

The Tools of Engagement

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Tell employees that they are to attend mandatory training on the organization's new code of conduct and you'll hear loud groans throughout the hallways. You'll also hear suggestions like; *"Just copy everyone – we don't need to discuss it"* or *"I don't have time for that – give the training to people who really need it"*. So how do you get people enthused about attending Code of Conduct training? You don't.

"The time when you can engage all employees is in the learning."

Engage employees through design

Few people look forward to training on compliance issues, yet most of them will admit that an organization needs interpersonal and ethical standards to ensure a safe and respectful workplace. They'll attend training because they have to and because they know deep down that it's the right thing for an organization to do. The time when you can engage all employees is in the learning. Sound adult learning design can take a group of sceptical employees and turn them into engaged learners who debate and discuss real-life situations. One of the keys is to design learning so that it respects the learners' sense of right and wrong, doesn't talk down to them and presents realistic situations where difficult decisions need to be made. Here are some suggestions for making your Code of Conduct learning sessions hit the mark.

- Spend more time on situations that relate to the policy rather than presenting the policy itself. Most codes of conduct, if written well, will make sense on first reading. Employees resent being lectured on things that they understand. The depth comes when they start considering specific situations and decisions that relate to the code.
- Let learners determine what the code means in given situations. Create a fun activity that gets learners to delve more closely into the code by considering a variety of actions and determining whether they are acceptable or unacceptable according to the code. In this way learners study the code, gain a working knowledge of it and start relating it to work situations.
- Use case study examples to get learners to consider how a code of conduct benefits individuals, management and the organization. Learners often come into training believing that codes of conduct are designed to protect the company. When presented with a reality-based case study, they start to see that everyone benefits when codes are understood and adhered to and when violations are dealt with in a professional and supportive manner.
- Focus on helping learners make thoughtful decisions. There is no way that any training can cover every possible situation. It's more important that learners think about and talk about how they will make decisions that abide by the code. Give them tools and guidelines for making decisions then let them practice using those tools when faced with ethical dilemmas.