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Behind the Curtain

Maybe something big is happening, so you tune in to watch the news. Maybe it's Sunday and you're having some beers and watching football. Maybe you're writing a paper for a class. Whatever the case, whatever screen you might be using, there is a good chance you're using a Toshiba device. Toshiba is one of the leading technology companies in the area of TVs, and they dabble with computers, but, for a majority of their consumers, no one really knows what goes on behind the curtain. Much like the Wizard of Oz, when people finally realize what is going on behind the scenes, it is far from the spectacular expectations.

Recently, Toshiba was involved in a huge scandal because they were inflating their profits illegally. This controversy had widespread effects in the business world, and is a huge issue currently in the field of business and economy. In the aftermath of this controversy the CEO of Toshiba resigned, which was a national issue, and attracted a lot of press. One article that was written about this issue is titled *Scandal Upends Toshiba's Lauded Reputation*. It was published in *The New York Times* in July of 2015, and was written by Jonathan Soble. To discuss this issue and article, I will be rhetorically analyzing it. Soble uses a variety of resources and approaches to emphasize cultural values and ethics in his article.

Through in depth discussion regarding the Toshiba scandal, content such as video interviews that provide further understanding, various outside sources, and a credible tone, Soble

drives home the argument that Toshiba's valued and storied reputation was tarnished through their business scandal.

Before even a word of an article is written, the effectiveness of the resulting article is influenced by the credibility and reputation of the author, as well as the venue of publication. For this reason it is important to know the author of *Scandal Upends Toshiba's Lauded Reputation*, before directly analyzing the article and its strengths, and it is also important to briefly discuss where the article is published.

Jonathan Soble is a reporter for The New York Times. According to his Twitter account, he is located in Tokyo. As the article discusses a controversy involving a Japanese company, the fact that Soble is based in Japan immediately adds to his credibility, as he has a first hand account of events discussed by his article. In addition, all of Sobles articles in *The New York Times* deal with Japanese issues and news, again adding to the validity of his information and argument in *Scandal Upends Toshiba's Lauded Reputation*. Other than this, there is little information on Soble on the information, showing that he is not immensely popular or established as a writer, which does not detract from his credibility, but does not add to it either.

As far as newspapers are concerned, *The New York Times* is arguably the most reputable source in America. This immediately adds a level of credibility to *Scandal Upends Toshiba's Lauded Reputation*. *The New York Times* is an American newspaper, but caters towards worldwide audiences, and covers news from countless areas. Thus, despite its primarily American audience, *The New York Times* and Soble's article is no less credible regarding Japanese news, especially to an American crowd.

Finally, before actually analyzing Soble's article and its methods of rhetoric, it is important to have a basic understanding of the article's content and the context of the controversy it involves. As mentioned before briefly, Toshiba was involved in an accounting scandal. Basically, Toshiba was overestimating its profits by over a billion dollars, appearing to make more money than they actually were. This occurred from 2008-2015, until the scandal was finally discovered. These false numbers were not due to a simple mistake, but to a scam covered up by management. Upon discovery, a majority of the Toshiba board resigned, including CEO Hisao Tanaka.

After all this surface information is processed and discussed, finally we can get down to the intricacies and methods of the article. Although the context information makes up a majority of what is included in Soble's article, the argument that Soble is making is deeper than the surface of the controversy. Soble is highlighting cultural values and morals involved in the issue, involving honor, reputation, and leadership. Starting with the title of the article, Soble uses a variety of methods and approaches to highlight and argue for certain values.

Typically a reader starts reading with the title of an article, so for Soble to use this to immediately communicate his ideas is very effective. In the title, *Scandal Upends Toshiba's Lauded Reputation*, Soble is already going beyond just the issue of the controversy. He mentions the scandal, but then argues how it affects the reputation of Toshiba. Lauded is defined as praised, so Soble is stressing the fact that Toshiba had a reputation applauded by the public. By immediately discussing this, Soble is getting at more than just the basic controversy, and is

planting the seed of his argument. Bringing this deeper issue into his title is a powerful tool, and Soble's article is that much stronger as a result.

Immediately Soble opens by praising the reputation of Toshiba, and by emphasizing that they had such a reputation as a honest and unblemished company. It then discusses how the leadership of Toshiba has been looked up to for many years, and now all of that is falling apart around the company as its ongoing scam was revealed.

Using statistics, hyperlinked external material, and quotes from experts, Soble stresses the extent of the deception that Toshiba was involved in, the moral wrongness of this, and the far reaching effects this had on many lives. An example of this comes from the fourth paragraph of the article.

“Toshiba has a 140-year history and was like a straight-A student when it came to corporate governance,” said Shin Ushijima, a lawyer who serves as president of the Corporate Governance Network, a watchdog group. “Toshiba shares are in everyone’s pension plans. Executives’ responsibility is extremely heavy.”

Essentially, Shin Ushijima, an authority on finance management, is discussing Toshiba's clean record, and emphasizes the obligation management has to the many lives Toshiba impacts.

Including this quote, which has statistics involving Toshiba's reputation and stresses the effects Toshiba's scam had on innocent people, strengthens the argument and supports the thesis of the article perfectly. To add to this, Soble includes the author's credentials, which are clearly those of an expert, adding to the credibility of the statement, and increasing the effectiveness of the quote even further.

After opening with these claims and the heart of the argument of his article, Soble launches into supporting information and discussion that evidences the depth of the deception

that Toshiba created. Soble builds up the climax of the controversy, discussing the events leading up to the discovery of Toshiba's dishonesty, and the explosion of backlash it created when finally out in the open. All of this is in support of the idea that Toshiba's reputation was ruined.

To support this even further, the article includes a video interview of the CEO of Toshiba resigning. This includes a wealth of information regarding the scandal, as Hisao Tanaka, the CEO, discusses details of the scam. Soble uses this as another method of communicating information, and of strengthening the credibility of facts in his article, which in turn strengthens his argument.

Ultimately, *Scandal Upends Toshiba's Lauded Reputation* is straightforward. It does a good job of discussing the Toshiba scandal, and argues at values under the basic controversy, using a wealth of information communicated in a variety of ways to support this. Using video interviews, a credible tone, and emphasis on cultural values the article communicates a clear message, Toshiba's reputation was ruined by the scandal they experienced. Again, this reputation is more important than it seems, and the issue at hand extends much further than just Toshiba. The importance of honesty and trust in big business is understated. People of all classes and places invest their money and lives into business, and for these companies to scam them can have widespread and devastating effects on honest and hardworking people.

Bibliography

Soble, Jonathan. "Scandal Upends Toshiba's Lauded Reputation." *The New York Times*. 21 July 2015. Web. 15 October 2015.