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## **“Keeping it Real”- Burson-Marsteller and IMD Business School Identify Drivers of Corporate Authenticity**

**LONDON, 14 April 2015** - Burson-Marsteller, a leading global public relations and communications firm, today launched a new study which, for the first time, identifies the key drivers of authentic corporate purpose. [Keeping it Real – How Authentic is Your Corporate Purpose?](#) developed with IMD business school, shows how companies can assess themselves to discover, define and deliver their corporate purpose. Burson-Marsteller and Swiss-based IMD have been working together to research corporate purpose since 2008.

This year’s study is presented in the context of the findings of Burson-Marsteller’s [Corporate Perception Indicator](#), a global survey of public hopes and expectations of companies and their leaders. While the survey found that there is continued public scepticism about the behaviour of corporations and their leaders, it also showed that there is a strong wish to hear more from the corporate world about their broader purpose and contribution to society.

“We know that both the general public and business leaders, especially in the developed world, retain reservations about corporations as economic, political and social actors, but also that there is a real desire to hear more from companies and their leaders about their role as a force for economic growth and social progress,” said Donald A. Baer, Worldwide Chair and CEO, Burson-Marsteller. “The insights from this year’s corporate purpose study can help organisations ensure their corporate purpose is tightly aligned to their business strategy and carries the authenticity their stakeholders demand.”

The 2015 “Keeping it Real” study, based on a quantitative survey and interviews with business leaders, shows a widespread understanding by business leaders that having a well-communicated corporate purpose is not enough to benefit reputation. It has to be real and authentic and embedded in corporate strategy. This makes living an authentic corporate purpose a challenge as companies seek to balance short-term financial considerations with their long-term values and identity. Authenticity of corporate purpose happens when there is alignment between a firm’s perceived and stated corporate purpose and the actual strategic decisions and actions a firm takes.

“An authentic corporate purpose guides business decisions and is central to developing strategy. It also plays a key role in guiding and motivating employees. Communicating it internally and externally is critical. But the purpose comes first – it is not a communications tool,” said Jeremy Galbraith, CEO of Burson-Marsteller Europe, Middle East & Africa and Global Chief Strategy Officer. “It is not surprising that leadership emerged as a strong and consistent driver of authentic corporate purpose. Leaders need relentless commitment to embedding the purpose throughout the organisation. Our study on authenticity seeks to provide executives with a roadmap for discovering, defining and delivering authentic corporate purpose for their organisations.”

“Keeping it Real – How Authentic is Your Corporate Purpose? identifies 12 drivers of authenticity, divided into those that relate to identity and those that relate to image. Drivers range from how transparent and open to self-regulation a company is, to its long-term orientation and consistency. It also takes into consideration differentiating factors such as passion and originality.

“Together with strong leadership, our research shows that awareness is the top dimension that drives authenticity – meaning that a company has an understanding of its own strengths and weaknesses, what drives or motives its actions and how this affects key stakeholders and the environment. But all drivers are critical to overcoming the scepticism of internal and external audiences and must be managed in a comprehensive way,” said Daina Mazutis, Professor of Strategy and Ethics at IMD.

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### **About Burson-Marsteller**

Burson-Marsteller, established in 1953, is a leading global public relations and communications firm. It provides clients with strategic thinking and program execution across a full range of public relations, public affairs, reputation and crisis management, advertising and digital strategies. The firm’s seamless worldwide network consists of 73 offices and 85 affiliate offices, together operating in 110 countries across six continents. Burson-Marsteller is a part of Young & Rubicam Group, a subsidiary of WPP (NASDAQ: WPPGY), the world’s leading communications services network. For more information, please visit [bm.com](http://bm.com).

### **About IMD**

Based in Switzerland, IMD is ranked first in open executive programs worldwide (Financial Times, 2012, 2013 & 2014) and first in executive education outside the US (Financial Times 2008-2013). With more than 60 years’ experience, IMD takes a “real world, real learning” approach to executive education ([www.imd.ch](http://www.imd.ch)), applying an open, collaborative and pioneering approach to everything that it does. For this reason, IMD’s Global Center for Corporate Sustainability (CSL) has a research and learning platform with an active membership of global companies and other partners such as NGOs, international organizations and think-tanks focusing on promoting innovation for sustainability. The CSL Platform pursues a mission of contributing to leadership in sustainable development by focusing on mainstreaming social and environmental issues in corporate strategies and providing knowledge sharing platforms to promote strategic innovation and best practice in sustainability initiatives ([www.imd.ch/csl-learning-platform](http://www.imd.ch/csl-learning-platform)).

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