![COSMOS - Navigate the Compliance Universe]

Compliance Today - September 2023

Kristi F. Lewis
(kristi.lewis@covenantpp.com, linkedin.com/in/kristi-faulkner-lewis-esq-chc-chpc-9b724921/, instagram.com/kfaulkner279/) is Vice President, Corporate Compliance Officer at Covenant Physician Partners Inc., Nashville, TN.

Chris B. Dendy
(chris.dendy@covenantpp.com, linkedin.com/in/chris-dendy-ed-d-chpc-chc-8810b4b/) is Director of Privacy at Covenant Physician Partners, Nashville, TN.

An engaging compliance program on a budget: It is possible

by Kristi F. Lewis, Esq., CHC, CHPC; and Chris B. Dendy, EdD, CHC, CHPC

In today's economic climate, many departments are being asked to do more with fewer resources. The compliance department is no exception. Those resources could be human, technological, or material. Creating an engaging compliance program may sound like a daunting task with less money to go around.

This article will explore employee engagement and lay the groundwork for employing cost-effective resources and strategies to help you create an engaging compliance program for your workforce. Please note that no single "magic bullet" or one-size-fits-all solution exists. Every organization is different and has varying needs; however, strategies can be applied to organizations of all sizes and budgets.

Exploring employee engagement

Engagement looks different for everyone; however, there are a few key indicators that serve as a baseline for an engaged workforce. According to Gallup, engaged employees are highly involved and enthusiastic about their work and workplace.[1] To further expand on Gallup's observation, highly involved employees are motivated, satisfied, productive, and innovative. Accordingly, enthusiastic employees are happy, positive, and loyal. Conversely, it could be argued that disengaged employees are highly uninvolved and unmotivated in their respective roles.

Engaging employees is a challenging prospect, as a variety of factors impact one's degree of involvement and motivation in their work and workplace. As a compliance professional, the reality is that much of your influence regarding an employee's overall engagement level may be wholly out of your control or, at best, limited. That aside, you absolutely have control over how your compliance program is perceived and received by employees throughout your organization. The trick is to be intentional in how you brand your compliance program. Remember, complete engagement does not occur overnight.

Wethrive.net identified poor communication, training, and lack of mentorship and collaboration as common barriers to workforce engagement.[2] It just so happens that communication, training, and collaboration are hallmarks of the compliance discipline. Enhance the quality of the communication from your compliance department by ensuring it is both timely and relevant. For example, in your communication, always make it a

point to answer the question "Why does this matter?" to your audience. This simple act will increase your audience's buy-in to your message. Your ability to answer the age-old question of "What's in it for me?" will further bolster the credibility of your communication. Training is no different. Focusing on the needs of your learners will enhance the quality of your training content significantly. Furthermore, take the time to ensure your training is not only designed with the learning experience in mind but that it is also visually appealing.

Collaboration is another area where engagement in your compliance program can thrive. Imagine a world where employees outside of the compliance team have "skin in the game" when it comes to compliance. For instance, create a community of practice where like-minded individuals from across the organization come together regularly (weekly, monthly, or quarterly) to discuss compliance issues or explore different perspectives on the compliance function.

Branding your compliance department is another significant ingredient to sustaining an engaging compliance program. According to Forbes, "internal branding creates a strong, positive image or identity for a company or department."[3] Consider the image you want your organization to possess of compliance and take the necessary steps to build and maintain that image. This could mean developing a compliance-centric mission and vision statement and actively managing how your compliance department is perceived. Your reputation is a vital component of your brand. For example, think about how you and your team respond to inquiries or requests. Are you and your team kind, responsive, and accurate? If not, the perception your workforce has of you and your compliance team may suffer.

Finally, take steps to ensure compliance is an active and integral part of your organization's culture. This means sharing your vision with all stakeholders, gaining buy-in from all levels of the organization, and consistently delivering on your promises. The bottom line is that engaging employees takes time and effort. Be patient and remain consistent in your approach—it will pay off in the end.