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Do Employees Know the CCO? Culture Surveys Reveal That and More

By Nina Youngstrom

On a recent culture survey at TAMKO Building Products in Joplin, Missouri, employees were asked if they know who the compliance officer is.

“87% knew who I was, but almost 13% never heard of me after I had been there 12 years and done live training every year,” said Chief Compliance and Ethics Officer Art Weiss. “Overall, it’s not a bad number,” but it’s something to work on. Having that feedback and other insights into employees’ perceptions about compliance and the organization’s culture will help compliance professionals improve their programs.

Culture assessments are also a good idea if organizations have been targeted for a possible enforcement action or “have a compliance problem of some sort,” he said Sept. 14 at the Compliance & Ethics Institute sponsored by the Society of Corporate Compliance and Ethics.^[1] It’s indispensable to know what employees will say if government agents show up. “You don’t want to be blindsided,” Weiss said. “It’s probably too late to avoid the investigation, but you want to minimize the shock and awe. When government investigators or attorneys survey your employees, they will ask about your culture and your compliance program, and whether employees feel comfortable reporting things and whether they fear retaliation and think that managers act with integrity—all things designed to find out if the compliance program [is effective].”

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