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### Compliance Reporting Is Down; Safety, Trust and Individual Benefit Are Seen as Solutions

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By Nina Youngstrom

Because many employees are working virtually and some were hired after the shift to remote work, they may feel less of a connection to their employers and therefore less inclined to report misconduct, according to new research by Gartner, which has identified a drop in the reporting of misconduct.<sup>[1]</sup> An emphasis on safety, trust and individual benefit may help reverse this trend, according to additional interviews with employees.

In fact, organizations may want to consider “explicit guidelines for self-reporting” when employees are wrongdoers, said Chris Audet, senior director of Gartner in Washington, D.C.

Some of its findings were eye-opening in terms of perceptions about reporting. “One of the things that was very resonant in the research” was that compliance officers got feedback that employees felt speaking up was a priority for the company, “but I don’t think anyone is thinking about me,” Audet explained. Employees conveyed that “I don’t have the same connection to the organization, so the expectation that I would come forward and report and put my neck on the line without knowing the degree of transparency and that I won’t experience retaliation” may be a harder sell in a remote environment. It makes sense that organizations may have to do more to convince employees to disclose compliance concerns, Audet said.

Audet noted that reporting gives organizations a “glimpse” into their risk of misconduct. Only about 40% of risks are reported, and “in a remote and hybrid environment, the line of sight is even more broken,” he said. That was the finding from the 2021 Gartner Compliance Culture Survey. “Chief compliance and ethics officers have expressed concern about lower misconduct reporting in the shift to a more virtual and hybrid workforce, and a comparison of historical Gartner benchmarks alongside our most recent data confirms these suspicions,” according to the report on the survey. The compliance reporting rate of observed misconduct declined from 41% in 2018 to 2019 to 36% in 2020 to 2021.

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