

## “Good Governance Is Good Business” Debuts on Pakistan TV: How to Get Your Message to a Million People in 30 Days

*With the lifting of strict government censorship and an end to sole ownership by the state, a wide range of private TV channels have developed in Pakistan. That’s why it seemed opportune for IFC Advisory Services in the Middle East and North Africa to try something different and sponsor a TV series—to create awareness of and make the business case for good governance within Pakistani companies and financial institutions.*

### BACKGROUND: WOULDN'T THIS MONEY BE BETTER SPENT ELSEWHERE?

Why should IFC sponsor a TV show, when it could put the money into program development? That’s what the Pakistan Corporate Governance Project team wondered. We asked: Is it worth it? We had two roads to choose from: We could continue with business as usual, organizing workshops, inviting key stakeholders and hoping they would show up for the whole event; or, we could take a more innovative approach. The second road was filled with challenges, of course, but that’s the one we chose. And in the end it proved more effective.

### LESSONS LEARNED

*1) Think about what you want to achieve, and simplify the message so it connects with an audience that extends beyond businessmen and government.*

After an extensive procurement process, IFC decided to partner with the leading English-language TV channel, Business Plus (<http://www.businessplus.tv/>),



which offered around-the-clock business news and analysis.

When we say that corporate governance is a public concern, a lot of people

have no idea what we’re talking about; so, we wanted to reach those people—to have our message go beyond a narrow community of business owners and corporate managers. Therefore, the program’s objective was to tailor its content to suit the varied information needs of the channel’s diverse viewers. For that reason, in addition to covering technical issues, it addressed generic questions, such as: Could anyone become a stakeholder in a corporation? How does poor corporate governance affect the country? Doesn’t poor corporate governance lead in some cases to bankruptcy, consequently affecting the incomes of thousands of families?

Working as partners, IFC and Business Plus carefully sorted out critical program elements, including the format, duration, number of episodes, allocation of airtime, extent of coverage, selection of program logo, and program design. The 25-minute format comprised moderated panel discussions and a series of onsite interviews of the key stakeholders, including directors and managers of companies. There were 13 episodes in all. The program was allocated a prime-time slot and could be viewed across Pakistan.

We also made sure to choose the right panelists to deliver the right message to such a wide audience. Each panelist’s credentials, including corporate governance experience, were properly reviewed. We also had a chance to choose some of the program panelists from the cadre of certified directors who

had participated in an ongoing director training program developed by IFC in association with a local partner and training institute, the Pakistan Institute of Corporate Governance, and to present these individuals as corporate governance champions. Also, an interview with the government's corporate regulator provided the opportunity to spell out various aspects of government policy in promoting good corporate governance practices.

### *2) Involve your communications professionals while the horses are still in the barn.*

Design the project in line with IFC's communications and brand-building guidelines. For example, the communications staff can help with issues related to presenting the bigger picture of IFC's work in the country and deciding what kind of information to emphasize.

### *3) Be proactive in mitigating reputational risk.*

The use of electronic media to disseminate information on good corporate governance was new. The medium is not comparable to a workshop or a seminar—the sort of activities we were traditionally engaged in at that time—where you closely manage everything from developing the content through presenting the material to choosing the audience and the level of publicity by the press and the electronic media. With TV you have less control over the presentation of the material and the response of the audience. In a highly visible project such as this one, less control increases IFC's reputational risks. We were very conscious of this situation and mitigated the risks as follows:

**We carefully chose and trained the program's anchor.** An anchor acts as the human face of a TV show, and the success of a TV program is inextricably linked to the anchor's performance. In consultation with the host channel, we chose a management consultant who had experience moderating TV shows for that channel before his engagement with the project. In addition to his experience as a moderator,

he had been advising companies on corporate governance issues in his consulting capacity. IFC's corporate governance message wasn't new to him, since he had taken part in one of the training events that IFC had organized for the public in Lahore.

The next task was to develop a close rapport with the anchor and have him understand what we were trying to achieve through this program. We coached the anchor on issues relating to corporate governance and IFC's role, and on asking the right questions targeting these issues.

The project manager played a leading role, providing the anchor continual guidance on issues arising out of discussions or other aspects of the program during rollout. In addition to the training we provided, it was important to encourage the anchor to undertake independent research on the specific topics and themes of each episode. And we solicited his input on the selection of the panelists for each episode.

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**“The use of electronic media to promote good governance in Pakistan has helped tremendously in creating an awareness of the key issues amongst the business community and also encouraging the regulators to take action where needed. The TV platform has allowed IFC and Business Plus to spread the message of good governance far and wide.”**

*—Amir Qureshi, TV anchor*

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**We reserved IFC's right to review and vet all 13 shows before airing.** In consultation with the channel and the anchor, IFC's project manager reviewed each show to provide technical advice on the content. As time passed, and with the increased capacity of the anchor, fewer modifications were needed.



Amir Qureshi, anchor, moderates a discussion with panelists David Monkman, CEO, Business Support Fund; Afra Sajjad, Head of Policy Development, ACCA Pakistan; and Abid Burki, Director, Centre for Management and Economic Research, Lahore University of Management Sciences.

#### *4) Remember to strike a balance between promoting IFC as a player in the corporate governance field, and at the same time not having the TV series come across as an IFC commercial.*

The show was primarily about raising awareness and encouraging businesses to introduce good corporate governance. We didn't want to tout our own achievements—or to be perceived as doing so. We wanted to deliver the message that good governance is good business for everyone, while branding IFC as a knowledgeable and credible player in this field. This was a delicate balance and one that demanded careful thought.

We encouraged the anchor to facilitate independent and thought-provoking discussions, since it was necessary for the panelists to be able to discuss the corporate governance practices of Pakistani companies in candid terms. However, we made sure the program stated clearly that the views expressed by the anchor and the panelists were not to be attributed to IFC or taken as carrying IFC's stamp of approval. Furthermore, because the purpose of this program was not to publicize IFC but rather to raise awareness on corporate

governance, IFC's name was deliberately taken out of the program's logo. However, the promo for each episode indicated that the program was sponsored in partnership with Business Plus and IFC.

#### *5) Evaluate your initiative.*

As with any program, it is important to measure—to the degree possible—what the project achieved. For example, we used the following indicators:

**Program reach:** We were aware that a more structured approach could have been taken to track viewers (including, for example, recall and exposure surveys), but the team opted for a more informal (and cheaper) way. The TV channel provided IFC with viewership numbers based on its own tracking. According to the channel, more than a million Pakistanis watched the IFC-sponsored program.

**New business:** As a result of the program, the project manager received calls from more than 15 leading companies in Pakistan asking for help in integrating corporate governance practices.

**Beyond the numbers:** The TV program contributed to raising awareness of good corporate governance and established corporate governance as a public concern. Most important, the program managed to build the capacity of media professionals, such as the Business Plus staff and the anchor, to carry on with the message.

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHORS**

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