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Avoid the dreaded burnout—keep your compliance team motivated

By Rebecca Wellum

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Compliance teams are not usually perceived as business enablers. When compliance comes knocking, people get nervous. In fact, in order to be successful at all, compliance professionals have to be extra conscientious that they are perceived as approachable and collaborative. Since compliance is about what must be done and navigating the gray areas of right and wrong, maintaining perceptions of approachability is never easy, even for those who are generally easygoing by nature. Given that people are happiest and most productive when they can be their authentic selves in the workplace, the immediate conflict between being authentic in our navigation between right and wrong and the need to be approachable seems almost irreconcilable on the best days. In days of crisis, this may be nearly impossible.

Ivy Exec covered the industries where people experience burnout.[1] While the compliance profession didn't specifically make the list, "Law and other careers with large workloads" did, and frankly, if that doesn't include compliance, I don't know what does. While it's clear that any person and job can be susceptible to burnout, teams that manage the company's biggest risks—human resources, compliance, and legal teams, among others—carry the burdens of dealing with complex, confidential issues affecting colleagues and the policies built by the compliance teams to protect those people. This leaves the compliance professional with very few outlets to deal with the stressors of enforcement and policy refinement. So if we can't talk about it in the workplace or at home, or at the therapist's office, who can we talk to? Often compliance people find themselves burning out in the constant pursuit of building a culture of integrity with processes that keep them from being able to fully control the outcomes or deal with the emotional burden the outcomes leave behind.