Founder of Rethink Compliance in Denver, Colorado, USA, and author of SCCE's new book, *Creating Great Compliance Training in a Digital World*

Kirsten Liston (kirsten@rethinkcomplianceco.com) was interviewed by **Adam Turteltaub** (adam.turteltaub@corporatecompliance.org), Vice President, Strategic Initiates & International Programs at SCCE & SCCE.

AT: Let's start at the beginning of your career in compliance. How did a journalist end up in the compliance training business?

KL: Honestly, it was a random lucky break. I'd spent five years working as a journalist in Minneapolis, writing everything from movie reviews to lawyer profiles—but eventually I realized that, while I loved writing, the profession just wasn't a fit for me.

That year, I was on the planning committee for my five-year college reunion. A classmate worked for an e-learning company that was spinning off a compliance training start-up, and they needed an editor. I moved to Boston to start work in September 2000—when the company had eight employees, six courses, no clients, and no revenue.

Of course, this was Integrity Interactive, which grew to be one of the leading vendors in the space. When SAI Global bought the company in 2010, we had 500+ courses, 20,000+ course translations, and 300+ clients, many of them Fortune 500 or Global 2000 companies, and I had a fantastic front-row seat for all of it.

AT: Back in 2000, compliance training was still relatively new, and many companies were still struggling with even the idea of doing enterprise-wide mandatory training; most of the courses were long, typically 40 minutes to an hour. Now we've seen an explosion of short-form training. What else do you find notable in the evolution of compliance training?

KL: So much has changed since 2000. Back then, as you say, compliance training was relatively new. Typically, we were selling to the general counsel, who was lobbying the CEO for funds to set up a program.

Companies were building their first compliance teams, often drafting in-house attorneys. I've heard stories from people who worked in transactions, and one day the general counsel showed up, dropped a big stack of paper on their desk, and said, "Congratulations, you're writing our first code of conduct." And they said, "What's a code of conduct?"

Just getting a program staffed, funded, and in place was a massive effort. Because the people running programs were new to compliance, they looked for vendors that could consult and partner at a high level, that could help them establish and troubleshoot the program fundamentals. This is different from today, where the client buyer often has a lot of compliance experience, has a plan and a vision for the compliance program, and, often, are the ones pushing the vendor to evolve. These days, most clients don't need guidance on the basics. They want vendors to lead through product innovation—using new technologies or communications approaches to

accomplish key compliance strategy goals.

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