

## CEP Magazine – March 2023



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### How compliance professionals can achieve more balance

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By Vicente Dias Borges, CCEP-I, MBA

How do you stop going through the motions and start contributing to your compliance program's improvement?

Let's talk straight, compliance professionals. You probably chose this career because you want to do what is right; you want to protect your company and avoid scandal; and you don't want the attitudes of your company's employees to raise questions from the public.

Keeping the waters calm requires a lot of work, commitment, patience, and the ability to anticipate problems. But at the same time, there is a typical day-to-day routine:

- Answering questions about the best course of action
- Responding to emails about internal projects
- Assessing the impact of a discrediting news story on leadership
- Managing the process controls that your area created
- Reviewing requests for proposals, questionnaires, and hotline reports

Amid so many demands, it feels like you are paddling against a strong current with a rope holding your boat to the pier. You also need to manage all the other demands with increasingly scarce and controlled resources. How much time remains for the team to row to improve the company's compliance program—and leave time to differentiate your compliance program concerning the market? There's often the feeling that this is a bill that didn't add up. Program improvement is what really counts in the end, and because the bar is always being raised, your program needs to keep up.

To deal with all of this, you must strike a balance, which means you must better plan your day-to-day activities. There will be exceptions, of course, but be patient—it's part of the game. No matter how small, this planning can result in targets at the end of the year that will show real program improvement. And it didn't improve just because some questionnaire asked you to do something you don't do; it improved because you devoted time to improving your company's program in ways you believed could make a difference.

#### How do I start?

Here are just a few ideas for how you can plan and organize your time to achieve better results:

- Limit the daily or weekly time you will be involved in day-to-day projects. Just make sure this doesn't

compromise the final delivery deadline and create risks for the company.

- Learn to let go. This can be a tough habit to break, but you don't always need to see every activity through until it's over.
- Make time to think about your program. Set a time in your daily or weekly routine. Get away from your desk or the room you work in at home. Have some coffee or breathe in some fresh air. Disconnect from what you are doing to let yourself think about different, novel things.
- Read a new article or listen to a podcast on your subject of interest.
- Write down your ideas and bring them to a team meeting.
- If you are a manager, encourage reflection from your team. But be careful not to ask your team to do things that will end up taking more of their time if it's not cost-effective.
- Avoid hasty and ineffective demands that gradually exhaust the team's spirit.
- Talk to employees who do the work. A business administration professor of mine once made a comment that I never forgot: The greatest source of knowledge in a company lies with those who work on the factory floor. Go talk to them! Most of the time, they can tell you the pros and cons of a claim. You will be surprised by the things they tell you.

By balancing your activities, you will find that even amid the responsibilities that consume most of your daily time, you can achieve efficient results in your compliance program if you reserve a little time to plan for yourself. At the end of the year, you may conclude that the bill does add up!

## Takeaways

- Share your ideas and insights with your team; a collaborative effort will improve results.
- Always pay attention to the opinions of those who work on the factory floor.
- Be careful with the demands you place on your team. Some things may not be worth it, and they can be avoided with a little more analysis and less impulsivity. Compliance officer time is precious!
- Plan for yourself. This takes discipline and perseverance, but in the end, it pays off.
- Be balanced. You will be able to do more things with more quality. And as a result, your compliance program will mature.

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