhorni, head of the “Network Agency for Effective Corporate Culture.” Karmasin agreed: Corporations think that someone “is trying to use business ethics to undermine capitalism.”