

The Ins and Outs of Compliance Training Design: Five Essentials for Designing an Effective Program



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INTRODUCTION

Compliance training has become vital for virtually every organization across many different industries and geographies. Training requirements are numerous and diverse, and the stakes are high—ranging from financial penalties to reputational and security risks.

Each organization must deliver a program that addresses its distinct set of mandates and employee behaviors. At a minimum, you need to design and implement a program that meets all relevant requirements. At best, you can use the opportunity to nurture a stronger culture of compliance that supports business goals, engages employees and reinforces expectations related to compliance requirements and guidelines.

Based on KnowBe4's experience delivering compliance training to 8,000 organizations worldwide, this whitepaper provides five essential best practices to design an effective compliance training program:

- 1 | Align your purpose
- 2 | Create your community
- 3 | Build your plan
- 4 | Choose your content
- 5 | Maintain your program

To help you bring these five essentials to life, we offer tangible recommendations on the “Outs” (what NOT to do) and, more importantly, the “Ins” (what to do) within your organization.

1. ALIGN YOUR PURPOSE

OUT: Expecting once-a-year training to have an impact

Compliance training requirements delineate what you must do but don't always articulate how. It may be tempting to do the bare minimum in the form of a once-a-year blitz, which frames training as a low priority and often leads to poor knowledge development and retention. Similarly, it may be easy to settle for a “toothless” program, in which many learners don't see a downside to skipping their required training. That's another path to a weak compliance culture.

IN: Incorporating compliance into your organization's culture and operations with robust training delivered at a regular cadence

A better approach? Remember the true purpose of compliance training. It isn't to check a box. It's to empower your employees—at every level—with the knowledge and behaviors they need to mitigate risks while meeting business goals.

To fulfill that purpose, focus on building a strong compliance culture backed by a robust training program. Set clear expectations. Use positive incentives and celebrations of success to create excitement and momentum. Establish and enact negative consequences for employees who don't follow through on their individual training requirements.

Most importantly, provide a regular cadence of year-round content to help build and continually bolster compliance knowledge and behaviors.

2. CREATE YOUR COMMUNITY

OUT: Trying to do it all yourself

If you have been tasked with managing compliance training, you have been placed in a critical role. Even if you have tackled similar initiatives in the past, compliance training is an inherently dynamic ecosystem of rules and regulations. Requirements regularly emerge and evolve, making it impossible for any single individual to stay abreast of every external variable. Within an organization, no compliance manager can fully succeed without buy-in and support from senior executives and other stakeholders.

Successful training requires successful teamwork, starting with support from your C-suite.

IN: Building strong partnerships internally AND externally

Successful training requires successful teamwork, starting with support from your C-suite. Depending on your organization, that may require some education to help senior leaders understand the strategic importance of your compliance training initiatives—and the benefits of going beyond a “check-the-box” approach.

Once you’ve secured leadership support, conduct a risk assessment that covers all areas of operation. That way, you can create a comprehensive map of training requirements and build a plan for meeting them. As you get a handle on the full scope and scale of your requirements, it may become clear that your organization would benefit from the support of a third party.

No matter how you execute the program, don’t try to go it alone. Engage stakeholders throughout your organization, and for additional expertise and support, consider enlisting a compliance training provider to help drive program effectiveness.

3. BUILD YOUR PLAN

OUT: Launching compliance training without a tailored plan

What is the transfer of knowledge or the behavioral change that your organization must address? Which employees must complete training, at what frequency and via which method (online or in person)? How will you communicate with users about the need for training? Tactically, how will you track and report on completion/attendance? Strategically, how will you measure program success?

Just as there are no quick, cookie-cutter answers to those questions, there’s no one-size-fits-all plan for compliance training.

Your plan should include objectives that are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely (SMART).

IN: Creating a plan addressing all requirements and articulating clear objectives and accountability

Compliance training success starts with [a well-defined roadmap](#). Your plan should include objectives that are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely (SMART). Tap into legal resources to ensure that your plan objectives address regulatory and compliance requirements—and communicate widely and transparently about program goals.

Be sure to incorporate robust reporting mechanisms and data review processes. To help, consider standardizing on a single platform for enterprise-wide delivery, tracking, and management of compliance training.

4. CHOOSE YOUR CONTENT

OUT: Relying on one-size-fits-all, off-the-shelf content

Buying off-the-shelf content might feel like a cost-effective shortcut. It might even serve the needs of some of your employees. But one-size-fits-all training does not address the diverse learning styles, languages and individual preferences of your end users.

What's more, you could be violating federal or regional laws if you fail to provide role-specific content and/or accessible training for learners who may need accommodations. Off-the-shelf content can also introduce another risk: failure to cover critical policies and procedures or regional requirements that are specific to your organization.

In addition, be wary of [leveraging free compliance training from a third-party vendor](#). While tempting, free training often falls short of providing comprehensive, engaging and legally-robust education for your users.

IN: Investing in role-specific, learner-specific training tailored to your organization

As you select content for your program, insist on training that can be tailored both to your business and to your learners as individuals. Content should be specific to an employee's defined roles and day-to-day responsibilities. It should be delivered in multiple languages and channels, including "on the go" via mobile. And it should be offered in more than one format to accommodate individual conditions and learning styles. That may include the ability to customize content so it aligns with your business and compliance priorities.



5. MAINTAIN YOUR PROGRAM

OUT: Using “set it and forget it” as your compliance training mantra

Requirements continually evolve. Your employee base continually changes. As such, your compliance training program should be just as dynamic. Reusing training content degrades learning engagement and enthusiasm. It can also introduce risks in the form of outdated or otherwise incorrect information.

Similarly, not getting regular employee feedback can lead to delays in identifying and resolving issues with your content and/or delivery. It can leave you in the dark about what types and styles of training your employees like. And it can create compliance risk since some regulatory standards require continuous evaluation and revision based on changes to your business.

Finally, beware of vendors who bail after the initial purchase and implementation. That can lead to missed updates, delays in support, and suboptimal return on investment—putting future budget dollars at risk.

IN: Committing to robust feedback, reporting and data review—and acting on what these insights uncover

Create a maintenance schedule for regularly updating your proprietary content (this is another area where a trusted third party can help you stay on track). Beyond updating content, refresh and expand training types. In addition to using training modules and videos, consider taking advantage of posters and other documents to supplement multimedia education.

Seek out training content that enables fast, easy employee ratings and reviews. That gives you a direct line for gathering feedback from the employees you serve. Perform regular check-ins with leaders to solicit their input and to keep them engaged with the organization's training goals. Analyze this gathered feedback and adjust your program as needed, being sure to document and communicate the changes that you make.

Above all, maintain communication with your training provider. Tap into their expertise for assessing and mapping training requirements, onboarding and implementing your training platform and content, and learning from best practices.

THE UPSHOT

How you design compliance training is about more than the success or failure of your program. A failed effort could mean a loss of customer trust, brand damage and even legal fines and penalties.

By working with an experienced provider, you can accelerate your ability to design, implement and continually improve a robust compliance training program.

To explore opportunities to build or improve your program, reach out to KnowBe4. We offer services to help you address all five essentials—as well as compliance training AND security awareness training on a single platform.

[Learn More](#)  **About Compliance Plus**



Additional Resources



Free Compliance Plus Training Preview

See our Compliance Plus library of training content; search by title, category language or content



Free Automated Security Awareness Program

Create a customized Security Awareness Program for your organization



Free Phish Alert Button

Your employees now have a safe way to report phishing attacks with one click



Free Email Exposure Check

Find out which of your users emails are exposed before the bad guys do



Free Domain Spoof Test

Find out if hackers can spoof an email address of your own domain



About KnowBe4

KnowBe4 empowers your workforce to make smarter security decisions every day. Tens of thousands of organizations worldwide trust the KnowBe4 platform to strengthen their security culture and reduce human risk. KnowBe4 builds a human layer of defense so organizations can fortify user behavior with new-school security awareness and compliance training.

Deploying KnowBe4 results in users that are alert and care about the damage that phishing, ransomware and other social engineering threats pose. The platform includes a comprehensive suite of awareness and compliance training, real-time user coaching, AI-powered simulated social engineering, and crowdsourced anti-phishing defense.

With content in 35+ languages, KnowBe4 provides the world's largest, always-fresh library of engaging content to strengthen your human firewall.

For more information, please visit www.KnowBe4.com



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