

CEP Magazine – November 2019

Make training appeal to the inner child

By Calvin London, PhD

Calvin London (calvin@thecomplianceconcierge.com) is the former head of Business Operations and Integrity in Australia and New Zealand for Celgene Pty Ltd. and now runs The Compliance Concierge, a consulting company based in Australia.

For some companies, training has become very pedestrian, to the detriment of the end purpose: to educate and impart knowledge. I have, over my time of being associated with both quality and compliance training, heard the same comments back from employees: This is boring. I almost fell asleep. I didn't learn anything new. Why do we have to do this again?

Over the past few months I have written articles highlighting the training overload imposed on employees^[1] and suggesting some examples that worked for us to recharge our training.^[2] In this article I provide further examples of how training can be recharged by thinking out of the box: (i) introducing personal examples to emphasize compliance principles and (ii) appealing to the inner child in all of us.

Making it personal: A practical example

It is sometimes difficult to explain to employees the relationship between compliance and ethics. For this purpose, if we assume compliance is “adhering to established rules and regulations” and ethics is defined as “doing the right thing,” what examples can we draw on from everyday living to explain these?

One helpful illustration uses driving and breaking the speed limit as metaphors. This example provides employees with a real-life situation that they can relate to and introduces the same philosophy that applies to many different compliance situations in business:

Driving over the speed limit is a traffic offense that receives a financial penalty. It is safe to assume that everyone knows the road rules, including the speed limit requirement, as it is part of the qualification for a driver's license.

There are three types of drivers. The first type of driver speeds on a regular basis and is clearly noncompliant. The second type of driver never speeds. These drivers do not want to break the law and are clearly compliant. The third type of driver sits in the middle. They may occasionally speed over the limit due to a momentary lapse of concentration or because they get side-tracked, but as a general rule, they do not deliberately set out to break the law.

In a compliance sense, only the second type is compliant; those people who never exceed the speed limit—but what about from an ethical perspective?

In this case the second type (those who never speed) is once again clearly ethical. The first type (those who intentionally speed with disregard for the laws and an indifference to the penalties) is clearly unethical, because they knowingly choose to break the law with full knowledge that it is wrong. The third type (those who occasionally and unintentionally break the speed limits) may not necessarily be unethical even though they have broken the law. They have good intentions of keeping within the law (i.e., being compliant) but occasionally make mistakes.

Challenge people

Another technique for recharging training is to tap into our inherent competitive nature. It is safe to say that many of us grew up in environments where competition was encouraged. At school, children compete for grades or in sport. In late life we compete for jobs and still compete in sporting events. While the extent to which people are inherently competitive varies, a good friend of mine maintains that everyone is inherently competitive because life demands it.

There are several ways in which this can be harnessed into training in the form of games or competition: appealing to the inner child. Here are two valuable examples.

Board games

Board games such as Who Wants to Be a Millionaire or Trivial Pursuit can be modified to include questions related to compliance. These may require a bit of setup but can be tailored to suit the launch of a code of conduct, a policy handbook, or to support country-specific regulations.

In one situation in our company, we formed cross-functional teams and ran a series of challenges leading up to a final. Question sets were based on general compliance, company policies, the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA), bribery, and lucky dip. The lucky dip selection included questions from the history of the company to more general areas associated with compliance.

This board game training provides an opportunity for compliance functions to be innovative and think out of the box, and for employees to gain exposure to elements of compliance in an enjoyable and fun way.

Puzzles and other games

The second example directly appeals to the inner child by creating puzzles and games. We have regular competitions with a small prize, such as a water bottle, box of chocolates, or coffee mug—something small to recognize the effort and encourage participation.

In our experience the most successful of these has been “word finders” or crossword puzzles. Templates for these can be readily downloaded from the internet and provide several options in terms of complexity. These can be used either as a simplified version where employees find nominated words or, in a more advanced form, where the remaining letters make up a statement that you want them to remember.

For a more complex challenge, you can provide sentences that need to be completed, and employees must provide the missing words in the sentence or acronym and then find them in the word finder. For example, FCPA stands for Foreign Corrupt _____ Act. The missing word “Practices” would be found in the word finder.

Mixing it up

It is important to note that these variations from the standard forms of training may not work in every situation. For example, where training requires detailed understanding and attention to detail, these may not be appropriate. However, these methods have received very positive responses. They provide employees with some light relief and alternatives to training. In some cases, feedback has indicated that employees enjoy the variety.

These forms of training are not compulsory, but there is no reason why they couldn't be. If the training method is appealing to employees, they will eventually join in. The important factor is that you are mixing it up and providing much-appreciated relief to training boredom and fatigue.

Takeaways

- Recharge training with out-of-the-box alternatives to “read and understand” training.
- Use examples of true stories to demonstrate the relationship between compliance and ethics.
- Harness the competitive streak in all of us with training games, such as board games, as an alternative to test understanding.
- Appeal to the inner child by using puzzles and games with a compliance message, such as word finders.
- Mix up your modalities of training to provide stimulation and variety—and make it fun and enjoyable!

¹ Calvin London, “Training *foie gras*: Problems with modern-day training,” *CEP Magazine*, July 2019, 50–52, <http://bit.ly/2Xi6pYY>.

² Calvin London, “Moments of Truth: Educational tools for codes of conduct training,” *ethikos*33, no. 8 (August 2019), <http://bit.ly/2m5mLas>.

This publication is only available to members. To view all documents, please log in or become a member.

[Become a Member](#) [Login](#)