CEP Magazine - March 2023

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Meet Krista Muszak: Different industries, different approaches, same objectives

By Krista Muszak, CCEP, CCEP-I, and Louis Perold

LP: I want to talk about your incredible range of experience in compliance, but before we get to that, I want to talk about your passion for speaking. By my count, you've spoken 18 times over the last nine years at SCCE events ranging from web conferences to regional conferences to both the United States and European Compliance & Ethics Institute. What drives your passion for speaking?

KM: I have to say, first and foremost, it's been an absolute honor to have that many opportunities to present, connect, and share with the compliance community. SCCE has been a wonderful outlet for me to do something that I love. I competed in speech competitions in high school and fell in love with public speaking. Ever since, I have taken every opportunity to hone that skill. My first career job included weekly 10-minute team trainings on various topics. My favorite one was called "Good Idea/Bad Idea," which ran through various scenarios—some frightening, some serious, but all of them helped guide the attendees arrive at the right choice. Technically, it didn't start out as a compliance or ethics topic, but it is a point in my career I identify as the start of my passion for compliance.

My favorite part of presenting is the community of attendees. My approach is not to tell people information, but I much prefer to present a foundation of information and generate conversation and idea-sharing, so we can all learn together. When presented with so many great offerings during the conferences, I want to honor my attendees' decision to attend mine and give them the best session I can.

LP: What do you think makes for a compelling session?

KM: For me, the most compelling are those with real-life scenarios and breakout case studies. You don't have to look far in today's news to take your pick of compliance blunders and ethical mishaps, but what is interesting is "why" they did it, and then asking "how" they got as far as they did. So many different perspectives come out in these breakouts or hands-on activities.

For example, a few years ago, I did a session focusing on ethical hacking. Like the IT world, we tried a theoretical version of penetration testing or hacking for compliance and ethics. It played on the risk assessment model but forced our very compliant and ethical attendees to step outside of their comfort zone and find the weak points—to think like a criminal. Their discomfort was almost palpable, but overall, each team came up with creative ways to circumvent the policies and ultimately act noncompliantly. It was a great exercise at the moment and provided a takeaway to try at their own workplace.

LP: What advice would you give to a compliance professional who may be hesitant about speaking and unsure if they should?

KM: Pick a topic you care about. Caring about the topic should provide comfort and ease the hesitancy, making you a much more engaging presenter.

Encourage interaction. These opportunities to get together are wonderful and interaction is happening throughout the conference. As a presenter, you can encourage that trend by engaging the audience through questions, games, or case study breakouts. This also provides a moment for the presenter to catch their breath, regroup, check time, and mingle, because the focus is moved off them and onto the task presented to the audience.

Stay humble. For me, the best part of presenting on a topic is when I learn something new from my audience! I know I don't know everything and love when a session provides new insight for me as well.