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Forging an ethical corporate culture: Bring compliance and legal to the table

By Bart M. Schwartz

Bart M. Schwartz (bschwartz@guidepostsolutions.com) is the Chairman of Guidepost Solutions LLC in New York City, USA.

Every company seeks to create an ethical corporate culture, or at least knows that it should. Achieving that is easier said than done. Central to the challenge is ensuring that the legal and compliance teams not only communicate well with each other, but work closely together. Creating that alignment, and making it work in practical terms, not only helps prevent ethical breaches, but if and when they occur, ensures that they are properly and enduringly corrected and are non-recurring.

Maximizing the combined expertise of both the compliance and legal teams results in a wide series of benefits for organizations. Although they each may have a different focus, their goals are the same: to empower and equip a company with the right tools to foster an ethical corporate culture and implement a program that protects it from future risks.

Tone from the top

An ethical corporate culture starts with the right tone from the top. A company's leadership must continually show its employees that it operates and behaves according to the highest ethical standards. When ethical leadership is demonstrated on a daily basis, it filters down to the rest of the organization and creates a culture of openness, integrity, and honesty.

Functionally, however, ethical modeling by leadership is not enough. CEOs and senior management just don't have enough visibility into every corner of the organization to prevent an ethical breach. Mechanisms for ethical conduct need to be put in place that are uniform, comprehensive, consistent, and cognizant of the evolving rules and regulations.

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