

Corporate Compliance and Ethics Week—What’s it all about?

A short history

The “official” Corporate Compliance and Ethics Week was first observed in 2005 as an event that could assist members of HCCA and SCCE with the need to educate staff on the importance of compliance and ethics. But the event’s roots actually go back to 2002, when two HCCA members, Gene DeLaddy and Cheryl Atkinson, wrote an article for *Compliance Today* telling others about an awareness program at their facility. That event was called Compliance Awareness Week, and it was celebrated at the Carolinas HealthCare System in Charlotte, North Carolina.



The first National Corporate Compliance and Ethics Week was launched May 22-28, 2005. This year will be the 10th annual Corporate Compliance and Ethics Week celebration. HCCA and SCCE have always co-sponsored the event, and early on, took steps to sponsor a resolution in the U.S. Senate. That resolution would have allowed a National Corporate Compliance and Ethics week to be officially recognized by Congress. Unfortunately, the senators who were shepherding the proposed resolution left office before it made its way through. But by that time, Corporate Compliance and Ethics Week had taken hold among members of both HCCA and SCCE, and compliance professionals across the country. In the early years, the event was celebrated during the last full week of May. It was later moved to the first full week of May to avoid Memorial Day.

Why celebrate?

Corporate Compliance and Ethics Week offers a great opportunity to shine a spotlight on the importance of compliance and ethics at your organization. By having a designated week, you and your compliance staff can build awareness in ways that reinforce not just specific rules and regulations, but an overall culture of compliance. Using the “hook” of Corporate Compliance and Ethics Week, you can emphasize your overall message in several different ways.



Learn how to capitalize on this annual celebration with helpful tools from HCCA and SCCE.

The importance of employee education is emphasized by the U.S. Federal Sentencing Guidelines' seven elements of an effective compliance and ethics program. The education element requires that steps be taken so all employees know and understand the compliance and ethics standards that they are expected to meet.

With a week-long celebration of compliance and ethics, you have a great opportunity to introduce and reinforce your chosen themes. Your plans will rely in part on your organization's specific needs, but some basic goals may include:

- **Awareness** – of the Code of Conduct, relevant laws/regulations, hotlines and other reporting methods, the organization's compliance and ethics staff, etc.
- **Recognition** – of training completion, compliance and ethics successes, etc.
- **Reinforcement** – of the culture of compliance for which the organization strives.

Strategies and tactics

Awareness. To get employees thinking more about compliance and ethics, repeated exposure is key. Posters and banners with simple messages, broadcast emails, screen-savers, table tents in break rooms, articles in employee newsletters – the more places, the better. Maybe a collection of simple compliance puzzles or challenges can be emailed out each day, and winners announced at the end of each day. Maybe a central kiosk can be used to promote compliance messages. Maybe an employee intranet can be “taken over” for the week to push out multiple messages. And of course, a variety of events can be planned to bring these messages to life.

Recognition. Some organizations use the week to launch a new compliance training program. Maybe this is a week to incorporate live training so that employees have a chance to meet the compliance and ethics staff. During the week, perhaps a “leaderboard” can be initiated to track the completion of each training module by each department, division, etc. If training programs are continuous throughout the year, perhaps one event during the week can give special recognition for the department with the highest percentage of completions. Other events might give recognition to departments that achieve specific compliance successes.

Reinforcement. To reinforce that all levels of the organization support a culture of compliance, you should find ways to get executive staff visibly involved. Maybe the CEO can send out a special message to employees; maybe key company officials can attend a highly visible event. If you choose to highlight the Code of Conduct during the week, that effort is a great one with which to involve executive staff. A message from top leaders about how and when they refer to the Code can reassert the need to be familiar with it. If you have onsite training facilities, promote the completion of certain training modules by company officials.

What follows in this train-the-trainer packet are samples of how simple compliance and ethics messages can be incorporated into a variety of places in a variety of ways. For more ideas for activities and events, be sure to visit the Corporate Compliance and Ethics Week section on each association's website, at bit.ly/CE-week-HCCA or bit.ly/CE-week-SCCE.



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