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### Be heard! Getting the top to deliver your message

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By Amii Barnard-Bahn, JD, CCEP, CCEP-I

**Amii Barnard-Bahn** ([amii@barnardbahn.com](mailto:amii@barnardbahn.com)) is Managing Director at Barnard-Bahn Coaching & Consulting, based in San Francisco, California, USA.

- [linkedin.com/in/amiibarnardbahn/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/amiibarnardbahn/)

On a good day, it can be challenging to get leaders to speak with a unified voice around doing the right thing—in other words, running an ethical business that is productively serving its customers, shareholders, and employees. In times like these, when world events like a global pandemic and racial injustice are on everyone's mind, it is anything but business as usual. In a crisis, organizations may have a tendency to fall into fear-based decision-making and make a push for profit at all costs, which can lead to brand damage, low morale, key talent departures, and regulatory enforcement when business goes bad.

How does this change or put a spotlight on the work of a compliance officer, when employees are concerned for their safety in every way, industries are undergoing exponential change, layoffs and furloughs are becoming routine, and we can't even physically get together for a meeting to connect?

The stewardship, clear thinking, and insight that compliance and ethics brings to the CEO has never been more critical. We need to react quickly and thoughtfully. Here are five things you can do right now to equip yourself in influencing the tone at the top, on good days and bad.

### Exert your influence in the C-suite

Does your leadership team listen to you? Are you asked to advise on relevant key decisions? The executive team needs to view you as an equal business partner critical to the organization's success.

To exert influence, you must first build strong relationships with your key stakeholders; your boss, peers, team, and core internal customers are critical to your ability to influence actions, investments, and messaging across your organization. Based on behavioral research, you must connect and listen to other people *before* they will listen to you.<sup>[1]</sup> People won't be influenced by you if they don't feel you are a partner.

Conduct a quick self-audit of your relationships to assess whether you have a strong influence network and evaluate how much influence you currently have in your role:

1. Write down the top 10 people that help you get your job done. Grade each person from one to five on how much you depend on them. If someone is critical to you getting your job done, give them a high score. Think broadly; include factors such as mentoring, daily work support, moral support, and organizational power/authority.
  2. Grade each person on a scale of one to five: How would they rate you on the same factors? How much do they depend on you (give it your best guess)?
  3. Audit your results. Are there any red flags? For example, **are you taking more value from your key network**
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than you're giving (i.e., did you rate them more highly than they would rate you)? Is your list diversified, or is it overly concentrated in one department, geographic location, or team?

Based on your results, consider whether you need to improve your influence scores. Where you're out of balance, consider meeting more frequently one-on-one to learn about and help others reach their goals.

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