The mission of making Compliance an academic discipline

an interview with Ryan Meade
Director, Center for Compliance Studies
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> *Compliance deals with speculative and practical ethics, organizational theory, psychology, finance, behavioral theory, and law. We need people who will help tie together the themes.*
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Compliance
TODAY

ARTICLES

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The other annual work plan, Part 2

» Maintaining an annual Personal Development Plan (PDP) is important.

» Defining the level of investment into a PDP will impact results.

» Be flexible with tools that assist with achieving results.

» Committing to technology goals can improve efficiency in role.

» Taking inventory of current behavior will identify areas of improvement.

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This is the second article of a three-part series devoted to a Personal Development Plan. Part 1 was published in the March issue of Compliance Today.

Consider this equation: Outcome = Investment x Goals. Although there is tremendous effort involved in developing a Personal Development Plan (PDP), simply having a PDP does not guarantee achievement. Investing in the PDP by dedicating time and resources will improve results. According to Mortensen, top performers spend 5%–10% of their income for personal development and read 5–10 hours per week.[1]

Just as many organizations finalize their budgets during the last quarter of the calendar year, ethics and compliance officers (ECOs) should consider allocating a budget for their PDP to achieve their desired results. When it comes to time management, ECOs should consider organizational tools, such as a calendar and/or a To Do list. Kibbe recommends using a calendar for high-focus activities and time- or date-dependent events.[2]

Some items require an annual budget, whereas other items may require an extended time period (see Table 1 on page 70).

Organizational expectations, family obligations, physical conditions, commute times, as well as a host of many other factors can impact time and financial investments. By making a commitment to invest, the flexibility to increase or decrease as deemed necessary remains an ongoing alternative. Investing in personal development is the best contribution to an organization.[3]

PDPs and technology

An ongoing challenge for ECOs is finding ways to maximize their effectiveness and efficiency in completing their constantly evolving list of assignments within their respective deadlines. Given that a population of one is not uncommon in the census of Compliance departments across the country, the need to optimize how one invests their

Table 1: Sample Personal Development Plan

Item	Time Investment	Annual Financial Investment
Listening to management audio books	10 hours (weekly)	$250
Reading reference guides and professional publications	5 hours (weekly)	$500
Attending national conference	4 days (annually)	$2,500
Completing online learning programs	Variable	$500
Exercise	5 hours (weekly)	$150*

* Includes exercise videos, weights, heart monitor, clothing and shoes, etc.

limited time is more a necessity than an option. Over the past couple of years, through networking with other ECOs, one trend or state of affairs is readily apparent: one of the most powerful tools available to every ECO is grossly under used—computer programs that are on workstations used by ECOs on any given day.

ECOs have used some of these computer programs for years, and they are familiar with some of the basic functions that they can perform. However, the level of effectiveness is very representative of the anecdotal remark: Does one have 10 years of experience using a computer program or one year of experience using a program which has been repeated 10 times? The point here is that with many computer applications, particularly Microsoft Excel, people often produce very impressive results by using brute force along with manually based processes which, in the end, represents a significant use of time, rather than learning and using a program's functions that would produce the same or even more effective results.

Invest a minute to save hours or even days. So, building on the Excel example, there are people who spent hours doing manual "look ups" of names against lists, because they were not aware of some of the powerful functions available within Excel that could accomplish the same task. Case in point, one ECO was taking two to three days every month to review a list of several hundred names against exclusion lists for possible matches. Needless to say, this person dreaded this laborious-but-necessary task.

After a colleague watched this person's primarily manual process and provided a little instruction on various Excel features to accomplish the task at hand, the cycle time to complete the lookup process was reduced from 16–20 hours to less than 15 minutes each month. How many ECOs would welcome the opportunity to save 16–20 hours a month that could then be invested in other tasks or projects? This is where the genuine value of investing in developing one's technical skills in the use of work-related computer applications makes itself known very quickly, simply as a function of the time it can save.

Identify your needs

On a micro level, deciding how to integrate activities into your PDP that can effectively develop or upgrade your computer application skills may seem like a question without an answer. Many people may think moving

forward is a paradox, because they may think, "I don't know what I don't know." That may be true to some degree, but here's an approach that has proven successful that may help in developing a PDP.

Take an inventory of some of the most commonly used actions or activities that you accomplish using your workstation. Do you receive a standardized text file, which you then import into an application (such as Word or Excel) that you then use to perform various calculations and present the data in a standard format? Are you constantly scheduling appointments or meetings in Outlook? Are you often querying groups of people for a response to a regular set of questions and then having to tally up the results? Do you have to compare lists of data for various purposes? This is a short list of examples that can be very labor intensive and time consuming, and they can be accomplished efficiently and effectively by using readily available functions on many of the computer programs that most people have access to. Start small with just a few tasks, and then move on to the next step.

Now that you have an idea of what you would like to learn about using your workstation, use your favorite browser or search engine and describe what you are trying to do in a short sentence or phrase. A terrific advantage of today's wired society is that what you are looking to accomplish has probably been asked and answered many times over by very clever people who have the gift of explaining things in very user friendly terms. You may be pleasantly surprised by how many options there are to learn how someone has performed a task similar to the one you are trying to optimize by using the unharnessed power of your workstation.

Explore the possibilities

An active PDP includes a healthy focus on increasing the use of available technology.

There appears to be this idea that to change one's current method implies in some way that what was done in the past was somehow wrong or ineffective. People who are open to developing their skills quickly learn that there are many ways to accomplish the same thing. Often what a person ultimately adopts is rooted as a matter of preference. For example, some people like to maximize the use of the computer mouse, while others like to use key sequences or hot keys to accomplish the same function. Our suggestion is to not limit yourself and learn both techniques. This way, you not only expand your familiarity with computer programs and their functions through the variety of interfaces that are available, but you also begin to switch back and forth, depending on the specific situations that call for these functions.

For example, when working with PowerPoint, it may be easier to use the mouse to point to a particular element on a slide to make changes to the appearance of a font, whereas in Word one might use the arrow keys and hot key sequences to accomplish the same task. As you develop your technical "IQ" in using your workstation, you may even impress yourself in coming up with solutions and options that you may never previously knew or even imagined. ⊙

Part 3 of this article will cover the physical element of the personal development plan.

Walter E. Johnson contributed to this article in his personal capacity. The views expressed are his own and do not necessarily represent the views of the Kforce Government Solutions, Inc.

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