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Meet Jay P. Anstine: An empathic approach to compliance

by Jay P. Anstine and Adam Turteltaub

AT: You've spent your entire career in healthcare, even before you went to law school and then entered the world of compliance. What drew you to the field?

JA: I am an eternal student type, so I was drawn in by the nature of the work. Whether it's conducting investigations, performing an audit, or delivering education, you're always learning not only about the regulations but also the operations of your organization. It's what drew me into the field, and it's definitely what keeps me coming back day after day.

AT: You were working as a legal assistant in the general counsel's office at Sanford Health while attending law school. It must have been fascinating, helpful, and maybe a bit confusing working in the law and learning it at the same time. How did it color your learning?

JA: It was a fantastic experience, and I think for anyone starting out, I would encourage them to seek out "real-world" experience prior to completing their education. When I made the decision to go to law school, I knew I wanted to marry my interest in healthcare and my interest in the law. When I came to that conclusion, I decided to contact the general counsel of Sanford Health (which back then was known as Sioux Valley Health System). I just called him cold and asked if he ever took in interns. Sometimes you just have to put yourself out there. Thankfully for me, his intern had just left, so there was an opportunity. It ended up being a nontraditional internship in that I worked for him for four years—during the school year as I had time—and then 40 hours a week in the summers. It was invaluable to see what I was learning coming to life, whether it was a contract dispute, a personal injury claim, or addressing a property law issue. I would say it did color my learning, but in a good way. I was able to recognize and distinguish a textbook understanding of the legal concepts I was studying versus the real-world application.

AT: Not long after you graduated law school, you switched over to the compliance side of things. What attracted you to compliance?

JA: Hah. Like many other compliance professionals, I fell into this line of work. After graduating from law school, I was still focused at the time on practicing, but a couple life events occurred that altered my career path.

The first was my that position with Sanford (then Sioux Valley) came to an end due to budget limitations. The other event was the end of a long-term relationship. My girlfriend at the time was pursuing a graduate degree out

of state, and we were just drifting apart.

So, these events put me in a position of having to decide whether I was going to continue to pursue practicing law and whether I was going to remain in my hometown. Since Sioux Falls, SD, was relatively small at the time and my interest was very niche, there weren't a lot of opportunities to practice healthcare law. I also grew up a skier (despite living in the upper Midwest) and went to college in Montana, so the mountains have always been in my heart. To that end, my focus shifted to relocating to Colorado, and I was finding more available compliance positions than legal positions. This opened my eyes to healthcare compliance, which, at the time, I thought I would try and continue to pursue practicing. After a year or so, it became evident to me that compliance was a better fit to sustain my interest long-term. I had already spent several years reviewing and drafting contracts in a legal department, so I knew what that work was like and felt like I might burn out.

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