

Ethikos Volume 36, Number 2. March 26, 2022 On ethics: Teaching ethics, brick by brick

By Adam Turteltaub

Adam Turteltaub (adam.turteltaub@corporatecompliance.org) is Chief Engagement & Strategy Officer at SCCE & HCCA.

When it comes to teaching ethics in the business world, pushback is inevitable. Virtually everyone feels as if they already have a strong sense of ethics. Many add that ethics is something that they learned from their parents or religious institution, and who are you to tell them about it? And for others, ethics is just philosophizing that is esoteric or academic. Worse, many perceive it as unrelated to their roles.

Paul Fiorelli, director of the Cintas Institute for Business Ethics at Xavier University, believes there are at least two reasons for the resistance. “For one, some may think the trainers are challenging whether the participants have ethics. Second, some trainers confuse compliance or legal training with ethics training. Ethics training should be aspirational and inspirational—not just reciting a laundry list of ‘thou shalt nots’ written by lawyers, for lawyers.”

Longtime compliance leader and Society of Corporate Compliance and Ethics Academy faculty member Marjorie Doyle remembers a research scientist who, when told he was required to do mandatory ethics training, emailed her saying, “We don’t make you take chemistry and physics. Why should we have to take ethics courses?”

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