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Compliance reimagined: Mastering the art of branding

By Teran Jeffery, MBA, CHC

Compliance and branding. These concepts may seem initially unrelated, but they go hand in hand when creating a successful compliance program. Compliance refers to following rules and regulations set forth by governing bodies, while branding is about creating a unique identity for your business. Branding is an essential component of any successful business strategy.[1] It involves creating a unique identity that sets your organization apart from competitors and resonates with consumers.[2] A strong brand can connect emotionally with customers, increasing loyalty and trust.

For example, think about the Nike swoosh or the golden arches of McDonald's.[3] These logos are instantly recognizable and evoke specific emotions and associations. Nike's swoosh represents athleticism, while McDonald's arches signify fast food and convenience. These associations are not accidental; they result from careful branding strategies designed to create a specific image in consumers' minds.

Organizations prioritizing compliance can use it to enhance their brand image. When an organization is known for following regulations and ethical standards, it can build trust with its customers and stakeholders. This trust can translate into a positive brand reputation, increasing awareness of compliance risks and organizational culture.

Branding works, so why not give your compliance program branding?

It is a great way to enhance compliance's reputation within the organization. If your company needs branding, here's how you can do it.

Brand compliance, why?

Branding evokes a positive feeling associated with the organization if done well. It gives people a visual, visceral reminder of who the department is and what it does. Branding can create social proof that others are interested in interacting with the compliance department. It can also amplify the company's values and commitment to ethics and integrity.

What should you include?

The first key strategy for mastering the art of branding is to create a solid and consistent brand identity. This means creating certain elements such as logos, colors, fonts, and a tagline.

Logos

A logo is a symbol or design used to identify the organization. Picture-based logos tend to be more memorable. Why? Human minds process pictures faster than words because they "read" them instead of as a sequential pattern.[4] If your organization is lucky to have a designated marketing and communications team, you may be able to use their department's skills and talents to create a logo. If you do not, there are several free logo generator sites, such as Canva, Looka, or similar design software. You can also enlist the efforts of a freelance graphic designer. A logo proves that you are committed to the business by investing the time, money, and energy to create a strong logo. Please be mindful of copyright issues if you use a variation of your company's logo.

Colors

Many wise color theorists would state that color emotes emotions and associations in people. For example, orange evokes optimism, energy, and positivity. My organization uses reds and various blues as our standard color scheme. Red is associated with energy, strength, power, determination, and passion. Red is a dominant and attention-grabbing color in creative work but also pairs well with blue.[5]

In contrast to its sister primary color, red, blue is associated with a calm serenity over intensity or passion. Blue is unique, authentic, enthusiastic, sympathetic, communicative, and personal. Our message is that we are passionate about compliance and interested in fostering a culture of honesty and integrity through communication and partnership.

Some companies will require you to use their official brand colors, while others will allow you to break from standard. If you are thinking about the right colors to send your message, you can reference "Color Meanings – The Power and Symbolism of Colors" by Jacob Olesen.[6]

Fonts

Like colors, fonts evoke emotions, too. Fonts influence your readers' perception of your brand. Flowing cursive fonts symbolize elegance and class, while heavy block fonts create a sense of menace and strength. Fonts speak to the viewer before they read. Choosing fonts well can make a brand more redolent. Some fonts, like Helvetica and Arial, are often used in digital formats because they are easily read on screen.

Taglines

Taglines are a fantastic way to cement your program's brand. My organization's is "A Partner You Can Trust." It uses our value of partnership to convey our commitment to collaboration and focuses on trust.

A winning tagline will often use words from the company's values. It may also use phrases like "Do the right thing," "Compliance is everybody's business," or "Speak up."

Where to put your brand

Once you have developed your brand, here comes the fun part: using it! A few good options are:

- In your email signature

- PowerPoint presentations

- Standards of conduct or the code of conduct

- The header of compliance-related materials

- Training and education videos

- As a screensaver

- As a virtual background during Microsoft Teams or Zoom meetings

- Intranet site, communications, social media posts, etc.

- Compliance and Ethics Week celebrations

Final thoughts

You can have all the elements: logo, tagline, fonts, and color scheme, but if you are not authentic in your message, your compliance program can be dead in the water. In the fast-paced and highly competitive world of modern branding, authenticity has emerged as the bedrock upon which successful companies build their empires. Gone is the time when employees were swayed solely by flashy ads and catchy slogans. Today, employees seek more than promises; they crave genuine connections with their organizations.

In today's climate, genuine authenticity shines like a beacon, attracting loyal customers and forging lasting relationships. One of the primary reasons why authenticity has become paramount in modern branding is the rise of social media and digital connectivity. Consumers can research a company's history, reviews, and social responsibility initiatives with just a few clicks. This level of transparency places immense pressure on businesses to be authentic and accountable for their actions.

Authentic brands communicate honestly with their audience, portraying a realistic and sincere image. They avoid exaggerating claims or manipulating consumers into making purchases. Instead, they focus on telling their unique stories, revealing their journeys, and showcasing the faces behind the brands. This is the same approach that a compliance program should take.

An authentic brand builds trust and credibility. Employees who perceive an organization's brand as genuine are more likely to comply with rules and regulations. They take ownership and pride in the company; they have skin in the game. Or what compliance professions like to call "buy-in." Trust is a precious commodity today, and authentic brands earn it through consistent and reliable interactions.

Moreover, authenticity fosters a deeper emotional connection. People want to support brands that share their values and contribute positively to society. Demonstrating authenticity within your compliance program creates a sense of belonging and purpose, allowing consumers to identify with the brand beyond mere transactions. It requires a clear understanding of your organization's and department's core values and an unwavering commitment to living up to them daily. Authenticity should permeate every level of your compliance program.

Takeaways

- Compliance and branding are interconnected. Successful compliance programs can use branding strategies to enhance their reputation and build trust with customers and stakeholders.

- Branding creates a unique identity. A strong brand sets an organization apart from competitors and resonates with consumers, connecting with them emotionally and increasing loyalty.

- To brand a compliance program effectively, organizations should create a solid and consistent brand identity, including logos, colors, fonts, and a tagline.

- An authentic compliance program builds trust, credibility, and a deeper emotional connection with

employees and stakeholders.

- Once a compliance program has a defined brand, it can be integrated into various communication and materials, such as email signatures, presentations, codes of conduct, training videos, and social media posts.

1 Phanom Professionals, "Right Place For Right Branding a New Company," Zupyak, March 18, 2023, https://www.zupyak.com/p/3550645/t/right-place-for-right-branding-a-new-company.

2 Makin Marketing, "The Benefits of Effective Brand Management," May 25, 2023, https://www.makindesign.com/advice/the-benefits-of-effective-brand-management.

3 Mike Tungate, "The Purpose of a Logo: 7 Reasons Why a Logo Is Important," Envision IT Solutions (blog), April 17, 2020, https://blog.envisionitsolutions.com/the-purpose-of-a-logo-7-reasons-why-a-logo-is-important.

4 Berger Colour Magazine, *Colours & Fashion For August 2018*, August 2018, https://www.bergerpaints.com/colour-magazine/august/2018/world-of-colours/colours-and-fashion.

5 Color Psychology, "The Psychology of Colors and Their Meanings," accessed October 2, 2023, https://www.colorpsychology.org/?ref=designscrazed.org.

6 Jacob Olesen, "Color Meanings – The Power and Symbolism of Colors," accessed October 2, 2023, https://www.color-meanings.com.

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