

HCCA



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## COMPLIANCE INSTITUTE

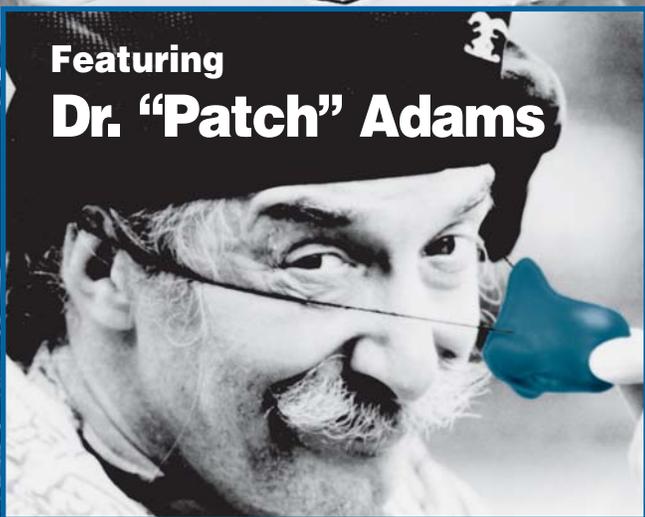
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Featuring  
**Dr. "Patch" Adams**



# Letter from the CEO

Roy Snell

**It Aint Over  
'til it's Over** I appreciate the compliments on the articles I write for **Compliance Today**.

However, I will let you in on a little secret; quite often I do not know the point of the article when I start. I started this article on the Presidential election (it is the morning of November 2, 2004.) Luckily I came to my senses. Even when I have a point at the start of an article, I do not have the same point at the end. Like a college student, I go in with one major and come out with another. Oddly enough, I would argue that that is a good trait for a compliance professional.

Don't go in to an investigation with a strong feeling about the outcome. You can be leaning one way or another but you should follow your nose. You can be determined to do what's right while being flexible.

I read Steven King novels to relax. This worries my colleagues. I tell them that it's all relative. Relative to being a compliance officer, or CEO of the Health Care Compliance Association, Steven King novels are child's play. Compliance is much more terrifying than King. In fact King should write a story about a compliance professional doing an investigation. Oh the humanity!

I just finished reading King's "Dark Tower" series; seven books, each 700 - 800 pages. It took 20 years for King to write the series. It was about a guy named Roland searching for a place called the Dark Tower. His readers were very disappointed that Roland did not get to the Dark Tower by the end of the first book. They were mad when the second book ended with no Dark Tower. By the 5th book King was getting death threats. "Finish the story or die." It sounds like a compliance officer's life, "Get to the right answer now, or die."

One elderly woman with terminal cancer pleaded with King to tell her how the story ended before she died. Many of you would be surprised to know that King is a very nice guy. He

was crushed to have to tell the woman he didn't know. That is a good trait for a compliance professional. You should have a mission. You should have a feel for where you are going. But you should keep your hands *Lightly* on the wheel and always be willing to turn.



When you set out to resolve a dispute or correct a problem, you should be willing to let the people involved in the investigation change your mind. You should listen intently. You should assume that they may be correct. You should be willing to look at anything to be sure you completely understand all of the facts. Of course you should never intentionally do the wrong thing. Never give up. Never be intimidated. Be wary of delaying tactics. Do not ignore or twist the regulations. Get expert advice. However, it does help to be open-minded. You are not there necessarily to determine the outcome but to facilitate a process that gets to the right outcome. Bringing people along is as important as getting to the correct answer. Being open is a key to bringing people along.

Good creative writers can't force a story. King told the dying woman that he had no idea how the story would end. Like you, he was under great pressure. He was accused of milking the story for more money. He was accused of holding out. But he had no choice because the creative writing process works best when it is not forced, rushed, or concluded for the sake of efficiency. Compliance is most effective when you let the process play out.

I just received a two-page email from a woman who was fired for being a zealot. She was accused of being inflexible. She quoted an article that I wrote about how some compliance professionals trying to be every one's friend. My article said that the state of health care regulatory compliance is abysmal because everybody in charge of regulatory compliance for the last 20 years wanted to tell leadership what they wanted to hear. Health care is a wreck in many other ways because we are pandering to those who insist on being pandered to. We can't pander any more but that doesn't mean we have to be iron fisted.

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You can avoid pandering and yet listen.  
You can be strong without entrenchment.  
You can put your arm around a powerful leader who is heading in the wrong direction, smile and say you can't do that. The articulate compliance professional works the middle. Listen, and teach. Be flexible and strong. If it sounds impossible it's because it is indeed difficult. Great people are identified as great because they do what few others can do. This is one of the most challenging jobs there is, however it can be done. I know, because I know people who can get it done. ■



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