



DEI, ESQ: Educating the Workforce on Compliance Risks

Compliance and Ethics

Employment and Labor



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Luisa May Alcott has an often-cited quote from *Little Women*,

I'm not afraid of storms, for I'm learning how to sail my ship.

To educate today's workforce on compliance risk, this is a starting perspective that should guide an educator in developing content.

The workforce of today faces ever-changing trends in business and technology. Industries that were previously stable are going through significant change due to local — and sometimes global — shifts in consumer needs. As a result of the changes affecting today's workforce, the potential compliance risks known, and unknown, are also changing.

Utilizing the fearless approach

The most effective way of educating the workforce on risks in such a dynamic environment is reliant on ensuring that they are well equipped to understand how to manage “storms” (i.e., hard times). As employees navigate and apply their training, they will become resilient in managing new risks within their work environments. That is, learning how to continue to “sail” despite changes in compliance risk.

The key to this, I daresay, “fearless” approach to educating the workforce on compliance risk is by focusing on three main concepts:

1. **Know your audience;**
2. **Know their work; and**
3. **Know you cannot prepare for every scenario.**

Knowing your audience has many facets and may be the hardest to address as small to large companies may have different needs. It may be easier to produce one training that covers many areas, but depending on the recipient of training, from front-line workers to high-level executives, a single training delivered in only one mode may not be sufficient.



Consider multiple methods of training so that all employees have a full understanding of compliance risk in the workplace. Lucky Business / Shutterstock.com

Some thought should be given to who requires the training and whether there are multiple ways to deliver and reinforce the content to bolster understanding of risks in the workplace and how to manage them. For example, a warehouse manager will need basic foundational risk courses similar to an office-based manager in the areas of workplace discrimination but may not need the same training as an international business traveler who may encounter foreign officials and require training on risks and appearances of bribes during the course of their business activities.

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Do this: Document the types of audiences that may require training, e.g., office workers, travelers, and the relevant compliance risk training they may need.

As creators of material to educate the workforce, we should consider that there are multiple ways to share information and that the target audience being educated should be considered experts in their respective roles. As we use techniques to convey compliance risk, the material should be relevant to their work experience and should encourage or direct the learner to think about how they can apply the risk to their role.

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[Mark Sparvell](#), global award-winning educator in social emotional learning and technology, discussed “[Five Adult Learning Principles That Increase Engagement](#)” published in Forbes on May 13, 2024. “If the content is not immediately useful, adult learners will often dismiss it as unnecessary,” Sparvell writes. Therefore, creating training relevant to the learner's work is important.

An example of compliance risk training that should closely relate to the work environment are for risks that engender emergency situations. For example, an environmental release or a safety risk and related contingency should mimic the work environment closely so that the workforce is able to practice how to respond to the risk. The value of practice allows for participants of training to interact with risk and practice their management and control of the situation.

Do This: Consider whether your training is relevant to the work that the experts in your workforce are undertaking. Review the types of work and determine if compliance risk training relevant to the work scenarios are sufficient.

Staying up to date with compliance risk management

Inherent in preparing any organization for compliance risk is the knowledge that risks change, and increasingly risks are changing rapidly. Even small businesses are dependent on global technology — and in some cases global supply chains — and as a result the recent proliferation of new regulations or revision of existing laws in areas such as privacy, cybersecurity, trade, and anti-money laundering will continue.

Compliance risk management typically includes steps to assess, document, control, and activate contingencies in worst case scenarios for known risks or changes in risk. As educational content is developed, attention should be given to preparing workforce teams to become more attuned to

identifying and escalating emergent or evolving risks. In addition, management teams should be encouraged to discuss business risks frequently so there is an understanding of a baseline level of risk. In doing so, teams will be more savvy at identifying compliance risk changes to their work environment.

There is no way to prepare for every scenario. However, there should be a routine to update training content in such a way that it incorporates examples of recent case studies of similar industries or business cases that may teach lessons of risk and control, so that, that relevant information on new risks can be learnt by relevant departments.

Do This: Check if management teams within your organization know their baseline risks within their division or operational unit. Share content from current events, new regulatory updates, or recent risk scenarios within the last year with relevant teams to enhance value of risk knowledge and planning for new risks.

Educating today's workforce on compliance risk is not insurmountable. To build a resilient workforce that is able to take on known and unknown risks requires a sustainable program. The program must include training that targets specific audiences within the workplace and understands if there are specialized needs for training. The training development routine should acknowledge that risks will change, therefore, training content must continuously be examined or updated. Lastly, employees respond well to real-life examples for discussion, so inclusion of the relevant compliance case study will ensure that employees within the workforce are able to "sail" even during times of change.

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Shani Carty Angus is a Senior Manager at Toyota Motor North America. She currently works on their Enterprise Strategy team where she leads a team focused on Enterprise Transformation. With over 20 years in compliance and twelve years under her belt at Toyota, she's a master of juggling priorities and problem solving, particularly in operations compliance implementation and project management. Before Toyota, she wrangled environmental compliance and sustainability at Coca-Cola Enterprises, where she supported 8 bottling plants and 35 distribution centers. Her knack for breaking down technical jargon into something even your neighbor could understand has made her a go-to for practical solutions for results-driven companies. And though she started her career as a lab technician in wastewater treatment, she's come a long way from analyzing what goes down the drain. Outside of work, Angus enjoys swimming, reading, and spending time with her family.