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by Roy Snell, CHC, CCEP-F

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I would like to thank Chelsea Steinborn, Masters student, for giving me this idea.

Just for fun, I used recognizable characters to describe the attributes of various types of compliance officers.



Snell

Clint Eastwood as Dirty Harry

Policing an organization can be problematic. Being firm is important, but we have to pick our battles. Effective compliance officers help their colleagues change their business processes rather than staring them down when they are resistant and saying, "Make my day."

Chicken Little

Some folks run up and down the hall with their hair on fire every time there is a little problem. We need to stand tall when there is a big issue and fight it to the end. But we also need to let as much go as we can. We need to pick our battles.

Albert Einstein

Some folks sit in their office writing reports, policies, compliance plans, audit plans, and audit reports. They edit and re-edit every document that exists. We need to get out from behind our desk and prevent, find, and fix regulatory and ethics issues. Sometimes you need to think before you act, but thinking all the time and taking very little action is problematic too.

Don Knotts as Barney Fife

This reference is a little old, but this guy played characters on TV that were so nervous they could not give directions to the bathroom without having a nervous breakdown. We have a tough job. We have to change things that people occasionally don't want to change. We need to have the courage of our convictions. I always double checked my work with experts in the field so that when I went into a difficult discussion I felt confident.

This will get me into trouble, but...

Pope Francis

This will get me into trouble, but I wanted to choose the world's greatest leader to represent the ideal compliance officer. Rather than pick my idea of the world's greatest leader and get criticized, I asked the Internet. Forbes was the first list I saw, and Pope Francis was at the top of their list.

Whatever your beliefs are, Pope Francis is a great metaphor for compliance. Whatever your organizations principles, regulations, and ethical expectations are, you cannot go wrong by looking at the Pope as a great example of an effective compliance officer. He sticks hard and fast to right and wrong, as his organization defines it. He stands tall on the issues that are important, but is supportive of people who are trying but falling a little short. He figures out where people are and tries to get them going in the right direction. He is firm, but he is positive as often as he can be. These are all qualities of a good compliance officer. ☺