

What Happens in Vegas...Never Should Have Happened

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I'm sure you've heard the saying, "What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas." This saying, commonly known as 'Vegas rules' essentially means that there are certain times and places where people can engage in bad behavior and have it overlooked or swept under the rug. It's fun to let loose once in a while, but in reality choices can have consequences that you didn't see coming. In other words, your behavior may have happened in Vegas, but the consequences can follow you.

This is especially true of leaders in organizations. It doesn't take long searching the Internet for examples of fallen leaders before you realize how serious the issue of corporate ethics is. This was brought to the forefront of recent news with the suspensions of Sepp Blatter and Michel Platini, the two most powerful men in soccer, being upheld for allegations of corruption¹.

Blatter has been the President of FIFA since 1998, heading the organization that oversees the world's most popular sport. FIFA generated more than \$2 billion in revenue in 2014, \$140 million of that being profit². Platini is the head of UEFA, Europe's soccer confederation. These men have been suspended from their posts for their roles in a scandal focused on illegal bribes. If the allegations are true, the misconduct of these men will have cost their organizations millions of dollars, will have broken trust with fans and countries across the world, and will have sullied the name of this great sport.

While investigating the alleged misconduct of these two leaders, it has become apparent how prevalent the 'Vegas rules' mindset is in this organization. Blatter has been plagued by allegations of scandal for most of his presidency, yet he continued to be elected. His interim replacement, Issa Hayatou, was disciplined in 2011 by the International Olympic Committee for accepting bribes. Platini's temporary replacement, Angel Maria Villar, could be facing sanctions by the FIFA ethics committee regarding the bidding process for the next two world cup location awards. To make matters worse, the next election for

the FIFA presidential office is being held in 2016, and one of the leading candidates for the position, a sheikh from Bahrain, has been under fire for human rights violations³.

As a leader, there is no time or place to let your ethics guard down. Everything you do must pass the highest ethical tests. I have heard it said that a good rule of thumb for making ethical decisions is the application of the 'headline' test. Consider for a moment how your actions would look if it were the headline of tomorrow's news. If you wouldn't want to see it there, you probably want to do something different. Build trust by making good decisions. Create a strong reputation in the community by upholding the highest ethical standards. Build a culture of ethics by leading with your example. There is no 'Vegas' for leaders.

Sources:

1 <http://www.msn.com/en-us/sports/soccer/fifa-suspends-blatter-platini-for-90-days/ar-AAfeBC4>

2 http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/03/20/fifa-billion-revenue-world-cup_n_6914224.html

3 http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/19/sports/soccer/sepp-blatter-michel-platini-fifa-lose-appeal-suspension.html?_r=0