

Compliance Today – September 2021 Compliance is cool. Let's celebrate it!

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All of us were kids at one point in time, and some of us even have our own now. I am sure a majority of people would agree that young children are curious about almost everything, and they tend to have endless questions, including the ones that we adults don't even think should be questions in the first place. Recently, my 10-year-old son asked me, "Mommy, what exactly do you do? Is your job like being a police officer, writing people tickets to ensure they follow the laws?" "To a certain extent." Unsure about the accuracy of my son's analogy, I paused while I put on my thinking hat and organized my words: "Just like parenting, my job function is to enforce the rules and ensure our conduct is in line with laws and policies. For example, as a parent, we set boundaries, but if we don't execute, monitor, and enforce the rules, then kids will figure out those rules mean nothing, and they may just tear the house apart."

As I was thinking about how I can explain it to my son in a way that is understandable to a fourth grader, I was also reflecting upon my own compliance work. Do our employees understand the compliance expectations and importance of the compliance function? Do our compliance measures make sense to the employees? Is our compliance responsibility clear to our team members?

This article aims to assist our fellow compliance professionals with illustrating the values and importance of the compliance program and organizing events to raise employee awareness, promote ethical behavior, and enhance a culture of compliance, because your compliance efforts are worth celebrating.

Help your teams understand the value of compliance

When handling paper documents, it is not uncommon to get paper cuts. For those who have experienced that before, you know it hurts. Yesterday, I got a paper cut on the tip of my right index finger, and that single cut has made my typing and writing unexpectedly challenging. Not until then did I realize and start to appreciate the importance of my index finger and the intact skin thereon. Like the old saying states, people don't value the things they have until they are gone. The same applies in a business setting. To some organizations, not until they are being investigated by an outside agency or hit with a stiff penalty do they recognize the need for a compliance program and its value. To reduce risk, ensure prosperity, and enhance reputation, compliance is the best insurance policy and investment to an organization that focuses on and values long-term success.

An effective compliance program can help an organization ensure quality and safety, build trust with customers, identify risks and issues, detect wrongdoing early, prevent further damages and losses to the organization, and reduce your organization's exposure to potential fines and penalties. The list of benefits goes on. It's been more than a couple of decades since the concept of compliance first floated around. Although the values that a compliance team brings are tremendous, the inherently serious nature of the function has made people nervous and resistant toward the compliance team. Unlike certain occupations (e.g., nurses and teachers), compliance was not a profession that was well understood or greatly appreciated by many. It is not because people are evil or have bad intentions, but because it was new to them, and changes take time. For instance, when electric vehicles

were first introduced to consumers, most people did not like them and even criticized them because they were rather different from traditional fuel-powered vehicles, with which they were so familiar. It sometimes takes a while for people to accept and fully embrace changes. Likewise, the culture of compliance or the habit of reporting cannot be established or achieved overnight. It takes time, perseverance, and continuous efforts, such as consistent messaging, tireless advocating, and effective communication, to achieve your ultimate goal.

While not everyone may embrace or appreciate compliance in your organization, there are people that are open-minded and receptive. In any group setting, there are always people who are quick to adapt and those who are slow to accept. Leverage the resources you have and build alliances with those that support compliance. Hopefully, with time, everyone will perceive compliance as a normal and essential part of all business operations and we won't see the hostility, resistance, and pushback that we sometimes see today. After all, opportunities always favor the prepared, and successes happen to the perseverant.

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