

## ethikos Volume 33, Number 1. January 31, 2019 Mid-level management is your weakest ethics link

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By Frank C. Bucaro

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A recent NAVEX Global Ethics and Compliance training benchmark found: “Managers are the day-to-day interface with employees and the carriers of the culture. Unless they are effectively and properly trained, organizations will struggle to meet their top training objective of building an ethical culture.”<sup>[1]</sup>

Professor Linda Trevino at Pennsylvania State University takes it a step further in her research that indicates that middle managers may turn to unethical behavior to face unrealistic expectation.<sup>[2]</sup> Ashley Fulmer of the *Harvard Business Review* reports that employees who trust their managers are more likely to trust their CEOs.<sup>[3]</sup>

Jim Brennan, in an SCCE blog post, published an article on the importance of training middle management on ethics.<sup>[4]</sup> In addition, Corinne Purtill reports on a Gallop survey of the US workplace that almost 70% of US managers are scared to talk to their employees.<sup>[5]</sup>

Employees judge their workplace as ethical or not, based on what they think about their manager. So what type of ethics training does your mid-level management receive?

Blame is not the issue here, although it could be one’s first response. The point here is the necessity to be increasingly more proactive in creating ongoing, quality ethics training that will empower that mid-level management tier of leadership. The purpose is then for mid-level managers to not only face proactively any ethics issues that may be reported, but also to be able to help resolve many of these issues on their own level, thus “freeing up” the next level of management from having to “step in” or pass the issue up the management ladder.

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