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Research, Branding Are Key to Inclusive Compliance Programs: Expert

By Jane Anderson

Branding and storytelling can help create an inclusive, engaging compliance program that emphasizes core values and inclusivity—particularly if they're paired with market research that accounts for views from throughout the organization, according to a diversity, ethics and compliance strategist.

"Embrace branding to increase visibility and cut through the noise," advised Nichole Pitts, founder and CEO of Ethintegrity, and a former vice president of ethics and compliance.

It's possible to "use [branding] for great storytelling, and to do it in an innovative and inclusive way, utilizing different departments and modalities to ensure that there's synergy across your organization, and then having that go into your clear policies and then looking at ways that you can measure the success of your program," she said at a Dec. 6 webinar sponsored by the Society of Corporate Compliance and Ethics.[1]

Branding is defined as "delivering an intentional experience to make your audience feel something and have them choose you as their top choice," Pitts said. Branding a compliance program can increase department and program recognition, creates consistency in messaging, increases employee engagement and helps to develop credibility, she said.

MAGIC Formula Explained

Pitts described what she called the "MAGIC" formula to ensure an organization's message is inclusive and engaging: Make it memorable; Audience first; Great storytelling; Innovative and inclusive; and Create synergy and clear policies and measurements. "MAGIC is making your program memorable by asking your audience [about their challenges] and understanding the challenges that they're dealing with, and how you can address that," she said.

Companies like McDonald's ("I'm lovin' it") and Geico ("15 minutes can save you 15 percent or more") have memorable branding campaigns and taglines, Pitts said. Compliance programs can follow suit on a smaller scale. "You want to make it memorable and where you're instantly recognizable. If you can't do a mascot, then maybe you do a watermark or something like that," so that workers immediately recognize communications as coming from the ethics department, she added.

Webinar audience members contributed taglines already in use by their compliance programs, including: "Got integrity?" (a play on "Got milk?") and "Speak Up." In addition, "Do the right thing" is a popular tagline for compliance programs, Pitts said, adding, "as you look to update or develop your branding and your taglines, look at core values and brand words. Most companies have core values. You can create your own set of core values, or you can add onto the company's core values."

Pitts said she recently worked with a company to set core values with feedback from its workforce. Based on that feedback, the company ultimately set three core values for the entire organization, and each department chose

three core values for itself as an add-on to the overall company core values, she said.

"What you want to do is help your workforce understand the purpose of your department and program," Pitts explained. "So, think about how you create trust to where people feel comfortable with coming to you and reporting to you. Ask them to hold you accountable in a way these core values can help empower them. You're letting them know, 'This is what we believe in, this is what we stand for, and this is what you can expect from us.'"

Branding based on core values can help to "create a solidarity and an identity for your department," she said. "Everybody pitching in and creating this ensures that everyone is in alignment, everyone feels heard, and they feel valued.

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