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Why you need a compliance PMO

By Lindsay Bernsen Wardlaw

Program management offices (PMOs) are usually the domain of engineering and other specialties where efficiency and planning come at a premium; however, they can also add considerable value to your compliance organization.

As a compliance leader, you likely have the technical expertise necessary to implement your strategic plan for your organization's compliance program. In fact, you probably did this kind of implementation earlier in your career, at least some of the time—drafting policies and procedures, work instructions, surveys, and other informational resources; training on them; and auditing or otherwise monitoring the results. Now, however, when trying to manage the whole program, you do not have the time to handle each of these tasks yourself, especially while also juggling daily inquiries and crises.

You have likely empowered some of your team members to work on issues of programmatic importance as a growth opportunity or part-time responsibility. Some tasks, like auditing and informal monitoring, may even be the full-time responsibility of one or more team members. But do you have a single individual—a deputy or trusted team member—who is well-positioned to see how the results of each of these efforts fit into your master plan? Do you have a partner who can help ensure your program evolves cohesively over time?

Maybe you are interested in reviewing the lessons learned from each close call or active mishap to create a systemic solution. Perhaps you would like to use the results of your audits to consider updates to your policies, procedures, and training materials that reduce the likelihood of nonconforming behavior in the future or to identify when a particular process simply cannot work the way you initially envisioned. Or maybe you would like to spend more time talking with your colleagues in other functions to see where and how they most need your help with risk mitigation, or, conversely, where and how your efforts could be softened to avoid unnecessary costs to the business.

Whatever your passion or particular perspective on how best to lead a program, you have probably found there simply is not enough time to implement all of the best practices that you have read about, and there is nobody else with your bird's-eye view of the program to help you get it done and keep it all straight.

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