
Driving Employee Engagement

Transparent and timely communications are more critical than ever before

Ai Lin Tay, Global Compliance Director at Johnson Controls-Hitachi Air Conditioning

Ethisphere spoke to Ai Lin about training and communications to accommodate the new remote environment.

Question: Now, more than ever, employee engagement is important, can you share some best practices on how to keep employees on the same page?



Image: Ai Lin Tay

At Johnson Controls-Hitachi Air Conditioning, we have a business continuity task force that ensures a consistent and coherent approach in terms of managing our response globally. In order to provide timely information on coronavirus updates, enterprise wide guidance and useful resources like FAQ, employee and community assistance programs. Messages from executive leadership and maintaining regular manager discussions during this period are particularly important in reassuring our employees that the company is first and foremost, dedicated to protecting the health and safety of our employees and their families, and secondly, working diligently with our customers and partners to ensure the continued functionality of critical infrastructure and essential facilities around the world.

Employee engagement is also about listening to our employees. The Integrity Helpline is one of the many channels in which employees feedback ethical and compliance related concerns. During this period, we've triaged COVID-19 related concerns to ensure these are prioritized for speedy resolution. We also proactively reviewed the nature and volume of integrity helpline cases lodged during this period in order to identify common COVID-19 related themes from employee concerns and to understand and navigate emerging key risks such as new conflicts of interest and workplace/business conduct issues resulting from the shift in the way we work.

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In recent editions of our monthly compliance newsletter, we've focused our messaging around the following themes:

- **Highlighting** that our channels for reporting concerns are available 'business as usual';

- **Resisting** the pressure to compromise on integrity and ethical decision making in this period of mounting uncertainties and business pressures due to the global impact of COVID-19; and
- **Reframing** what integrity means in relation to COVID-19. For example, we emphasize the importance of complying to the rules that the company has put in place to protect every employee's health and safety, and adhering to governmental regulations on social distancing. Rather than issuing general reminders to uphold company values and act with integrity, we provided COVID related scenario examples so that employees could easily understand and relate to. For example, acting with integrity and being a responsible employee means being transparent about your condition and not coming into office if you know that you are at risk due to exposure to a possible case.

Johnson Controls International is considered an essential service provider and we are instilling a sense of pride among our employees in what we do as a company by communicating the role our company played in the 1950s in supporting our customers to achieve the precise temperature and humidity required for anti-polio vaccine production.

Question: During this pandemic while employees are working from home and major platforms are being monitored remotely, flagging unethical behavior can be a challenge in this day and time, can you provide a few ideas on how you are navigating around this? Or have you implemented any specific trainings in light of this pandemic?

With the shift to remote working for most of our employees, travel gifts and entertainment spend has been drastically reduced but we are still continuing with our data analytics program for remote monitoring of expense reporting and travel reservations. With many companies working remotely, the risk of cybercrime has also increased. Even before this crisis, we conducted regular mock phishing simulations to train our employees to be alert and exercise vigilance on phishing attempts. These preparations prepare our employees for situations such as what is happening now.

We suspended live training globally early on and also postponed the deployment of planned online compliance training to allow the business to focus on urgent business needs which require their attention in light of the fast developing COVID-19 pandemic. While our training program has been de-emphasized during this time, we have increased our level of communication with employees. We are issuing regional relevant communications on a bi-weekly basis going forward providing guidance on what Compliance and Integrity looks like for our employees as they deal with this pandemic. In addition, we continue to publish Investigation Insights which features anonymized real case scenarios that can be used in team meetings to encourage dialogue and raise awareness about potential risks and the disciplinary actions taken for misconduct. This has been very well received by employees. I'm also happy to note that Management support has been integral in the success of these initiatives.

ABOUT THE EXPERT

Ai Lin is a seasoned ethics and compliance professional with over 18 years of focused experience. With a foundation in financial services and professional advisory work, Ai Lin is experienced in a diverse spectrum of subject matter expertise, including Internal Audits, Investigations, Sarbanes Oxley (SOX) reviews and consulting on Enterprise Risk Assessment projects for multinationals across various industries such as Manufacturing, Oil & Gas and Property. Ai Lin is also experienced in establishing compliance programmes and dealing with regulators such as the United States Department of Justice, acting as the APAC liaison in a Deferred Prosecution Agreement. She is currently Global Compliance Director with Johnson Controls-Hitachi and is responsible for overseeing its ethics and compliance.