
The Spirit of Giving?



It's that time of year again, with Christmas almost upon us. Most of us are now in the festive spirit and feeling generous, buying and giving gifts to others. But what about those who do so expecting something in return? This has prompted the Royal Mail this week to provide guidance to their staff in light of the new Bribery Act and the potential to commit an offence when accepting gifts.

Guidance on the Royal Mail website warns staff that whilst Christmas tips are acceptable, they should never be accepted in return for favours such as earlier delivery or enhanced collection. Staff are told to decline gifts over £30 and to log any hospitality over the value of £25 in the Royal Mail Gifts and Hospitality register.

The recent sentencing of Munir Patel to six years imprisonment for accepting a £500 bribe whilst in a public office shows that the Bribery Act should be taken extremely seriously and that careful consideration must be given by all businesses to implementing the measures needed to avoid falling foul of the Bribery Act. Clear instructions such as those issued by Royal Mail must also be given to staff. Further guidance in relation to a suitable management system can now be found in British Standard 10500 "Specification for an anti-bribery management system".

Businesses are likely to be most at risk in this festive season, and without care the gift received could be a prison sentence. If there is any doubt in respect of necessary measures then legal advice should be sought.