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Compliance professionals make natural leaders

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It's important, on occasion, to take a step back and consider ourselves as leaders. We exist in a world where the way we engage with each other is ever-changing, so it's important to challenge ourselves to assess and enhance our individual leadership and communication styles, courtesy, and proactivity.

The marks of a good leader

Most of us know good leaders when we see them. They listen attentively, share strategies for success, redirect when appropriate, and encourage us to exceed expectations. They challenge their teams to speak up and seek out more efficient or dynamic ways of doing things and to share what details they can to keep communication flowing.

Each one of us has the capacity to become a good leader by sharing our subject-matter expertise, serving as a sounding board for team members, or driving change within our departments.

An October 2019 article^[1] mentioned Amazon's Leadership Principles.^[2] Of the 14 items listed, these few key points resonate strongly with compliance teams:

- **Customer obsession:** A compliance department needs to look at the customer and lead from there. What does the customer expect, and how do we best deliver it? Customers can be external business partners and clients, but they can also be stakeholders, like department and corporate leaders.
- **Ownership:** Leaders are accountable; they own their mistakes as well as their successes. They may delegate and redirect in some instances, but a good leader will not say "that's not my job" or "that's not my fault."
- **Invent and simplify:** In 2020, doing things as they always have been done is no longer sufficient. We need to challenge our teams to make things more efficient and productive, and we need to source new solutions.
- **Learn and be curious:** We can help our compliance teams learn by asking them questions, seeking answers, attending webinars, and sharing takeaways with the group. We need to walk around, check in with other areas of compliance, and see what we can offer and what we can learn from others.
- **Insist on the highest standards:** Someone asked me recently, "Do you think my standards are too high?" My response was a quick "no," followed by, "Never lower your standards for anyone else, but know that your standards are not everyone else's standards." As leaders, our task is to help teammates set their own standards and then challenge them to raise that bar.
- **Have a backbone; disagree and commit:** If we don't agree with something, we need to say something—address the hurdles, get results, and find success.

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