



What Can Harry Potter Teach Us About Conflicts of Interest?

Compliance and Ethics



Photo by Tatiana Gordievskaja/Shutterstock.com.

Draco Malfoy and Gregory Goyle are an untrustworthy pair, just the kind of baddies who bend the rules. You don't know them? Then please meet two unsavory characters from the Harry Potter books and films.



The Harry Potter series. Photo by Anton_Ivanov/Shutterstock.com

Despite their questionable characters, Malfoy and Goyle have been quite helpful to us when it comes to making training something people want to do, rather than a chore.

Take compliance training. When you mention it, people often groan. We found that by using fictional scenarios about conflicts of interest featuring these two villains, it was more enjoyable.

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Using Harry Potter characters is one small example of an approach that the [Europe, Africa, and Middle East \(EAME\)](#) legal team, headed by Ingolf Quandt, has developed towards designing and delivering high-quality online legal training to a wide array of clients in our region.

Knowing that training is part of the remit of a legal counsel, we wanted to do something different and more engaging than standard online learning platforms or sending out slide packs. Our aim was to go beyond theory, engage people, and help them to feel empowered. People can be shy and don't always participate, so we wanted to create a safe space to empower everyone to get more involved.

Here are a few tips and tricks from our training

Fictional characters

Shirley McCulloch, legal counsel for United Kingdom and Ireland, created the compliance session

featuring Harry Potter characters for commercial colleagues in her territory. To make it interactive, people were split into groups in Zoom breakout rooms to discuss various scenarios, including possible conflicts of interest. People really engaged with and enjoyed it.



Zoom breakout sessions can be very effective, fun, and interactive. *Photo by fizkes/Shutterstock.com*

Movies

Films also offer a great way into a complex and sensitive topic, such as workplace harassment. In a presentation in Russia on preventing harassment, we used both real Syngenta cases and scenes from a Russian romantic comedy, "Office Romance," filmed 45 years ago but still well known. The mindset and ethics of that period encouraged reflection on how behavior that was appropriate and funny then, could now be seen as harassing.

Interactivity

For EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) training, Mónica Pereda, legal counsel for Iberia, and Shirley McCulloch used experiences from real-life questions and issues from Syngenta. Rather than speaking to dense slides stating the law, they invited participants' questions throughout, and mixed informational slides with interactive quizzes. For a second GDPR session, they initiated a discussion among participants. Laurens Veldhuizen, legal counsel for Benelux, Central and Nordics, and Shirley McCulloch used the same interactive, discussion-based approach for competition law training for commercial colleagues in their territories.

Contests

The Russian legal team included a contest to win a Val-You in an annual refresher on competition law. Halfway through the training, Pavel Bashmakov, legal counsel for Russia-KAZBEC, showed a television commercial and asked the audience to guess why antitrust authorities had banned the advertisement. This encouraged participants to listen more attentively.

Real-life stories

A dawn raid by competition authorities can be very stressful when you don't know what to do. To turn training from a classroom exercise into an exciting discussion, Irina Maurits, legal counsel for South East Europe, invited colleagues from Moldova and Romania to speak about their experience of dawn raids. Teamwork is always a key to successful training.

Recordings

Training may take significant time, so Sergiy Kaduk and Pavlo Dovhalets, legal counsel and paralegal for Ukraine, recorded their face-to-face competition law training and posted it online for newcomers to watch when it suits them.

Each training session has been carefully targeted to be relevant to the audience and give the opportunity to engage in a good quality learning experience. The entire team has invested time and effort to offer people that good experience. And time-consuming it certainly is!

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That said, the legal team has also benefited. We learned as we went along and have had the opportunity to show our leadership in certain topics. It is a big advantage for us and for the participants that the sessions help to create a network of mutual support. If you have met someone on an interactive session, you are more likely to feel you can contact them if you have a question they could help with. We also wanted to encourage others to feel confident in sharing their knowledge with us. The better we understand our colleagues and the businesses they operate in, the better we can tailor our legal advice.

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[Shirley McCulloch](#)



Legal counsel for UK and Ireland and Digital Agriculture

Syngenta

Shirley McCulloch, Syngenta, legal counsel for United Kingdom and Ireland and digital agriculture. She has been with Syngenta for more than 10 years and enjoys the sheer variety of her role

supporting the full breadth of Syngenta's operations. From the commercial sales functions to the manufacturing sites, research and development (R&D) sites, indirect procurement, human resources, and dispute resolution. She continually learns as she goes and continues to develop expertise in data privacy and the new digital agriculture businesses.

[Mónica Pereda](#)



Legal Counsel Iberia

Syngenta

Mónica Pereda, legal counsel for Iberia. Pereda has advised Syngenta for more than 13 years in all its business and operations in the Iberian Peninsula. She enjoys digital law, and therefore she got certified according to the UNE-EN ISO/IEC 17024:2012 as a data protection officer, and earned two masters degrees in the field, one in digital law and another in legal tech. She believes that the training that lawyers provide needs to be rethought to make it more engaging for those who receive it and to make it really effective.