

**HCCA**



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# COMPLIANCE TODAY

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**Meet  
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# Letter from the CEO

We all work in a tough job. I say “we” because I still consider myself one of “us.” I was a compliance officer for three years prior to becoming CEO of HCCA. Some of you may have never had a problem or challenge in your job as a compliance officer; this article is more for those that have had some adversity.

## Compliance is a tough job

As a compliance officer I received outstanding support from our leadership. I couldn't imagine any better support but even with the support the job was still tough. Some of you don't even have that. Despite the support, I still experienced the verbal tongue-lashing dished out by the physicians who thought we were going too far. I was there for the endless and complex audits. I was there when the interpretation of a regulation came down to splitting hairs, and if we leaned just an inch to the left or right it would make a huge difference in the refunding of money or disclosing of the problem. I was there for the 60 physician training sessions at which, without fail, we would be told, “This is a waste of time. Why don't you use this time to fly to DC and tell the regulators to jump in a lake.”

I once received an internal mailing envelope with a crumpled piece of paper. I unrolled it and discovered it was the compliance training session attestation form from one of our physicians. Now that I think about it, I should have written a “thank you” note to the physician who sent the attestation form, crumpled it up, and sent it back.

## Roy Snell

I would often try to lighten up the mood, while helping my staff understand how important our work was. From time to time I would tell my staff, “We are going to do what ever it takes to set up the best compliance program in the country even if we have to lie, cheat or steal—whatever it takes to get our job done. My sense of humor would sometimes get me into trouble. I stopped making this statement after my staff told a visiting dignitary that “Roy says we can lie, cheat and steal.” Yes, they had a great sense of humor too. I changed my comment to, “Everything BUT lie, cheat or steal.”

There is a great deal of turnover and burnout in our profession. As CEO of the HCCA, I get calls each month from people who describe really bad situations. I try to help with positive comments, but I often think they should just move on.

I used to worry about the next external investigation by the Department of Justice or Office of Inspector General—how I would be found incompetent or guilty of something and go down with the ship. I actually worried about being prosecuted for not having done enough. I worried that I'd lose all my savings defending myself. At one point I actually worried about retaliation from one of the physicians we investigated. I share all this with you in the hope that it may help someone understand that they are not alone in facing this challenge. I want people to understand that they may be taking

their worrying a little too far (as I did).

I look back on this experience as one in which I learned and ma-

tured. I learned and matured precisely because it was so hard. You could get an easier job but you would not learn as much. I also want to tell you that sleepless nights and constant worry are a waste of time and energy. In 10 years I have only seen the investigators point their finger at the compliance officer on one occasion. Worrying that you are going to be seen as a part of the problem is just not based on facts.

You are doing the right thing. You are fighting the good fight. You are maturing and learning. Please excuse me for going over the top here. Our society could not function without rules. Capitalism could not function without rules. Some countries' economies are in shambles, in part, because they can lie, cheat, and steal. Effort is not rewarded. Entrepreneurial drive and hard work are not rewarded.

Rules are no good if they are not enforced. Our very livelihood is dependant, in part, on your effort. Yes, the job is hard. It just so happens that reward and challenge go together—like apple pie and ice cream, or motherhood, or baseball. The work you do contributes to the reason that the United States is one of the most desirable countries in the world in which to live. You are an important contributor to our ethical culture and one of the reasons we, as a nation, enjoy such a high standard of living. Over the top? I don't think so at all. You are to be commended and you should feel damn good about that. ■

