

Real Life. Real Fun. – Compliance and Ethics in Action

Colorado Housing and Finance Authority
Management Innovation: Internal Operations

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Typically, when you think of a Compliance Department, you don't think of words like "fun" or "innovative."

Mandatory compliance training can be boring and repetitive. Year after year, staff sit in the same class and listen to the Compliance Department cover the same material. It can be difficult to keep the audience engaged and ensure they retain the information they need to know.

There are four primary types of learners—visual, auditory, reading/writing, and kinesthetic—and yet the Compliance Department typically provide adult learners with one medium: a one-hour lecture with a PowerPoint presentation. Knowing this, the Compliance Department wanted to make the training more impactful, memorable, and engaging to everyone. So, a crazy decision was made - CHFA ditched the mandatory one-hour class completely and let staff take the lead!

In 2019, the Compliance Department launched the "Real Life. Real Fun." Ethics and Compliance Campaign. The campaign consisted of four interactive games played throughout the year, with a gift card being awarded to a randomly selected winner each time. These games gave staff an opportunity to get hands-on, think creatively about ethics and compliance, and have some fun. Instead of listening to someone talk about compliance and ethics for one hour once a year, our staff were engaged in different ways throughout the whole year.

Each game had a "real life" element to help staff understand the roles compliance and ethics play in their work life and a "real fun" element to help them learn values in an active way.

Innovative

The project was innovative by taking the traditional style of learning and throwing it out the window, moving from a one-hour class to four hands-on games, one happening each quarter. The Senior Compliance Analyst worked with members of her team and the Marketing and Community Relations team to develop brand new content for engagement. They also were able to align the four activities—Photo Competition, Coloring Book, Crossword Puzzle, and Art Show—with the four longstanding tenets of Compliance at CHFA: See It, Own It, Solve It, Do It; reinforcing the established compliance and ethics culture.

Replicable

All of these games could be easily recreated, and the [communication/marketing plan \(Visual Aid 1\)](#) shows the exact timeline and steps taken that can be replicated to implement a similar year-long campaign. Most of the printing and design was done in-house, and if an outside printing budget is not available, the final art show elements (the only pieces printed out-of-house) could be replicated in a different, but just as compelling, way. Prizes were awarded for each game/activity, but the cost was low, at a \$25 gift card per game. There was an additional cost for treats and refreshments at the Art Show and "See It, Own It, Solve It, Do It" tacks for everyone's desk, but those were optional, made available because of a Compliance Department's less-than-\$500 budget allocation.

Content was developed by cross-divisional teamwork of the Compliance Department and the Marketing and Community Relations Division. The key element for those who wish to replicate was the mix of the "real life" element, showing staff members how the philosophies and policies apply to their daily life—

the “real fun” was a bonus that helped them retain the information. CHFA hopes that others will be inspired to transform training, recognize that everyone learns differently, and encourage staff to truly engage with training material and think about how it applies to them in real life.

Engage target audiences

In this case, the target audience was all CHFA staff, onsite and remote. To reach offsite staff, the team mailed out pieces prior to each engagement and gave them time to scan and email or mail them back in so they could participate. For the end-of-year Art Show, a staff member walked them through the exhibit via Skype so they could participate. Staff readily participated and the effects were really felt at the Art Show, when staff had to answer questions about how ethical they are in real life, often generating conversations during and after they left the event.

As you can see from the Photo Competition (Visual Aid 2), staff were really engaged and having fun, much more so than they would have been listening to a lecture. These activities “brought it home” for staff, making them translate learning material into real-life examples of how it applies to their job functions.

Achieve measurable results

The direct way the Compliance Department measured results was by counting the number of submissions received for each game/activity. The team felt this was a deeper assessment that who is present in a class—answers were submitted by those staff who took time out of their day to engage and really think about the topics.

Provide benefits that outweigh costs

Value was assessed by comparing the possible cost of noncompliance, which can be very high (why Compliance and Ethics training is a mandatory class at most institutions) with the total cost for the campaign, which was \$5,000. The real benefit was staff engagement, excitement, and conversations the activities generated. Instead of a one-time training, compliance and ethics education happened multiple times through different ways, making it more memorable for staff.

Demonstrate effective use of resources

Cross-divisional collaboration between the Compliance Department and the Marketing and Communications Division were the resources used during the campaign. Using in-house design, printing, and communication services allowed CHFA to deliver efficiently and effectively to all staff. Proper planning helped the team stay on-task and on-time, offering fun compliance resources to an engaged staff.

Achieve strategic objectives

At CHFA, staff are required to take 40 hours of training, including four mandatory classes, of which Compliance and Ethics is one. So, you could say the Compliance Department has always achieved this strategic objective. However, the team asked themselves—is everyone retaining what they have been presented? That became the team’s strategic objective.

As stated above, the best way to make sure someone remembers a lesson is to give them hands-on experience applied to real-life instances—and a little fun never hurts! The “Real Life. Real Fun.” campaign exemplified this philosophy by incorporating a photo competition, a coloring book, a crossword puzzle, and an interactive art exhibit.

1. Own It: Ethics and Compliance Photo Competition

What does ethical and compliant behavior at work look like? Is it doing the right thing, being transparent, helping a coworker, taking responsibility for your actions, following the rules, or finding solutions? CHFA asked staff to show examples! Participants took photos illustrating ethical or compliant behavior at work and provided a caption explaining the ethical or compliant behavior shown. This also follows the CHFA Compliance and Ethics tenet of “Own It:” If you see something that is noncompliant or unethical, own the solution. See [Visual Aid 2](#) for the announcement email and sample submissions.

2. Do It: Ethics and Compliance Coloring Book

Staff learned more by completing the Ethics and Compliance Coloring Book. Each staff member received a staff-created coloring book and a set of colored pencils. Each page of the book illustrated a key point from an important policy, such as the importance of properly destroying documents with sensitive information as required by CHFA’s Data Classification, Protection, and Disposal Policy. Staff then colored their favorite page and posted their work in the designated “gallery” in the employee break area. This related to the “Do It” tenet: Once you figure out how to solve a noncompliant/unethical issue, put the solution in action. See [Visual Aid 3](#) for the announcement email and [Visual Aid 4](#) for the coloring book.

3. Solve It: Ethics and Compliance Crossword Puzzle

To solve the Ethics and Compliance Crossword Puzzle, staff had to know the correct answers to fill in, often with only one or two letters provided. The “questions” were taken directly from past trainings. After the contest, the correct answers were sent out, offering another chance for staff to learn. This related to the “Solve It” tenet: If you encounter a unethical or noncompliant issue, own it, then help find a solution to remedy the issue. See [Visual Aid 5](#) for the email announcement and [Visual Aid 6](#) for the crossword puzzle.

4. See It: The interactive Ethics Art Exhibit

For the grand finale, there was an interactive art exhibit encouraging staff to think about their own ethical behavior, with each of the eight stations asking an ethics-related question that staff had to answer with action. With real-life examples of ethical dilemmas, staff had to reflect on decisions they’ve made and think about factors that impact your decision-making process. Inspired by the works of Yayoi Kusama, staff displayed their answers with dots, creating a collaborative masterpiece that showing ethical trends of our staff. This related to the “See It” tenet: Look for areas that you can improve upon. Ask for feedback and learn from your mistakes. “See it” is about seeing the problems even when it would be easier to look the other way. See [Visual Aid 7](#) for the email announcement and [Visual Aid 8](#) art exhibit station images, before and after the event.