

A Conversation with Lisa A. Cox, Director, Catholic Responsible Investments



CBIS

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Director,

Catholic Responsible Investments

We cannot help but notice your work in the Human Life and Dignity pillar. The Impact & Justice team appears to be engaging with some of the most important companies in the world.

I'd have to agree. We've joined with other shareholders to engage with Verizon, AT&T, Alphabet, Meta, and Apple on preventing child sexual exploitation and removing sex abuse materials online. These alliances demonstrate to the company the strength of our concern and it comes from a diverse group of investors.

Does CBIS lead alliances of this sort?

We'll act as lead if we've built the coalition ourselves. Otherwise, we'll join an established coalition. Regarding these tech companies, we lead on Verizon, AT&T, and Apple while we're joiners on the Meta and Alphabet coalitions.

Are you finding much success?

There are big goals and then there are smaller milestones to get there, but we're making good progress. In fact, we made significant progress with Verizon and AT&T in getting them to conduct child rights impact assessments, reporting the findings and implementing recommendations that came out of the assessments.



“...there are big goals and then there are smaller milestones to get there...”

Can you be specific about your goals with these companies?

Our goal was the same with both: to improve tools to prevent child sexual exploitation and remove sex abuse material from their



platforms. Our journeys, of course, were unique. With Verizon, we succeeded, among other things, in gaining agreement to scan videos in the cloud to identify, remove, and report child sexual abuse material (CSAM). And this is interesting, Verizon has agreed to share its learnings with industry peers.

AT&T, meanwhile followed up its commitment in 2022 to implement training of relevant staff on child sexual exploitation matters with a promise to enhance tools for protecting children. They, too, are sharing learnings, including how to incorporate a child rights lens into relevant business units.

All of that must be incredibly satisfying.

Absolutely. No company is ever going to be perfect, but we feel like both Verizon and AT&T are on the right path. They've taken these issues seriously.

What can you tell us about the other engagements?

I can tell you there's good progress with Alphabet and Meta. Alphabet is taking steps to prevent live streaming of abuse and improving age verification. Meta, meanwhile, has committed to ethical AI (Artificial Intelligence) principles and integrating their scientists with their human rights team. That the company has just published these AI principles on its website is encouraging. These are all big issues.

Does each engagement move at its own pace?

Absolutely, and for any number of reasons. For example, early on in our engagement with Apple, the company met several goals, then reversed course after receiving backlash from privacy advocates. CBIS understands the importance of protecting privacy, in fact it's critical that children's right to privacy be protected. However, technology companies must have a balanced approach and consider all of children's rights, including the right to protection from harmful conduct. We continue to work with Apple on improving their approach to child protection, and that will take time.

On a separate but related note, what impact, if any, will Mensuram Bonam have on your work?

It will have a huge effect. CBIS has been on this path for a long time, of course, but [Mensuram Bonam](#), a proposed set of faith-consistent guidelines for Catholic investors, of will bring others along who haven't been as close to these issues. We have a lot of power as investors, and we need to use that power wisely and for the common good. Businesses don't and shouldn't exist just to make money. They have a responsibility to be good corporate citizens. That's the spirit of Mensuram Bonam, and it's a good one.



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