

## How do you convince them?

by Joe Murphy



### Joe Murphy

*(joemurphycep@gmail.com) is a Senior Advisor at Compliance Strategists, SCCE's Director of Public Policy, and Editor-in-Chief of Compliance & Ethics Professional magazine.*

**I** have often heard people complain about the difficulty of reaching management, or the board, or any other group. How do you convince them to buy in to the compliance program, or support a key initiative, or do anything else you need?

Here is a suggestion: Just for now, stop thinking in the collective. Think about each individual in the group. Where is each one coming from? Which one is most likely to agree with you? Which one has a particular worry he or she is dealing with that has their attention? What can you do that will help them? How does what you are proposing possibly help particular individuals in the group?

In part, this means thinking like an effective salesperson. Good salespeople are good at listening and figuring out what the customer needs. So think of these groups as containing individual customers. What does each one need? What is each one thinking?

Often there will be at least one member of the group who will be more aligned with your objectives. Start with this individual. Talk about how to approach each of the other members in the group. If it is the board, maybe a member has been connected with another

company that had a serious violation? Maybe this board member will be sympathetic to preventing this from happening at your company. Has another board member had bad experiences with litigation? Maybe she will see your proposal as a way to minimize the kind of litigation she finds so irritating.

Another board member may resist you because he had to sit through boring compliance training at another company. For him, you privately explain how you, too, hate boring lectures and have vowed never to have that here.

When you are done, depending on the size of the group, you should basically know what each person will say. If you can, get those who agree with you to speak up early on, to set the tone for the meeting. Be aware that meetings can take on personalities of their own, so you want to set the tone right from the beginning.

Of course, if your proposal is really stupid, talking individually with members can save you from embarrassment! But if you are on the right course, thinking of the individuals and not getting lost in the group can help you achieve your objective. 