



## Many of the biggest names in business are losing their shine.

If there is such a thing as national character, three words among many would be used to describe Indonesia: forgiving, generous, optimistic. Criticism doesn't come easily.

Much of the people's view on societal issues are influenced of course by religion. Almost seven out of ten Indonesians regularly go to a formal place of worship. While almost 90 per cent. of the people believe that it is "the government's duty to support those who can't find work". An equal number believes that "a percentage of everyone's income should go to charity". Today 80 per cent feel that "the gap between rich and poor is growing", rising steadily from 74 per cent as recently as March 2006. As if in sympathy, "my rights are more important than society's rights" went up from 25 per cent in March 2006 to 31 per cent in June 2008, then down gradually to 26 per cent by end-September 2009.

These are simple lessons for the big names in business to learn from the small man on the street. And his wife, who as David Ogilvy reminded us, is not a moron. If the term 'corporate citizen' has any meaning, it fundamentally alludes to business being part of a larger community. It stands to logic that a good citizen will be admired, a bad citizen will not. Like any community, people will rally around their good neighbours. If a good family has a business, most people will support it in preference to someone else's. There is nothing parochial about this phenomenon, it's just common-sense. It's also good business. Then why is it that so many corporates treat CSR, Corporate Social Responsibility with so much disdain? Conscious efforts to be good citizens, adequately communicated will inevitably payback, in real terms. Legislators really don't need to demand it by law.

Not surprisingly, legislation has had little effect, if the dwindling popularity of some of the biggest names in business is anything to go by. Of the 25 big corporations selected by Roy Morgan Research to reflect a diverse group of industries, both local and multinational, not one has improved in public perception. The Perception of Big Business Monitor administered to over 2000 respondents per month, reflects a trend heading downhill in fact. Asked how they perceived these companies on a 5-point scale, many showed declining fortunes with "very favourably" sliding gradually over the last three to four quarters. IBM, Indomobil and Microsoft were the only exceptions, gradually improving upon they are seen by society at large. Registering neither decline nor improvement in recent quarters, Pertamina and Nokia are the most favourably perceived corporations, with 46 per cent of all Indonesians giving them the thumbs-up. At the other end, Freeport with 13 per cent and Bimantara with 7 per cent were rated "very unfavourably". "Nationalism created no bias, with Indonesian and multinationals measured by the same yardstick and sharing the brickbats and bouquets.

The Perception of Big Business Monitor is conducted in tandem with Roy Morgan Single Source. It is Indonesia's biggest syndicated survey with over 25,000 respondents 14 years and older interviewed each year. Almost 90 per cent of the population is covered, from the cities, towns and villages around the country. The data is updated every 90 days.

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**THE PERCEPTION OF BIG NAMES IN BUSINESS**

