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# Business ethics vs. Save the World ethics

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There are many business ethics professionals who are a great asset to the compliance and ethics program movement in this country. However in their midst are some "business ethics professionals" that are completely unfocused. One of the many frustrations I have with the extraordinarily vague world of ethics is that some ethics professionals use ethics to push their personal agenda. The problem is, it dilutes and distracts our efforts to solve the most serious legal and business ethics issues. That sucking sound you hear is the limited resources for compliance and ethics programs going up in the smoke of some ethics zealot's personal agenda.



Snell

Generally speaking, "Business ethics" is, don't lie, cheat, steal, break the rule of law, be unfair in your business dealing, etc. However, "Save the world ethics" is anything you want to have happen in society. Ethics zealots are hijacking the compliance and ethics movement to promote their personal cause. Here are five discussion thread topics from an ethics professionals' *LinkedIn* group: Create a guaranteed citizen's income, advancing social cohesion, political lobbying, legalizing drugs, and capital punishment.

Not a single one of these is a compliance and ethics program issue. They have nothing to do with preventing, finding, and fixing regulatory

or business ethics infractions. Another post on this ethics professionals' *LinkedIn* group stated, "...of the ten largest federal corporate criminal fines ever, five were from last year alone." The business community is under siege. Everyone is disappointed in business.

**We need to stay focused. These distractions are what got us into the legal and business ethics mess our businesses are in now.**

Ethics zealots are saying they are the be-all and end-all solution. They say, "If we build an ethical culture then all our problems will be solved." Some leadership believe this claim and they are distracted from implementing an effective compliance program. The Compliance and Ethics Department should prevent, find, and fix regulatory and "business ethics" infractions in our organizations. We need to stay focused. These distractions are what got us into the legal and business ethics mess our businesses are in now.

The Compliance and Ethics Department is often underfunded relative to the size of the battle. You would think we would want to use our limited compliance and ethics resources to ensure our company follows the rule of law and behaves ethically in its business dealings before we move onto issues such as social cohesion, whatever that is. ☐