

ethikos Volume 34, Number 9. September 01, 2020

On ethics: Chuck Gallagher

Chuck Gallagher, Business Ethics Expert, Consultant, Keynote Speaker, and Author located in Greenville, SC.

An interview by **Adam Turteltaub**, CHC, CCEP, Vice President of Strategic Initiatives & International Programs, SCCE & HCCA.

AT: Compliance and ethics professionals spend a lot of time encouraging people to make the right choices. You made the wrong choice. Can you share your mistake?

CG: Sure. As a young tax partner in a Certified Public Accountant firm, I had testified before Congress, written articles in national magazines, and taught continuing professional course in 30 states. The career was great. However, I was head over heels in debt, and during a moment of stress, I embezzled funds from a client's trust fund. Need led to opportunity, and the human experience is such that if you can rationalize behavior, you can sleep at night. I rationalized that I'd "borrowed" the money. With bonus money in hand, I repaid what I stole four months later. Then, I did it again. Repaid it again. But that set up a pattern of behavior that ultimately became what I'm ashamed to say was a Ponzi scheme.

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