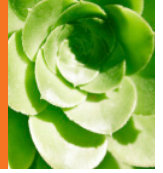


7 Reasons to Increase Ethics & Compliance Program Communication and Awareness

BEST PRACTICES



By Gail Allen, Vice President, Ethical Leadership Group – the advisory services division of NAVEX Global

For a compliance program to be truly successful, employees and leadership alike must know that it exists, understand it, support it, and live by it. Most successful programs involve increasing communication with employees in seven core areas:

1. Formal and informal education: Leads to behavior change
2. Company Commitment: Establishes a trustworthy work environment
3. Non-retaliation: Improves culture
4. Informed Decision-Making: Empowers employees
5. Reputation: Differentiates your organization
6. Financial Liability: Explains the 'why'
7. Consequences: Makes compliance personally relevant

It's easy to lose sight of the fact that different departments (Human Resources, EEO, Diversity, Finance and Legal) communicate with employees about compliance issues on schedules that align with their own priorities, and often use terms that are inconsistent and, in some cases, contradictory to the overall compliance message. Integrating your messages, creating consistent themes and releasing them on a schedule that's acceptable to all departments not only ensures consistency of messages but aids in increasing message retention and demonstrating the connection of issues.

1 FORMAL AND INFORMAL EDUCATION

Evidence supports that a branded, multi-pronged awareness and communication approach facilitates greater comprehension and retention with learners. Changes in technology and social media, the breadth and depth of learning vehicles, and the recognition that employees respond better when messages are relevant to them and their jobs have influenced the ways business partners like NAVEX Global offer learning. Take the time to investigate and evaluate your continuous learning options since this first step is crucial to success.

2 COMPANY COMMITMENT

When employees are confident about being treated fairly and with respect, they are more likely to pursue issues directly with supervisors or other internal managers. Have senior leaders send periodic messages to remind everyone about the company's commitment as well as reinforce accountability across all levels and jurisdictions.

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3 NON-RETALIATION

Employees must perceive that their questions or reports are welcome, taken seriously and will not lead to retaliation. Managers must be trained on how to properly address or direct those questions without retaliation. And organizations must proactively communicate and model the fact that retaliation is unacceptable.

4 INFORMED DECISION-MAKING

Individuals want to feel empowered to make the right decision when faced with ethical dilemmas or compliance-related concerns. Successful programs ensure that employees know about the resources available, are clear about the kinds of issues they should report and understand their rights to remain anonymous. They need to understand what happens when they report issues and the outcome of those issues (even in sanitized format). Clear communication about how issues are handled has a dramatic impact on overall culture.

5 REPUTATION

Clear and frequent communication can help to strategically differentiate your company from competition. Even if a single, highly publicized incident compromises your program, your ability to demonstrate your program's completeness can help to sustain you in the court of public opinion.

6 FINANCIAL LIABILITY

An active compliance and reporting system can be a mitigating factor in protecting your organization from needless legal costs. Proof of a well communicated program and an actively-used system may significantly reduce legal fines should your business be found liable for a compliance violation. The reduction in fines can often be as much as 80-90%.

7 CONSEQUENCES

Not doing compliance right –because of a lack luster, poorly advertised, or check-the-box ethics and compliance program – has well-established financial, legal and reputational consequences. Communication and awareness that is consistent with the organization's risk assessment, while reflective of its Code of Conduct and company values, can be instrumental in mitigating the impact of alleged or substantiated wrongdoing.

ABOUT NAVEX GLOBAL

NAVEX Global is the trusted ethics and compliance expert for more than 8,000 clients in over 200 countries – the largest ethics and compliance community in the world. A merger of industry leaders ELT, EthicsPoint, Global Compliance Services and PolicyTech, NAVEX Global provides a comprehensive suite of solutions to manage governance, risk and compliance (GRC), providing critical cross-program insights through unmatched expertise and actionable data.

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AUTHOR GAIL ALLEN, vice president with NAVEX Global's Ethical Leadership Group, has been engaged in ethics and compliance program management for more than 17 years, executing initiatives and creating broad awareness of efforts to help strengthen corporate cultures.