

CEP Magazine – July 2020 Meet Blair Marks: The best defense is training

Blair Marks, CCEP, Vice President of Ethics and Business Conduct at Lockheed Martin in Bethesda, Maryland, USA

Blair Marks (blair.c.marks@lmco.com) was interviewed by Adam Turteltaub (adam.turteltaub@corporatecompliance.org), Vice President, Strategic Initiatives & International Programs at SCCE & HCCA.

AT: At Lockheed Martin, you have served in various roles and came into compliance from a business unit after managing some very large programs—even serving as a plant manager. Looking back at those days, what was your view of compliance and ethics?

BM: I suppose I did not give it much conscious thought as a discipline. I knew my ethics officer was the person to call to answer questions about gifts, business courtesies, and hospitality—or if, heaven forbid, we needed something investigated. It was certainly not something I aspired to. That said, though, if you had walked into my office 25 years ago, you would have found quotes pinned on my bulletin board saying things like G.K. Chesterton’s “To have a right to do a thing is not at all the same as to be right in doing it.”^[1] So I guess it was in the cards for me all along.

AT: How did you end up making the leap into our profession? Was it something that you pursued, or did someone knock on your door one day with surprising news?

BM: I had been working on the C-5 modernization development programs for several years. We were updating the United States Air Force C-5 Galaxy fleet with new avionics, engines, and a host of other system upgrades to ensure this national resource could support US needs well into the future. As we neared completion of the development effort and were entering production, I decided to see what else might be out there. As it happened, our Aeronautics business was looking for an ethics director for a two- to three-year rotation. It was an opportunity to work with both corporate staff and the other business areas (which I had not done in the past), and then I expected to go back into program management. That was 11 years ago, and I’m still here. I found the job I was meant to do!

AT: I imagine that when you started there were a lot of surprises. What would you tell others who are moving from the business unit into compliance to help them make the adjustment?

BM: Recognize what you don’t know and use your network of ethics and compliance professionals both internally and externally. Don’t be afraid to ask questions. Our colleagues are generous with their time and knowledge. I was quite familiar with many aspects of the business, having worked in engineering, manufacturing, business development, and program management. But, for example, I definitely needed to learn how to conduct investigations. I was mentored by our director of investigations and still check in with senior team members as needed.

AT: You may be the only compliance officer I have ever met—and I have met quite a few—who has a bachelor’s degree in ceramic engineering and a master’s in materials engineering. I’m constantly amazed how other fields can have so much in common with compliance. I spent 13 years in advertising agencies, for example, and the communications skills I learned are regularly used when discussing compliance programs. Is there anything

from materials engineering that every compliance professional should know?

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