'I've got a quick question!': Using apps to communicate policies

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How often does your compliance team get asked a "quick" question? How many of these repeatedly come up? How many are straightforward policy questions versus in-depth discussions about compliance risk?

Compliance professionals welcome questions from their customers, use those opportunities to discuss risk, and help their customers move forward with decision-making. At the same time, compliance departments are being asked to do more with fewer or static resources. So how do you balance the want to encourage your customers to contact you with the growing mountain of work on your desk?

You might want to consider a technology solution that can handle basic Q&A so your team can focus on value-added initiatives, topics that need in-person discussions or coaching, and other risk management activities. A variety of technology solutions, hereafter referred to as apps, exist on the market today and offer a wide range of capabilities at varying cost.

Your compliance Q&A app could:

- Provide consistent answers to basic Q&As and direct users to your compliance team for more complicated topics.

- Show users other topics your compliance team advises on, increasing the reach and adoption of your programs.

- Allow users to get answers in their native language, even if no one on the compliance team has that language skill.

- Allow your compliance team to spend their valuable time on higher-value activities.

The following sections are intended to provide a nonexhaustive list of things to consider as you explore options. The considerations will vary by business.

Compare platforms

When should you pick a platform? Don't decide on a particular platform or tool too early in the evaluation process. You should evaluate your must-haves and nice-to-haves prior to getting demonstrations from vendors or internal information technology (IT) teams. If you see a particular tool too early in the process, you might get stuck on that as a solution and end up compromising on some of your must-haves.

How mobile are your users? If they travel extensively or work from home, you might want a mobile app in addition to a desktop app or as a solitary solution.

Do all your users have computer access? Many companies have large portions of their workforce that do not have

access to a computer. If this is your situation, deploying a desktop-based app would not reach all your users.

Where do employees already go for information? Your company might have a companywide app or site that users already visit frequently. If so, you could try to add your content to the existing location instead of building a standalone app.

What data are stored by the app, and where are they stored? If your app is gathering any information when a user logs in, you will need to discuss this with your data privacy expert. Additionally, the storage location will have an impact on the speed at which the app responds and ongoing data charges.

Is the platform flexible enough to allow for frequent changes? Some platforms will allow the compliance team to make quick edits to content while other platforms will require the vendor or IT team to make changes. Consider how often you plan to make changes and what the ongoing charges for content updates will be.

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