

Ethikos Volume 32, Number 1. January 01, 2018 Influencing ethical culture through a multi-channel compliance program

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Using new communication channels in your compliance training program can open up new avenues for influence, persuasion, and cultural change. Most compliance learning programs today run on email. Compliance teams use it to distribute policies, collect certifications, prompt annual disclosures, and assign or remind on training. But in recent years, we've started to see opportunities to move beyond just email for compliance learning and messaging—opportunities that bring additional benefits when it comes to influencing culture and keeping compliance topics top of mind.

Email is useful but limited

Online compliance programs first emerged between 2000 and 2003, so it's not surprising that they relied heavily on email to reach employees. In 2000, email was a new technology. The average office worker received 10–50 emails per day, often only on one computer (which stayed at work when they went home). An email from the general counsel (GC) or another senior executive was a big deal. So if the GC wrote to you and asked you to take a training course, you took it seriously.

Our tolerance for content was also different in the year 2000. Patti and I both joined the industry around that time, and the course rollout messages we wrote for clients back then were often many paragraphs long and full of ponderous, now-boilerplate phrases like: "Our company is committed to integrity."

The rollout messages worked, at least at the time.

Rethink Your Rollout Messages

If you are still using long, laborious rollout messages in the year 2018, it might be time to rethink your approach.

Remember that your audience is living in a 140-character world, and people get to the point a lot faster than they used to.

In fact, we just wrote a rollout message for a client that reads, in total: "Hey! We think respect is important. Take 90 seconds to find out why."

Challenge yourself: What's the minimum amount of information you can include and still get your message across?

Today, most of us receive hundreds of emails per day across multiple accounts and devices, and we are quick to delete or unsubscribe. We have little patience for content that goes on too long or wastes our time—whether it's compliance training or one too many emails from our favorite retailer.

Email is still a useful tool, and it's one way to efficiently deliver compliance training to a global audience, but it's no longer a unique channel to your audience. Instead, you're competing with everything from urgent project updates to J Crew coupons. Email is also not the only way your audience communicates anymore, even at work.

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