

HCCA COMPLIANCE TODAY

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Letter from the CEO

Roy Snell



Do the right thing, even if it hurts

There are a lot of catchy phrases, on compliance posters and at the bottom of e-mails, which are used by companies to motivate people. Many of them are in the form of flowery prose. There is a more direct approach. There is a phrase that is more frank and gets to the heart of the issue: "Do the right thing, even if it hurts." It's not sexy, but it may be more effective.

I was describing HCCA to a prospective employee this week. I was telling her that in our office we try to do the right thing, even if it hurts. I was speaking more broadly than just regulatory compliance. I was referring to running an office. However, I think the phrase "Do the right thing, even if it hurts" applies to regulatory compliance.

What I am getting at is that people are often more effective at accomplishing a task or doing what you want if you are more honest with them. That is why I like the direct approach. It tells them we expect them to succeed, even if there is pain. When I am asking someone to do something, I want them to have proper warning. If they know what to expect, I think they may be more willing to push through barriers. Ultimately, they need to know that pain is not an excuse.

A lot of problems that are not resolved are not resolved because someone is avoiding pain. This is true particularly for those who observe wrongdoing. In congressional hearings involving corporate wrongdoing, there are often a number of people who testify that they knew about the problem. They often have an explanation about why they didn't get involved in fixing the problem. The reasons people give have a common theme, the root of which is this: it would have been painful to deal with the issue. The root cause is often masked.

Many of the excuses I have heard are often technical. "It wasn't my job" is a classic. Others say they tried, but when you look into it, their attempt was feeble. At the first point of resistance, they throw their hands up and say, "I tried." What many of these people are really saying is that it hurts. Doing the right thing often hurts.

We should consider letting them know, up front, that doing the right thing may hurt. We should let them know that, even though it hurts, we expect them to do it anyway. We should consider telling people, "Do the right thing, even if it hurts."

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