

Jour 1
Doc 8

Total wants to become a good Corporate Citizen



Welcome to Big Oil's latest innovation: the ethics road show.

The goal is to drive home to managers everywhere that Total, with \$122 billion in annual revenues, has a new goal besides making money: it wants to become a better corporate citizen. That means being more responsible and responsive in how it deals with the environment, with its employees, customers and vendors—and with the governments and peoples of the countries where it operates, including more than 40 in Africa.

Those might be obvious goals for many companies; at Total, they seem imperative. The company has been battered at home and abroad over the past four years by a series of scandals: a high-profile corruption trial that last month sent former top managers to jail, allegations that in the mid-'90s, the company used forced labor to build a gas pipeline in Burma (renamed Myanmar by the regime)—which Total vigorously denies—and the 1999 wreck of the tanker *Erika*, which created a devastating oil spill that polluted some of France's best-loved beaches.

But Total officials insist that they've changed their spots: So bribery and leaky old tankers are out; codes of conduct and wind energy are in. Instead of ignoring protest groups like Greenpeace, the company now tries to engage them in dialogue. In poor countries, it's funding projects designed to win over indigenous peoples. And it has even hired a consultant to conduct "ethical audits" of all its subsidiaries, to ensure they comply with a 67-point checklist of standards.

Time Sept 2003