

FOREWORD

Nigel Tait

Managing Partner, Carter-Ruck



Over recent months a growing number of our clients have encountered a set of intertwined issues arising from large-scale, deliberate, coordinated assaults on reputation, using modern communications techniques.

This nexus of problems is popularly referred to as Fake News, a term which is itself controversial. Many commentators argue that it conceals as much as it explains and that certain public figures are stretching its meaning through over-use. Others, including seasoned communications practitioners, point out with some justification that much of this phenomenon is not new at all and has been with us since the ancients.

But the phenomenon our clients are seeking to manage is very real. It is a complex combination of old problems – lies, intrusion, disinformation, inaccuracy and malicious communications – which present with greater intensity, from a far more distributed and often concealed set of sources, across a wider range of platforms than ever before.

We see this in our media law work, where individuals, businesses and institutions often struggle to manage sustained and often unfair criticism from consumers, those pretending to be consumers, pranksters and competitors.

We see it in our international law practice, in the form of inter-state conflicts and sponsored campaigns of subversion and manipulation of opinion. And we see it in commercial disputes, where misleading communications to shareholders and analysts are sadly deployed by unscrupulous people in pursuit of unearned competitive advantage.

That is why we felt Carter-Ruck could play a useful role in bringing together insights from leading thinkers who have been wrestling with the social pathology of Fake News. So in this publication, with eminent contributors from leading think tanks, universities and professional associations, we survey the origins and exponential growth of Fake News and ask:

- What is it, what are its dynamics and direction?
- What are its impacts on business, government and the management of reputation?
- What policy, regulatory and legal responses can contain or eliminate the threat...without undermining the culture of our society in the process?

We hope you find this an engaging and thought-provoking read. And we look forward to hearing your views on this most contemporary of topics over the months ahead. ●

nigel.tait@carter-ruck.com