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Help your field grow: Become a compliance and ethics mentor

By Julia Masser

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The field of compliance and ethics (C&E) is growing at a substantial rate. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects 6.2% employment growth for compliance officers between 2020 and 2030.^[1] Did you know that many of these new C&E professionals—and students interested in C&E, in particular—are looking for internships and mentors?



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As a former student of Arizona State University with a bachelor of science degree in healthcare compliance and regulations, I have experienced firsthand the need for more C&E–related internships and mentors. Learning about C&E on your own can be difficult, as it requires a unique way of thinking in order to solve problems, such as learning how to navigate government websites, read mandates, and be analytical with information presented to form logical opinions. Many professionals have migrated in from other fields, and their practical knowledge can be invaluable to those who want to become part of the C&E profession.

The search for a mentor

Over the course of the last four years, I had to be very creative in learning this new area. Resources are slim, and most information can be tricky to understand due to the compliance lingo being unfamiliar. I had to seek out a mentor in order to succeed and found her by leveraging social media, where I posted that I was seeking a tutor for one of my courses: Clinical health care ethics. I connected with a mentor, Helen Avery, who had many years of experience and had worked the same jobs I was searching for—but through a very different pathway. Her practical experience gave me insight on my questions that would have never been explained through a textbook, and her shared personal experience made it easier to relate real-world problems to the field of compliance. She has been a compliance officer, teacher, consultant, and filled many other roles in the C&E profession.

After gaining a good grasp on how compliance programs worked, exactly what an audit was, and learning how ethics applies to almost every situation, I sought out an internship. I started with the Arizona Board of Osteopathic Examiners in Medicine and Surgery last year and completed a project while reporting to Executive Director Justin Bohall. The project consisted of going through regulatory discipline for osteopathic physicians, creating a database of each discipline, and studying the trend of demographics of each physician in relation to the discipline they received. I was then able to leverage this internship experience—along with the practical knowledge I could now discuss from having endless conversations with my mentor—to obtain a job as a compliance and privacy specialist before graduation.

Many students in my cohort are still unable to find employment due to their lack of experience and/or practical knowledge. If there were more opportunities readily available, it would certainly be easier for these passionate and curious students to gain experience.

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