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The added value of Schadenfreude

By Matthew Silverman

Schadenfreude, a borrowed word from the German language, is the experience of pleasure, joy, or self-satisfaction that comes from learning of or witnessing the troubles, failures, or humiliation of another.

I experienced it recently when a competitor incurred a hefty penalty for a trade-compliance violation. The violation ignited the *schadenfreude* in me for a simple reason: They should have known better. This wasn't a case where complex regulatory schemes or unclear guidance from the government had caused the company to unwittingly misinterpret or misapply the rules. The root cause was simple: They didn't have an adequate compliance program, or they knew what they were doing was noncompliant, but they did it anyway.

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