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We can make a difference

By Steve Priest

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In my last column, I asserted that our profession is failing at our primary goal of strengthening cultures of integrity. A culture of integrity has two components: compliance (doing the lawful thing) and ethics (doing the right thing). In this column I question whether we are making progress in compliance. In the next column I will illuminate our collective illusion that we are advancing ethics in corporations.

First, let's dismiss the notion that any organization really wants total compliance. "Working to the rule" is a long-established, highly effective way to cause operations to grind to a halt. Successful organizations promote innovation, creativity, and customer service, all of which at times necessitate thinking outside the box. And few organizations care much about minor violations of laws and regulations. Employees speeding while on company business will face no penalties unless they cause harm in the process. There are many other examples you can come up with in your industry.

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