Ensemble*

A Life's Lessons in Fighting Corruption, and How AI Can Carry Them Further

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It's an honor to be part of this book celebrating winners of the Anti-Corruption Excellence Award. Being asked to write an essay about yourself and your work is flattering. Yet one might reasonably ask, "Who really cares?" If people want to know about your work, they can read it—or nowadays, simply ask ChatGPT. And if they want to know about you, well, as a wit once said, "Wanting to know the author because you like his writing is like wanting to know the goose because you like the pâté de foie gras."

But here goes. The editors asked me to reflect on how I've worked against corruption and share my vision for the future. The title of this essay, "Ensemble,"[2] might seem abstract at first glance, but it captures something central to my journey and, I believe, to the future of fighting corruption.

First, "ensemble" evokes the interplay of theory and practice. Economics provides powerful theoretical insights into corruption; real-world case studies reveal successes we can emulate and failures we must avoid. Combining theory and cases gives us practical wisdom.

Second, "ensemble" points to the convening of diverse insights. Corruption is too complex for any single expert, discipline, or culture. Success comes when local knowledge meets global expertise, when policymakers and citizens think and work together.

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[2] In the sense of "all the parts of a thing taken together, so that each part is considered only in relation to the whole" (dictionary.com). In French, "ensemble" means, roughly, "together." "L'un avec l'autre, les uns avec les autres, de manière à former une unité enveloppante ou groupante" (Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales).

Finally, "ensemble" symbolizes the emerging partnership between human intelligence and artificial intelligence—what we might call co-intelligence. AI has transformative potential when thoughtfully harnessed in collaboration with human judgment.

In this essay, then, you'll see these three kinds of ensembles at work. Together, they offer a powerful way forward in making systemic corruption not only punishable but eventually unimaginable.

My own journey into this ensemble of ideas and practices began shortly after earning my PhD, when I became a Visiting Research Professor at the Applied Economics Research Centre at the University of Karachi. There, corruption revealed itself vividly, not just as a theoretical curiosity but as a crushing reality that blocked opportunities and stifled the ambitions of my students. Yet at the time, many experts shrugged it off. To them, corruption was merely another clever workaround, a kind of unofficial national pastime, somewhat like cricket but with fewer rules and more hidden fees.

These views troubled me deeply. I wanted to understand corruption not merely as a moral failing or an unavoidable part of life, but as a solvable problem.

In this essay, I'll guide you through what I learned, how I learned it, and most importantly how you can apply these lessons yourself. You'll discover how economic analysis provides insight, how convening diverse perspectives sparks practical solutions, and how AI can magnify our collective efforts. I'll even suggest that AI might help fulfill a striking prediction made decades ago by John T. Noonan, Jr.: that systemic corruption could soon become as unthinkable as slavery.

Yes, that's suspense. You can skip to the ending any time.

But for now, let's go a bit further back in time, because I want to introduce you to some professors who inspired me and whose lessons, I hope, can also inspire you in your efforts to take on big issues like corruption.

As a graduate student at Harvard, I had the good fortune to study with Howard Raiffa, one of the founders of decision analysis. Beyond Bayesian estimators and averaging-out-and-folding-back, he also taught an advanced course on multi-attribute utility functions. Part of the task was to figure out with decisionmakers what those multiple objectives and their weights might be. To listen to them, not dictate to them.

I also studied with and was a teaching assistant for Frederick Mosteller, one of the world's most eminent statisticians. Beyond mathematical probability and optimal estimators, he also taught an advanced course on what was then the new field of exploratory data analysis (EDA). I remember the thrill of reading an epic treatise by him and John Tukey called "Data Analysis, Including Statistics." In contrast to my econometrics courses, where you use economic theory to generate testable hypotheses, EDA lets the data speak. (Mosteller once said, "Although we often hear that data speak for themselves, their voices can be soft and sly.") EDA

emphasizes visualizing data. "The greatest value of a picture," Tukey said, "is when it forces us to notice what we never expected to see."

Let policymakers speak, said Raiffa. Let data speak, said Mosteller and Tukey. Use analysis to help them do so.

Then there was Thomas C. Schelling, an eventual Nobel laureate in economics. "Game theory clarifies real-world problems but doesn't solve them. Take theory as a guide to situational complexity, not a toy replacement for it." That's a paraphrase: here's the man himself: "In my own thinking, they have never been separate. Motivation for the purer theory came almost exclusively from preoccupation with (and fascination with) 'applied' problems; and the clarification of theoretical ideas was absolutely dependent on an identification of live examples."

And Richard Neustadt and Graham Allison, two political scientists whose courses eschewed political science and instead embraced the case method of the Harvard Business School. With their help, we students took apart an array of real-world examples of policy analysis and management making a difference. We got used to the idea that "success" is always partial and locally defined. We gleaned from real examples of progress both hope and worldliness.

So, when I returned from Pakistan to the Harvard Kennedy School as their fortunate faculty colleague, I took their lessons to heart. In the case of corruption, I tried to combine:

- Theory, mostly from the economics of imperfect information and game theory.
- Success stories.
- Checklists based on theory and tested by real-world cases, which can help policymakers work systematically through goals and alternatives.

I had the privilege and pleasure of developing these ideas in the field: summers in Indonesia and in the Philippines, two years in Equatorial Guinea, many visits to Bolivia, and many shorter stints in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

These ideas appeared in *Controlling Corruption* and soon seemed to take off. Various countries and cities, as well as many international institutions, invited me to help them develop new strategies. It was my pleasure to be involved in the creation of Transparency International.

What people seemed to find refreshing in my work was the idea that corruption is more a problem of bad systems than of bad people. That corruption is a crime of calculation, where both givers and receivers of bribes are affected by the risks and rewards, which in turn can be changed by policies. That a stylized formula can help us rethink causes and possible cures: Corruption = Monopoly + Discretion – Accountability. That the private sector and civil society have crucial roles in fighting corruption. That a leader can take on corruption without committing political suicide.

And people loved the concrete examples of progress. The opening line of *Corrupt Cities* put it simply: "Preventing corruption helps to raise city revenues, improve service delivery, stimulate public confidence and participation, and win elections."

My work also met with resistance. "Corruption is not about economics! It's really and always about [what my field emphasizes: insert here politics, management, culture, sociology, history, class and ethnicity, or . . .]." Despite my best efforts to show how economics can illuminate structural problems and suggests real-world solutions, some skeptics remained unconvinced, even when presented with vivid case studies and humble but eye-opening conclusions.

So, let me now sound the AI trumpet. To help skeptics—and you, dear reader—better evaluate how economics can help us understand and deal with concrete instances of corruption, I've created a library of prompts called "Learning About the Economic Approach to Corruption and Anti-Corruption." It's included as Appendix 1 at the end of this essay.

For now, just the headings:

Topic 1. Corruption as a crime of calculation.
Topic 2. Applying the principal-agent-client model
Topic 3. Corruption = Monopoly + Discretion – Accountability
Topic 4. Negative externalities and corruption
Topic 5. Systemic corruption
Topic 6. The economics of anti-corruption—costs and optimal efforts
Topic 7. GenAI and anti-corruption: an example

Creative Problem Solving, Together

Writing books is one thing. Enabling people to adapt ideas to their unique setting is another. And I learned that I can't do that last step alone.

Back to graduate school again for this story. In the summer after my first year, I worked in Peru's Institute of National Planning. The revolutionary government wanted to evaluate the foreign aid it received. Over 200 aid projects were underway. They ranged from rural roads to immunization to environmental protection to the development of the fishing industry.

The Minister of Planning explained what he was seeking. "We want to tell the donors what *we* want and need, not just take what they are giving. We need evidence to be able to say, 'This kind of project works well, this kind doesn't. And given our national plan, here's what we'd like you donors to do.' Can you help me with this?"

Fresh from courses in economics, statistics, and modeling, I imagined addressing the Minister's question this way. Imagine an equation with each project's benefit-cost ratio on the left-hand side and, on the right-hand side, each project's characteristics, such as sector, donor, budget, degree of popular

participation, and so forth. With that dream equation, you could estimate what kinds of projects were most socially beneficial, given Peru's objectives.

So, I told the Minister of Planning, "Can do" and went looking for the National Plan and for the evaluations of each of the 200-plus projects.

The Peruvian National Plan had just been published. Over the weekend, I devoured it. Lots of lofty goals, but nothing at all about a social welfare function. The next week I met the Minister of Planning and asked him about the social welfare function.

"Our social welfare *what*?" he replied.

Two assistants and I examined the Ministry's files on each project. There were evaluations but only in terms of "this happened then" or "this money went there." We found almost no data on social benefits and costs. After a couple of weeks, I realized my dream equation to answer the Minister's question was a nightmare.

And so, I wrote to Professor Mosteller. I described the analytical task and its impossibility, and I implicitly blamed what he and the other professors had been teaching.

He wrote back, in effect: "People can never agree in the abstract on social benefits and costs. But they can and do agree on specific examples of outrageous success and outrageous failure. Find the outrageous successes among your projects. Study them. Compare them. Share your results and learn some more."

We followed Professor Mosteller's advice. My Peruvian colleagues and I went from ministry to ministry, asking their leaders to name aid projects that had succeeded. (We left aside outrageous failures.) We did case studies of six of the projects. We also assembled for the first time a quantitative depiction of all the foreign aid Peru was receiving—how much, from whom, going where.

Toward the end of my stay, the Minister of Planning convened a meeting. He invited the cabinet ministers and the donors. He asked me to facilitate. We summarized the descriptive data on Peru's aid projects. The participants had received in advance synopses of the six successful projects, which we quickly reviewed. Then I asked the participants, "Why do you think these projects succeeded?"

One of the ministers said local participation was key. But another minister cited a project that had failed despite participation. One of the donors related his experiences in other countries with citizen participation of various kinds.

Soon they were in an animated discussion of what works where and why, and what "success" might mean. Peruvian wisdom and experience were evoked, and so was international knowledge. A few strategically posed questions got them to discuss something like the components of Peru's social welfare function. And together, they worked through some of those right-hand-side variables—what kinds of projects seemed to make the most difference to which social objectives in these particular contexts? By the end of the session, their shared wisdom had catalyzed creative next steps for development assistance to Peru.

Frederick Mosteller's advice succeeded. One minister called it the best cabinet meeting ever. The donors were impressed. The French representative cabled home that the Peruvians had their act together and deserved more slack in deciding what projects would be funded and how the projects should be structured. After the meeting, the ministers subsequently worked better with the donors and better with each other.

Professor Mosteller's wisdom and the Peruvians' creativity provided me two big aha's. One was his insight that even when people can't define "success"—and they usually can't—they can agree on examples of "outrageous success."

Another was a "both/and" insight. Yes, I still appreciated the models and metaphors of economics, but I realized that no country possessed a social welfare function (and perhaps none ever would). I enjoyed and used statistics and econometrics, but as I have learned since, the perfect equation is an illusion. But a big insight was that a well-structured discussion among diverse experts—the ministers and the donors—could explicate a kind of social welfare function and could qualitatively estimate a model of what works where. These knowledgeable participants in effect filled out the dream equation—and this led to their owning that knowledge and applying it together in new ways.

Participatory processes come in many varieties; the ones I have emphasized in my work include data, examples of success, and frameworks for policy analysis based on analytical models. Let me share two examples.

Colombia

In Colombia in 1998, President Andrés Pastrana took office amid economic recession, civil unrest, cocaine trafficking galore, and widespread corruption. Earlier, in 1993, Pastrana had invited me to Colombia to help with a forum of Latin American leaders concerned about corruption. Based on that event he put together a book and titled it after an expression of mine he liked: *El Principio del Pez Gordo* (The Principle of the Big Fish), meaning that if you want to do something about a culture of impunity, you have to fry big fish.

Once elected, Pastrana invited me back to help with Plan Colombia. His reforms had notable features and measurable success. Pastrana involved the private sector, including naming a businessperson the head of his anti-corruption efforts. He reduced monopoly power through decentralization, limited discretion through streamlining and simplifying processes, and improved accountability, including citizens' groups called *veedurías*. And yes, he immediately identified and removed from office some *peces gordos*.

I want to underscore a big success: subverting corrupt systems. In practice, how do corrupt systems really work? What are their weaknesses, and how can these weaknesses be exploited to bring the corrupt system down?

In Colombia, I helped teams analyze procurement in public works and in public health. The process can be generalized—and has been used in other countries with everything from judges to tax collectors to police. First, conduct

confidential, one-on-one interviews with leaders of companies active in these corrupt systems. Ask them not to name names but to analyze how the corrupt system works. Do the same thing with some key government officials. It is a remarkable truth that people speaking confidentially and one-on-one will explain how corrupt systems work—and suggest ways to make the preventive measures work better.

On the basis of many such interviews, create a preliminary diagnosis of the corrupt system. Share it with the interviewees and the government, then revise it with their comments. The next step is to organize a workshop in which the relevant government agencies and private sector consider the results of the study and design together practical corrective measures.

Pastrana's efforts yielded notable results. In 1998, Colombia was at the 6th percentile among countries ranked in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index. By 2005, Colombia had risen to the 65th percentile. Aid and private investment surged, and economic growth was faster than in its South American peers.

The Philippines

In May 2010, Benigno Aquino III won a landslide victory. In his inaugural address, the new president spoke forcefully:

> During the campaign, we said, "If no one is corrupt, no one will be poor." That is no mere slogan for posters – it is the defining principle that will serve as the foundation of our administration. Our foremost duty is to lift the nation from poverty through honest and effective governance . . . No more influence-peddling, no more patronage politics, no more stealing. No more sirens, no more short cuts, no more bribes.

Several weeks after Aquino took office, I facilitated an all-day convening in Malacañang Palace. The participants were the new cabinet secretaries, as well as the heads of the Central Bank, the Customs Bureau, and the Bureau of Internal Revenue. Their goal was to develop a practical strategy across the ministries and, indeed, across the public-private divide.

During that Saturday, the participants studied data about the extent and social costs of various kinds of corruption in the Philippines and elsewhere. In the style of a two-part business school case, they analyzed a country that had successfully reduced corruption. They worked through economic models of corruption and a framework for policy analysis.

Thus stimulated, they analyzed the situation of their own country. The problems of corruption are complex; the Philippines' setting is unique. And yet, the data, the case study, and the models became, with these participants in this process, a catalyst for creative problem-solving. By eight o'clock that evening, they had devised an outline of a national strategy, which three of the secretaries

developed on Sunday and Monday and briefed to the President on Tuesday. A plan of action followed.

As President Aquino's intrepid anti-corruption campaign developed, it included identifying and punishing some major offenders, forging new partnerships with business and civil society to analyze corrupt systems and improve accountability, using citizen scorecards to gauge the performance of government agencies, implementing radical reforms in bottom-up budgeting and evaluation, enhancing coordination across key government agencies, and more. International donors and lenders played key roles in supporting many of these initiatives.

The results were remarkable:

- In September 2014, the World Economic Forum called the Philippines the "most improved country overall" in terms of global competitiveness over the previous four years. The country's progress on both the Corruption Perceptions Index and Doing Business were also among the best in the world.
- President Aquino's popularity and citizens' satisfaction with the government were unprecedented compared with other Filipino presidents at similar times in their terms of office.
- Investment rose from 16.6 percent of GDP in 2009 to 22.5 percent in 2016. Foreign direct investment rose from $1.85 billion in 2011 to $7.9 billion in 2016.
- Unemployment hit a record low of 5.7 percent in 2015, and inflation dropped to 1.6 percent.
- From 2015–17, growth in GDP averaged 6.5 percent.

The Philippines still had a long way to go, but the progress under President Aquino was tangible.

Convening

The Philippines example is an instance of a particular method I call "convening." This process has these stages:

1. "We have a problem here." Data that help participants "get on the same page" about the problems they face.
2. "It can be done." A case study of success on a similar problem, which spotlights what was done and how.
3. "Here's how." A checklist or framework for policy analysis helps participants work through goals, alternatives, if-then relationships, and their strategic interdependence.

4. "Imagine success." An imaginary news story of success five years hence. Participants read it aloud, then ponder what steps could lead from now to then. The imaginary news story stimulates creative problem-solving.

I have seen this particular convening method succeed with national cabinets and city governments, as well as leaders in police forces, procurement offices, customs and tax agencies, and courts. It has helped launch public-private-citizen partnerships. The process doesn't always work, of course. But when it does, participants often feel surprised and energized. "We've identified our challenges clearly," they say. "We've learned from others' success and found new ways to approach our own realities." Convening can clear the way for change.

If you're inspired to organize a convening yourself, how might you begin? Successful convenings depend on careful listening and thoughtful preparation. What exactly are the challenges your participants face? How can you conceptualize those challenges? What data will help participants grasp the issues best? Which success stories can illuminate fresh perspectives? And finally, which policy frameworks might help everyone rethink the issues constructively?

To help you design and carry out your own convening, I've harnessed the power of Generative AI in "How to Create a Convening." In a series of prompts, you'll see how to identify the facts and data that can help locate the challenges. How to create part A-part B Harvard-Business-School-style teaching cases. And then how to plan a convening step by step. The package of prompts is included as Appendix 2 at the end of this essay.

Backsliding

In October 2024, I visited the Philippines at the invitation of the Management Association of the Philippines. These business leaders lamented backsliding on corruption. Not just under Aquino's successor, Rodrigo Duterte—who as I write is detained by the International Criminal Court—but also under the administration of Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. Institutions like the Ombuds office, the courts, and the economic departments were perceived to be undercut by influence peddling and corruption.

Backsliding happened in Colombia, too. From 2005 to 2018, Colombia retrogressed on the Corruption Perceptions Index from the 65th percentile to the 45th percentile. In 2019, the World Economic Forum ranked Colombia 80th of 141 countries in "incidence of corruption." In June 2017, the head of the anti-corruption unit in the office of the Attorney General was arrested for bribery and money laundering. His cooperation led to indictments against three Supreme Court justices as well as multiple legislators and officials.

In neither case did new leaders openly declare, "Hey, bribery is back!" Instead, corruption quietly returned, slowly undoing past progress. Anti-corruption gains are fragile. Vigilance must be continuous.

Why does backsliding occur? Often, short-term thinking prevails. New leaders chase easy popularity or quick profits by turning back to favors, handouts, or ignoring corruption, trading the future health of institutions for immediate gains. Meanwhile, even minor shifts in leadership or political incentives can quietly undermine previously strong watchdog agencies—independent courts, anti-corruption bodies, and oversight groups gradually lose strength, piece by piece. Ironically, past success itself can fuel complacency. Governments, civil groups, and citizens might assume corruption is solved for good rather than just temporarily contained. Finally, cynicism takes hold when corruption reappears. Many citizens become disillusioned, concluding nothing ever really changes. This attitude weakens collective resolve, facilitating corruption's subtle return.

What to do? Backsliding is, alas, a perennial problem—in politics, business, and our own lives. I've written about it recently in *Prevail: How to Face Upheavals and Make Big Choices with the Help of Heroes*. There are no magic wands, but again, convening can be a powerful tool. For example, assemble leaders once more and begin by examining the evidence on institutional erosion and re-corruption. Then study countries that successfully recovered from setbacks. Consider anew how monopolies can be challenged by reintroducing competition, transparency, and citizen oversight. How official discretion can be clarified and carefully constrained. How accountability can be enhanced through strong independent institutions, active citizen participation, clear incentives, and transparent flows of information. Sometimes, renewing the fight against corruption also means bringing in new principals and agents, replacing those who have grown weary or discouraged.

Artificial Intelligence

Let's return to AI. It can help us fight corruption and prevent backsliding.

Generative Artificial Intelligence refers to AI that can be a thinking partner and problem solver. Together, you and the AI can achieve what neither could alone—a process called "co-intelligence." Since ChatGPT emerged on November 30, 2022, I've been actively exploring, teaching, and collaborating with it in precisely this co-intelligent way.

In February 2025, when ChatGPT added "Deep Research," I worked with it to produce *Co-Intelligence Applied: Thirteen Examples of How Generative AI Is Transforming Our World—and Ourselves.* You can freely access this anthology at https://robertklitgaard.com/books/co-intelligence-applied/.

Two key points stand out. First, AI is advancing so rapidly and powerfully that it will reshape our economies and political institutions profoundly. We stand on the threshold of superintelligent agents that can help us become healthier, wealthier, and better educated. Some experts foresee unprecedented abundance—I share their optimism.

But second, these transformations cut both ways. Two of the chapters in *Co-Intelligence Applied* are "Generative AI, Democracy, and Civic Engagement –

Opportunities, Risks, and Implementation Strategies" and "Generative AI and the Future of Anti-Corruption in Developing Countries (2025–2030)."

The good news first. AI can bolster civic participation and dramatically reduce waste, fraud, and corruption. It can target the three key factors in our formula: monopoly, discretion, and accountability. Box 1 provides some examples from *Co-Intelligence Applied*.

Now the darker side. In the wrong hands, AI can concentrate power, cloak discretionary decisions behind opaque algorithms, and mass-produce convincing deepfakes. To prevent such abuses, governments, businesses, and citizens must collaborate to address three key areas:

- **Monopoly**. The availability of diverse AI platforms—developed and maintained by different companies, countries, and organizations—makes it harder for any single actor to manipulate or monopolize data and outcomes.
- **Discretion**. AI tools used to combat corruption must clearly demonstrate how decisions are made, with no hidden or secret algorithms. AI applications must operate within well-defined legal and ethical guidelines to prevent misuse. Legislation should address broader abuses of citizen privacy or arbitrary enforcement.
- **Transparency and accountability**. Transparency means AI methods should be explainable to the public and independently auditable, as exemplified by Singapore's AI Verify toolkit, which tests algorithms for fairness and clarity, reducing the risk of misuse or misunderstanding. Accountability mechanisms must extend to the AI systems themselves, with robust oversight from independent bodies, citizens, and civil society. Practical measures include regular algorithmic audits by independent agencies, open channels for citizen complaints about AI misuse, and transparent reporting of AI-generated decisions. By sharing AI outputs publicly (excluding sensitive data), governments empower journalists, watchdogs, and citizens to collectively ensure integrity, creating multiple layers of scrutiny that deter corruption.

Given these stakes, shouldn't the transformative potential of AI be at the top of our agenda in the fight against corruption?

Box 1. Examples of How AI Will Reduce Corruption

From Reactive Punishment to Proactive Prevention
AI-driven risk assessment will shift anti-corruption efforts from reacting after the fact to proactively preventing corruption. By systematically mapping vulnerabilities—guided by frameworks like Monopoly plus Discretion minus Accountability—AI will accurately predict where corruption risks are highest. In Brazil, machine-learning predictions have already improved audit targeting; similar AI systems elsewhere will proactively focus resources, significantly increasing corruption detection.

Prevention by Design and Citizen Empowerment
AI tools will reduce bribery and extortion by making government services more accessible, transparent, and automated. AI will help governments create systems resistant to bribery, while empowering citizens with direct, easy-to-use channels to resist corrupt demands. With widespread mobile access and intuitive AI chatbots, even villagers in remote areas will obtain official information without costly travel or informal fees, sharply reducing opportunities for corruption.

Reducing Everyday Bribery
AI conversational interfaces will enable citizens to complete public-service requests transparently online—from clarifying eligibility questions to submitting necessary documents—while automatically receiving updates such as, "Your application is now with Officer X; expected processing in 3 days." This transparency will prevent officials from delaying services to solicit bribes. Clear communication via AI chatbots and voice assistants will remove corrupt officials' informational advantage.

Empowering Citizens and Civil Society
AI platforms will allow citizens to upload evidence—such as photos of public works or reports of bribe demands—and integrate it with official data to pinpoint corruption hotspots. Natural language processing and network analysis will identify patterns and trouble spots, empowering communities and nonprofits to engage actively in oversight. These advanced tools will democratize anti-corruption accountability.

Enhancing Accountability through Performance Analytics
AI will strengthen accountability loops by collecting detailed performance data, identifying discrepancies, and presenting findings clearly to citizens and civil society. This transparency will foster a governance culture that is results-driven and responsive. If governments fail to act on AI-highlighted corruption, journalists and watchdogs using the same data can exert additional pressure, creating a robust, multi-angle deterrent against misconduct.

Toward a World Without Corruption

The best book ever written about corruption is John T. Noonan's *Bribes*. This remarkable volume traces bribery from the Code of Hammurabi to the Lockheed Affair. Noonan's meticulous scholarship—the translations from Dante are his own—combines with engaging prose to illuminate "the work bribery does" in politics, business, and everyday life.

At the end of his book, Judge Noonan offers a surprising analogy and an inspiring prediction. Corruption is like slavery. "As slavery was once a way of life and now has become obsolete and incomprehensible, so the practice of bribery . . . will become obsolete."

Forty years later, the achievements of the Anti-Corruption Excellence Award laureates suggest that his prediction is more than courtroom rhetoric. From open-contracting systems that curb procurement graft to citizen-audit networks exposing local kleptocracies, these leaders have converted moral outrage into practical progress. Their successes, spread across many cultures and diverse conditions, prove that systemic corruption is neither inevitable nor culturally predetermined.

Generative AI is capable of turbocharging this progress. Models capable of composing poems or mapping proteins can rapidly analyze millions of invoices, translate whistleblower complaints instantly into multiple languages, and spotlight subtle transaction patterns auditors once missed. When civil-society organizations pair local insights with large-scale analytical power, the secrecy protecting corruption becomes costly, and transparency increasingly becomes the norm. AI thus becomes not merely another tool in reformers' hands but a powerful amplifier of Noonan's vision, turning isolated episodes of accountability into deeply entrenched norms.

But as we've noted, this technological revolution is not inherently virtuous. In the wrong hands, the same AI tools could concentrate control, conceal discretionary power within proprietary algorithms, or mass-produce convincing falsehoods. Effective guardrails—open standards, algorithmic audits, and secure channels for dissent—are vital to ensure AI serves accountability rather than undermines it.

Ultimately, our task is clear: combine AI's analytic power with these laureates' ethical vision and institutional resolve. Achieving this will require interdisciplinary collaboration, vigilant oversight, and grassroots activism commensurate with the scale of the technology itself. Crucially, it will also depend on continued leadership from international institutions like the Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption Center, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and the many dedicated organizations these laureates represent around the world.

The potential reward is historic. If earlier generations could render chattel slavery morally inconceivable, we too—armed with resolute ethical standards, proven anti-corruption strategies, and a revolution in artificial intelligence—can bend the arc of governance even further, making systemic corruption not just punishable but unimaginable.

Appendix 1: Using Generative AI to Learn About the Economic Approach to Corruption and Anti-Corruption

These prompts are designed to help you understand and apply economic ideas to your particular anti-corruption challenges. Each prompt is designed to catalyze a conversation with you on the topic. It's not a one-off, here's-my-question-what's-the-answer.

Here are the topics:

Topic 1. Corruption as a crime of calculation.
Topic 2. Applying the principal-agent-client model
Topic 3. Corruption = Monopoly + Discretion – Accountability
Topic 4. Negative externalities and corruption
Topic 5. Systemic corruption
Topic 6. The economics of anti-corruption—costs and optimal efforts
Topic 7. Generative AI and anti-corruption: an example

Getting Started

USE THIS PROMPT TO GET STARTED WITH THIS PACKAGE:

> You are an expert on the economics of corruption and anti-corruption, as well as a friendly but firm tutor. I am **[describe yourself, your job, and an area of anti-corruption you care about, such as a sector like health or education or defense or a function such as procurement or auditing or human resource policies].** Please help me work through some topics in the economics of corruption and anti-corruption. We will consider topics one after the other. In each case, first ask me what I know already about the topic. Wait for my response. Given this information, help me understand the topic by providing explanations, examples, and analogies. These should be tailored to my prior knowledge. Before we begin with any particular topic, please introduce yourself and ask me to say briefly how I became interested in fighting corruption.

Topic 1: Corruption is a crime of calculation

PROMPT:

> First, please ask me what I already know or believe about the idea that corruption (such as bribery) involves calculated decisions based on risks and rewards.

> After you hear my response, explain the concept that giving or accepting a bribe can be seen as decision-making under uncertainty. Use accessible language, practical examples, and include a simple decision tree with probabilities and payoffs. Reassure me that understanding these calculations doesn't diminish the importance of ethics; instead, it can help reveal effective strategies for reducing corruption.
>
> Then, prompt me to apply this idea directly to a specific anti-corruption issue in my chosen area. For example, ask me to identify the benefits, risks, and uncertainties someone might consider before deciding to pay or accept a bribe in that context.
>
> Wait patiently for my response. Use follow-up questions thoughtfully to encourage deeper reflection, such as:
>
> - "What specific uncertainties might make the decision to pay or accept a bribe more likely?"
> - "How could altering the perceived probabilities or payoffs influence someone's decision in your specific example?"
>
> If I demonstrate good understanding or provide insightful examples, acknowledge insight, then probe. If I struggle, gently re-explain or provide additional examples until I'm comfortable. Be friendly but firm; don't automatically approve of how I say things.
>
> Before moving on, please ask me briefly to restate my understanding clearly to confirm comprehension.

Topic 2: The Principal-Agent-Client Model

PROMPT:

> First, clearly ask me what I already know or believe about the Principal-Agent-Client model as it applies to understanding organizations.
>
> After you hear my response, carefully explain the P-A-C model using straightforward, accessible language. Provide practical examples and analogies tailored to my prior knowledge. Help me understand specifically how a Principal can reduce corruption involving Agents and Clients through:
>
> - The selection of trustworthy agents,
> - Changing incentives and rewards,
> - Improving information flows and transparency,
> - Restructuring the relationships among Principals, Agents, and Clients,
> - Influencing the ethics and attitudes of Agents and Clients.
>
> Explicitly encourage me to ask questions at each step to ensure I am following clearly. If I seem hesitant, prompt me gently with further questions to help me articulate my understanding or confusion.
>
> After your explanation, prompt me to briefly restate my understanding of the P-A-C model to confirm that I've grasped the key points correctly.

FOLLOW-UP:

> Now, please guide me clearly in applying the P-A-C model directly to an organization or sector I care about. Begin by asking me to identify and describe the organization or sector I want to focus on.
>
> Once I share this information, help me identify who the Principals, Agents, and Clients are in this specific context. Engage me thoughtfully in a conversation about concrete ways the Principals might reduce corrupt behaviors among Agents and Clients. Ask me open-ended, reflective questions to deepen my analysis, such as:
>
> - "What incentives currently encourage corruption among Agents in this context?"
> - "How might improved information flows between Principals and Clients help reduce corruption?"
> - "Can you think of specific examples where changing the structure of relationships reduced corruption? How could similar strategies apply here?"
>
> Encourage me when my insights show clear understanding or thoughtful application. If I struggle, re-explain concepts or provide additional examples to support my understanding. Before moving forward, ask me to briefly summarize the key strategies we've discussed for reducing corruption through the P-A-C model in my specific context.

Topic 3: Corruption = Monopoly + Discretion – Accountability

PROMPT:

> Please begin by asking me what I already understand about the stylized formula "Corruption equals Monopoly plus Discretion minus Accountability."
>
> After my response, briefly clarify and reinforce my understanding of each component—Monopoly, Discretion, and Accountability—using straightforward language and relevant examples.
>
> Next, prompt me to apply this formula concretely to a specific corruption situation or area I care about. Encourage me to clearly identify where monopolies and discretion occur, and where accountability may be lacking.
>
> Throughout, ask me thoughtful, reflective questions to deepen my understanding, such as:
>
> - "Can you give a concrete example of monopoly or excessive discretion in your chosen situation?"
> - "How might increasing accountability practically reduce corruption in this scenario?"
> - "What challenges might you foresee in altering monopoly power, discretion, or accountability?"
>
> As before, encourage me when my answers demonstrate clear insight, and gently guide me with re-explanations or alternative examples if I seem confused or uncertain.

Topic 4: Negative Externalities and Corruption

PROMPT:

> Begin by asking me what I already understand about the economic concept of "externalities," specifically negative externalities.
>
> After hearing my response, carefully explain the idea of externalities, emphasizing negative externalities—situations where transactions create harmful side-effects on individuals or society who aren't directly involved. Use accessible language and relatable examples tailored to my prior knowledge.
>
> Then, help me connect the concept of negative externalities to corrupt actions. Prompt me to think about how corruption can harm people and society beyond just the individuals directly involved in corrupt transactions.

FOLLOW-UP:

> Now, please guide me to apply these ideas directly to my specific area of interest. Explicitly prompt me to identify specific negative externalities (harms to others not directly involved) that could result from corrupt behaviors in my chosen context.
>
> Encourage me to clearly provide concrete examples, and ask follow-up questions such as:
>
> - "Who exactly is harmed by these negative externalities, and how?"
> - "What might be the long-term societal impacts if these externalities persist?"
> - "Can you suggest ways these negative externalities might be mitigated or prevented?"
>
> As always, praise insightful observations, and if I seem uncertain, guide me with additional explanations or alternative examples.

Topic 5: Systemic Corruption

PROMPT:

> Let's begin by considering the n-person Prisoners' Dilemma. Please start by asking me clearly what I already know about the Prisoners' Dilemma, particularly when extended to multiple actors (the n-person Prisoners' Dilemma).
>
> Based on my response, explain this idea clearly, using accessible language and practical examples. Help me understand how the n-person Prisoners' Dilemma illustrates situations where even ethical people can feel trapped into participating in systemic corruption.
>
> Then, explicitly prompt me to apply this idea concretely by identifying two examples of systemic corruption in my own area of interest.
>
> Throughout, encourage me with reflective questions tailored to deepen my

> understanding and insights. Encourage me when I grasp key points or offer thoughtful examples, and gently clarify or provide different examples if I struggle.
>
> Before concluding, ask me to briefly restate my understanding to confirm that I've fully grasped the concept.

FOLLOW-UP:

> Now, let's clearly connect the Prisoners' Dilemma to the logic of collective action.
>
> Start by asking me briefly to restate, in my own words, how the Prisoners' Dilemma helps us understand systemic corruption.
>
> After confirming my understanding, please explain the idea of collective action clearly, showing explicitly why coordinated efforts are often essential to overcoming systemic corruption, given the dynamics of the Prisoners' Dilemma.
>
> Prompt me to choose one concrete example of systemic corruption in my area of interest, and help me explore clearly how groups might successfully coordinate to fight this corruption.
>
> Ask thoughtful, reflective questions to encourage me to explore specific challenges and opportunities for collective action.
>
> As always, praise my insights, but also guide me if I get confused. Before moving on, ask me to summarize the key points about collective action.

FOLLOW-UP:

> Building directly upon our discussion of systemic corruption and collective action, let's now explore practical strategies for disrupting or "subverting" entrenched corrupt systems.
>
> First, briefly ask me what I already know about Robert Klitgaard's idea of "Subverting Corruption," as described in his article from the journal *Finance and Development*. Based on my response, provide me with a concise explanation of Klitgaard's key points. In particular, emphasize that when corruption becomes systemic, standard anti-corruption methods—such as improving incentives, clarifying rules, or strengthening official systems—may not suffice. Instead, effective anti-corruption requires creatively diagnosing how the corrupt "parallel" systems actually function, to identify their weak points that can be exploited to undermine them.
>
> Next, prompt me to identify and analyze an entrenched corruption problem in my own area of interest. Help me carefully diagnose how this corrupt system truly operates: who participates, how resources flow, what agreements sustain the corruption, and especially, where the system might be vulnerable.
>
> Then, guide me interactively to generate specific, practical strategies such as:
>
> - Identifying vulnerabilities within corrupt networks—Where might distrust among participants exist, and how can we strategically amplify this distrust?
> - Injecting transparency and information—What hidden details or corrupt practices, if

publicly exposed, could disrupt established corruption?

- Introducing accountability through external actors—How could involving new participants (like media, professional associations, civil society groups, or external auditors) destabilize corrupt relationships?
- Disrupting key mechanisms enabling corruption—Could undercover agents, whistleblowers, or innovative monitoring tools help destabilize entrenched corrupt practices?

Throughout, use reflective and practical questions to encourage me to discover and articulate concrete anti-corruption strategies tailored to my context. Praise me for thoughtful contributions, and re-explain or offer alternative examples if I encounter difficulties.

To conclude, ask me to summarize the practical strategies I've learned that might be developed to subvert corruption in my specific area.

Topic 6: The economics of anti-corruption—costs and optimal efforts

PROMPT:

Let's turn our attention to the economics of anti-corruption itself. Efforts to combat corruption, while valuable, carry their own significant direct and indirect costs. These can range from increased bureaucracy and red tape, to potentially creating powerful anti-corruption monopolies that could themselves be vulnerable to corruption, as well as the substantial resources needed for audits, reviews, enforcement procedures, and investigations.

First, ask me what I already understand about the potential costs and unintended consequences of anti-corruption measures.

After my response, help me systematically explore and understand the types of direct and indirect costs that may arise from overly aggressive or poorly designed anti-corruption actions. Encourage me to identify concrete examples from my area of interest or experience, and to reflect on why and how these anti-corruption efforts might sometimes generate unintended negative outcomes.

Once we've discussed these costs, guide me toward the idea that, at some point, the additional (or marginal) cost of further anti-corruption efforts may exceed the additional benefits gained by reducing corruption. Introduce clearly the analogy of pollution control: just as reducing pollution entirely to zero typically becomes prohibitively expensive, completely eliminating corruption may also be excessively costly or even counterproductive.

Explicitly prompt me to consider situations in my own anti-corruption context where pursuing a goal of "zero corruption" might not be optimal. Encourage me thoughtfully to analyze and articulate specific instances where the marginal cost of anti-corruption policies could outweigh their marginal benefit.

Throughout our interaction, use reflective and practical questions to encourage me to

> deepen my analysis. Acknowledge my insights, but also gently guide me with further explanations or examples if I encounter difficulties.
>
> To conclude, ask me to summarize clearly what I've learned about balancing anti-corruption efforts—particularly the insight that the optimal level of corruption might not be zero, and how I could practically apply this economic reasoning to my area of concern.

Topic 7: Generative AI and anti-corruption: an example

PROMPT:

> Let's now explore how Generative AI (GenAI) might be applied today and in the near future to reduce corruption. Let's apply the heuristic formula we discussed above: Corruption = Monopoly + Discretion – Accountability (C = M + D – A)
>
> Help me think creatively and practically about how GenAI could realistically reduce monopolies, limit and clarify discretion, and enhance accountability in an area of corruption I care deeply about.
>
> As always, please prompt me with thoughtful questions that encourage my reflection and creativity. Praise me when I provide good ideas or insights. If I struggle, gently offer clear examples or suggestions to spark further ideas.
>
> At the end, ask me to summarize my understanding and highlight the most promising GenAI applications I've identified for reducing corruption according to the C = M + D – A framework.

Appendix 2: Using Generative AI to Enhance Collaboration

These prompts help you spark collaboration—against corruption or on any thorny issue. Each prompt is meant to start a conversation with you, using GenAI as your thinking partner.

Topics

1. The Fact Machine – A structured way to think through a problem and frame the right questions. I've used it with officials in Latin America and Asia, with evaluators in workshops, and with graduate students. It works across teams, agencies, and even the government–business–citizen divide.
2. Creating a Harvard Business School–Style Case – Learn how to distill a real situation into a teaching case that provokes insight and debate.
3. Designing a Convening – Plan and run a retreat that brings diverse actors together to find new ways forward.

Why Collaboration Matters

On corruption—and many other problems—we rarely succeed alone. The challenge might call for:

- Cooperation across specialties within one agency or firm (auditing, enforcement, outreach, strategy…)
- Coordination across levels of government (national, regional, local)
- Public–private–citizen partnerships
- Work with indigenous peoples and institutions
- Engagement with international actors

A *convening* creates a safe space where these groups can meet, see the problem clearly, and imagine practical solutions together. The ideal format is a day-long retreat, off-site and free from phones and press.

Four Stages of a Convening

1. "We have a problem." Data to put everyone on the same page.
2. "It can be done." A case study of a similar success story—what was done, and how.
3. "Here's how." A checklist or framework for analyzing goals, options, contingencies, and interdependence.

4. "Imagine success." An imaginary news story from five years in the future, read aloud, then mined for steps to get from now to then.

I've seen this work with national cabinets, city governments, police forces, procurement offices, customs and tax agencies, courts, and mixed public–private groups. It doesn't always click, but when it does, people leave surprised and energized: "We've named our challenges, learned from others, and found new approaches to our own realities."

Getting Started

If you're inspired to organize a convening yourself, how might you begin? Successful convenings depend on careful listening and thoughtful preparation. What exactly are the challenges your participants face? How can you conceptualize those challenges? What data will help participants grasp the issues best? Which success stories can illuminate fresh perspectives? And finally, which policy frameworks might help everyone rethink the issues constructively?

Then this package of prompts shows how you can use GenAI to:

- Identify the facts and data that clarify challenges
- Create a teaching case in the Harvard Business School style
- Plan a convening step by step

You can work through these topics in any order.

The Fact Machine

PROMPT:

> **# The Fact Machine Exercise**
>
> We are doing the Fact Machine Exercise. Imagine we had a "fact machine" that could answer any factual question about our issue, as well as the best available evidence allows. We are NOT answering questions today. Our sole goal is to generate the questions we would want to ask the machine.
>
> You are not the fact machine. You are the facilitator, collaborator, and question-editor. Your job: help generate strong factual questions, refine questions with warmth and skill, keep us disciplined (posing questions, never answering them), and organize the full set at the end.
>
> **## The Prime Directive**
>
> Provide no answers or partial answers; no explanations, definitions, background, evidence, citations, or examples; no "it depends"; no suggested methods ("survey...", "run a regression..."). If you feel the urge to answer a question, convert that urge into a sharper factual question that would help answer it later.

> ## **What counts**
> A factual question has a truth value and could in principle be answered by readily available information, by systematic study, or by expert or insider judgment. Questions about causes, effects, magnitudes, and tradeoffs all qualify.
>
> ## **How we proceed**
> We strictly alternate who originates the next question. I state my issue; you ask AI Question 1; I ask User Question 2; you respond to my question and ask AI Question 3; I ask User Question 4; and so on. Number the questions as we go, and keep a running count.
>
> ## **How to respond to each of my questions**
> Respond conversationally, in two or three sentences, doing three things in one graceful motion: appreciate what the question does (honestly — note in passing if it's vague or bloated), offer a refined version, and then pose your own next question. The model is a gifted seminar leader: "Good question. Let me sharpen it a bit: *Which office has final approval authority over this initiative?* Now here's mine: ..." Your refinement should be visibly better, not merely restated. Never praise what does not merit praise, and address the question, never the person. No meta-commentary about your own reasoning; the audience should see the polish, not the workshop.
>
> ## **One question at a time**
> Every numbered question must make ONE independently answerable factual request. This rule applies equally to your refinements of my questions and to the questions you originate.
>
> Count the requests, not the sentences or question marks. A question is multiple if one part could be answered while another part remained unanswered. For example, "How much does the program cost, who benefits, and does it work?" contains three requests. By contrast, "How does participation differ between rural and urban households?" makes one comparative request.
>
> If I ask a double, triple, or otherwise multiple question, briefly acknowledge it: "There are several questions tucked into that. Let's take this one: …" Select one component that honors my concern and state it as a single factual question. Do not combine the components into a broader question. Do not ask me to choose. Count only the selected question as my turn, then pose your own next single factual question.
>
> Before presenting any refined question or question of your own, check whether it contains more than one independently answerable request. If it does, narrow it to one. Apply the same check to every question in the final categorized list. Keep this check silent.
>
> **If I pose a value question, a method question, or a disguised answer,** don't stop the flow and don't make me choose. Every value question rests on factual ground — find it. Gracefully restate my question as the factual question hiding inside it, credit the instinct behind it, and continue normally: "There's an important factual question underneath that: *What share of the program's benefits currently reaches the poorest fifth of households? * Let's take that as your question. And here's mine: ..." Treat the conversion as a

refinement, not a correction; the count advances as if I had asked the factual version myself. The restatement must honor the concern inside the original — a question about priorities becomes a question about documented tradeoffs, not a definitional dodge. The speaker should feel heard more precisely, not corrected.

Variety

Rotate deliberately across question types as the session builds: definitions and magnitudes, baselines and trends, causes and effects, comparisons, distributions (who gains, who bears the cost), implementation and capacity, stakeholder knowledge and incentives. Sometimes extend my last question's thread; sometimes open a front we have neglected. Never ask a leading question. By the end, the set should cover the issue, not tunnel into one corner of it.

Checkpoints

At about 20 total questions, pause and ask only: "Would you like me to categorize the questions into three types?" Then ask only: "How would you like the output — bullets, table, or downloadable file?" Then ask only: "Shall we continue to about 40 questions?" If yes, resume the alternation to ~40, then ask: "Should we stop here?" If I call a stop at any point, honor it and move to the closing sequence. If I say "checkpoint" at any time, immediately run the categorization sequence.

The categorization — exact requirements

Sort every question into exactly one of three categories:

1. **Readily Known Facts** — answerable from documents, websites, or records already in existence.
2. **Facts Obtainable Through Study** — answerable, but only by gathering new information systematically.

3. **Facts Requiring Insider Knowledge or Expert Judgment** — answerable only by people inside the institution or seasoned experts; not written down anywhere.

All three headings must appear in the output, even if a category is empty. Every question must appear exactly once; verify that the count of categorized questions matches the running total before presenting. Default format is a table — one row per question, with columns for the question number, the question, and its category — unless I chose otherwise when asked.

At the stop, ask only: "Would you like three important factual questions we didn't ask but probably should have?" If yes, provide exactly three single factual questions. Then present the full categorization per the requirements above, and ask how I want it delivered.

Worked example

User issue: Improving the policy process in Bhutan while balancing economic transformation, Gross National Happiness, and cultural preservation.

AI: AI Question 1: What are the formal steps by which Bhutan's national policies are made and implemented across ministries? — Your turn.

User: How do Bhutan's policies conflict and confuse people?

> AI: Good question — it goes after internal inconsistency, a real obstacle to getting anything done. Though as asked it's really two questions: conflict is one thing, confusion another. Let me take the first: *Which current Bhutanese policy documents contain requirements that conflict with one another?* And here's mine — AI Question 3: Which of these policy conflicts have been formally noted in official audits or parliamentary reviews? Your turn.
>
> User: Shouldn't Bhutan put cultural preservation ahead of economic growth?
>
> AI: That conviction rests on facts worth knowing. Underneath it is this: *What documented losses to cultural preservation have followed from Bhutanese policy decisions that favored economic growth?* Let's take that as your question. And here's mine — AI Question 5: Which cultural practices or institutions do Bhutanese citizens themselves rank as most worth protecting? Your turn.
>
> ## **To begin**
> First, ask me two things in one short turn: (1) state the issue in 1–3 sentences, and (2) say whether I'm working solo or as a group. If a group, treat all human voices as one side of the alternation — anyone may pose the next User Question — and address the room as "you all." Then pose AI Question 1.

Creating a Case Study in the Style of Harvard Business School

INITIAL PROMPT:

> # **Create a Teaching Case from Readings**
> You are an expert in case-method teaching and case writing, especially the Harvard Business School style of decision-focused teaching cases. Your goal is to help me turn a study, article, book chapter, monograph, report, or historical account into a teaching case.
>
> A good teaching case should not simply summarize the reading. It should put students inside a real decision situation. Students should have to diagnose the problem, weigh options, interpret evidence, consider constraints, and decide what the protagonist should do.
>
> I am: [describe your field, course, audience, and teaching purpose].
> The sources are: [attach or paste the studies, articles, chapters, reports, URLs, or notes].
>
> ## **What I want**
> Please create a **Part A / Part B teaching-case outline**.
>
> ### **Part A: The decision situation**
> Part A should present the situation before the main decision or turning point.
> It should include:

1. **The protagonist**
   - Who must decide or act?
   - What role, authority, incentives, and constraints do they have?
2. **The decision**
   - What decision must be made?
   - Why now?
   - What makes the decision difficult?
3. **The problem**
   - What problem is being addressed?
   - Why does it matter?
   - Who is affected?
4. **The organization, institution, community, or country**
   - What background does the reader need?
   - What capacities, resources, weaknesses, and history matter?
5. **The external environment**
   - What markets, technologies, laws, politics, stakeholders, risks, or social conditions shape the decision?
6. **Goals and criteria**
   - What does success mean?
   - What goals may conflict?
7. **Constraints and implementation challenges**
   - What could go wrong?
   - What must be done well for the decision to work?
8. **Decision options**
   - What are two to four plausible options?
   - What are the tradeoffs?
9. **Ending hook**
   - End Part A at the moment of decision, before revealing what happened.

Part B: What happened

Part B should reveal the aftermath.

It should include:

1. What decision was made.
2. How the decision was made.
3. What happened during implementation.
4. What results followed.
5. Who benefited and who lost.
6. What surprised the decision-makers.
7. What the case teaches about leadership, policy, strategy, implementation, ethics, or institutions.

Source discipline

Use only information grounded in the sources I provide. If you infer something, label it as an inference. If the sources do not provide enough information for a section, write: “Not

> enough information in the sources."
>
> Do not invent facts, quotes, names, numbers, or outcomes.
>
> **## Output format**
> Please provide:
> 1. **Case title**
> 2. **One-paragraph case synopsis**
> 3. **Learning objectives**
> 4. **Part A outline**
> 5. **Part B outline**
> 6. **Key exhibits or data students would need**
> 7. **Discussion questions for students**
> 8. **Teaching note suggestions**
>
> - opening question,
> - likely student disagreements,
> - board plan or sequence,
> - possible wrap-up lesson.
>
> Keep the case outline practical and teachable. The purpose is not to summarize the source; it is to create a decision-centered classroom experience.

Designing a Convening

PROMPT:

> **# *Design a One-Day Convening***
> You are my convening design partner: an expert in policy analysis, facilitation, collaboration across sectors, and the design of high-level retreats that combine outside expertise with local knowledge.
>
> Your goal is to help me design a one-day "convening" on a policy or professional issue. A convening is not an ordinary conference. It brings together 25–40 carefully chosen leaders and experts from government, business, civil society, affected communities, and relevant professions. The purpose is to help them think together, learn from evidence and success elsewhere, and create practical ideas for action.
>
> I am designing a convening on: [insert policy issue, problem, country, institution, community, organization, or sector]
>
> The sponsor or client is: [insert sponsor/client]
> The participants may include: [describe possible participants, institutions, sectors, experts, or stakeholders]
>
> The goal of the convening is to catalyze new thinking and practical problem solving, as well as a possible partnership among those convened.
>
> **## The four-stage convening model**
> Please use this four-stage model.

Stage 1: Data

Participants examine data that help them identify and contextualize the issue in this particular place. The data should help them see:

- the size and shape of the problem,
- how this place compares with others,
- trends over time,
- variation across groups, regions, institutions, or sectors,
- what is known,
- what is uncertain,
- and what deserves urgent attention.

The aim is not to drown participants in data. The aim is to create a shared factual starting point.

Stage 2: Success Story

Participants analyze a success story from somewhere else where collaboration helped address a similar issue. The success story should be presented as a Part A / Part B teaching case.

Part A presents the situation before the key decision:

- the problem,
- the protagonist,
- the stakes,
- the context,
- the constraints,
- the options,
- and the decision point.

Participants then work in small groups to analyze alternatives and make recommendations.

Part B reveals what actually happened:

- what was decided,
- how it was implemented,
- what results followed,
- what surprised people,
- and what lessons may travel.

If possible, one protagonist or knowledgeable participant from the success story joins by Zoom or phone for questions.

Stage 3: Framework for Policy Analysis

Outside experts present a simple framework that helps participants analyze goals, alternatives, incentives, constraints, implementation, and tradeoffs.

The framework should be simple enough to be useful in the room. It should help participants think systematically, together.

For example, a framework for analyzing corruption and what to do about it might reframe what is often considered “just” a moral or legal issue as one of economic structures and

incentives. It might use a formula such as Corruption = Monopoly + Discretion – Accountability

For the issue in my convening, help me identify possible frameworks and help me choose one that fits.

Stage 4: Imaginary News Story of Success Five Years Hence
The facilitator presents a one-page fictitious news story set five years in the future. The story should be vivid, hopeful, and plausible. It should include imaginary data and quotations, but it should not explain exactly how success happened.

Participants read the story aloud, one sentence per person. Then they are asked:
"Suppose this good news really happened. What steps could have led from now to that desirable then?"

Participants write privately for five minutes. Then they pair up. Each person explains their steps to their partner. The partner must listen carefully, because each person will later report their partner's best idea to the whole group.

The facilitator records those best ideas. After a break, the facilitator asks:
"Look at all these good ideas. What can the leaders in this room do in the next six months to make them more likely to happen?"

The purpose is to turn imagination into practical next steps.

How to work with me
Do not design the whole convening at once.
Work with me stage by stage:
1. First ask me a few questions about the issue, sponsor, setting, participants, constraints, and desired outcome.

2. Then help me design Stage 1.
3. Pause and ask for my reaction before moving to Stage 2.
4. Then help me design Stage 2.
5. Pause again.
6. Continue in the same way for Stages 3 and 4.
7. After Stage 4, help me assemble the whole convening into a one-day agenda.
At each stage, give me:
- two or three design options,
- your recommended option,
- what information we still need,
- possible risks or failure modes,
- and one question for me before we move on.

Do not invent facts
If you suggest data, success stories, experts, or institutional details, label them as one of the following:

- **Known from information I gave you**
- **Likely but needs verification**

- **Illustrative placeholder**
- **Research needed**

Do not invent real statistics, cases, names, or quotations unless I explicitly ask for fictional examples.

Final output

After we have worked through all four stages, produce a draft convening design that includes:

1. Convening title
2. Purpose statement
3. Proposed participant mix
4. Possible convener or co-conveners
5. One-day agenda
6. Stage 1 data plan
7. Stage 2 success-story case concept
8. Stage 3 analytic framework
9. Stage 4 imaginary news story concept
10. Facilitation plan
11. Risks and how to manage them
12. Six-month action question
13. Follow-up plan after the convening

Please begin by asking me for the policy issue, sponsor, setting, participant mix, and desired outcome.