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AT&T's compliance training evolution

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AT&T has undergone a shift in its business, expanding beyond telecommunications services to include entertainment and digital advertising. We're becoming more agile and focusing intently on creativity and innovation. Five years ago, we reorganized our compliance program under a chief compliance officer, who reports directly to our CEO. This transition allowed us to re-examine our compliance training program. We soon realized we could streamline it and make it more meaningful and relevant to our employees. Our Compliance Training Evolution started slowly. However, the past three years have been remarkable. Here are some things we considered as we reinvented what compliance training meant at AT&T.

For many years, we had approached compliance training very deliberately and prescriptively. Relying on compulsory training and providing detailed information on every topic, we took a "more is better" mentality. It consisted of single-topic courses, laden with content to click through and knowledge checks. As you can imagine, we heard complaints from the business about how much time training was taking. We also had to combat the misperception that all training was compliance, which was not the case. We realized the click-through format was getting a little shopworn, and employees were less and less enthusiastic about repeating the same courses year after year, taking hours to complete them. So, our first goal was to look for ways to consolidate training and focus on what was most important.

Early in the process, we used internal media resources to produce our own versions of talking-head training—short videos of subject matter experts discussing key risk areas. This was an hour that users could stop and start, with a bookmark feature! This was a big improvement, saving our employees a lot of time. There were segments for each of the risks we wanted to address, like data protection, antitrust, gifts and hospitality, and so on. We could track and report completions in our platform. This format worked for a few years, but we wanted it to be more timely, relevant, and accessible. We wanted to make training available across multiple devices. While some employees may use a computer, others, like our tech and retail teams, rely on tablets and cell phones. And we wanted to allow our employees to schedule training at their convenience.