

## Compliance Today – January 2020 How independent is independent?

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By Margaret Hambleton

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Clearly, the independence of a compliance professional is an expectation from the government.<sup>[1]</sup> So, just how independent does a compliance officer need to be? Here's how *independence* is defined by *Black's Law Dictionary*: "The state or condition of being free from dependence, subjection, or control."

Every compliance professional recognizes that compliance programs cannot be effective without the help and support of others in the organization. Freedom from dependence, subjection, or control may be satisfied through a direct reporting relationship and unfettered access to the board or audit committee, separate and equal standing and authority with other functions such as legal and finance, and the independent ability to find, fix, and prevent noncompliant behavior and activities.

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