

# Compliance & Ethics Professional

November/December  
2012



A PUBLICATION OF THE SOCIETY OF CORPORATE COMPLIANCE AND ETHICS

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See page 14

**30**

**Improving your  
policy management  
program**

Andrea Falcione and  
Meghan Daniels

**37**

**Website cookie  
laws bring  
compliance issues  
across Europe**

Jonathan Armstrong

**43**

**Creative, artful  
approaches to building  
trust and shaping  
ethical culture**

Ted Nunez

**50**

**Money  
laundering  
101**

Maria  
Coppinger-Peters

by Roy Snell, CHC, CCEP-F, CEO SCCE/HCCA

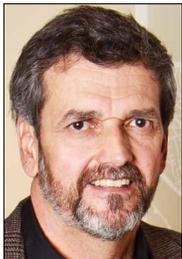
# Penn State University: A compliance failure of epic proportions

*Please don't hesitate to call me about anything any time.*

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**M**y biggest problem is not just with the Penn State University pedophile. My problem is also with the half dozen or more people who knew he was molesting little boys for years and did nothing except inform someone. My problem is that PSU had no compliance program. They may claim to have had a compliance program, but recent events prove the difference between an effective compliance program and a compliance program in name only. For over fourteen years several mature, reasonable, and highly educated adults knew a man was abusing little boys



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and they did nothing but “advise people” that it was going on. They did not fix the problem. That’s the difference between compliance professionals and the rest of the world. Compliance professionals advise, and if people don’t listen, then compliance professionals fix the problem. Untrained people don’t always step up.

Pedophiles, thieves, and all kinds of other bad people will always walk our streets. We will never ever not have bad people. What we can do, however, is catch and stop bad people. The pedophile should get most of the blame,

but the people surrounding him enabled his behavior by not making sure it was stopped. That is unacceptable. Many children could have been spared a lifetime of pain.

A compliance program is the best way to help average citizens (like those at PSU) who can’t step up on their own. A compliance program is an avenue to fix serious problems. Two simple steps stood between PSU and its epic failure. First, hire an experienced compliance officer who reports to the Audit Committee of the Board just like the head of audit. Second, have every employee sign a code of conduct that says, among other things, “I will report illegal and unethical infractions to PSU’s Compliance Officer, and if I don’t, I understand it may be grounds for dismissal.” A compliance officer, much like the head of audit, would have tried to get the problem fixed with leadership. However, much like audit, they would have gone to the board with leadership to explain that there was a dispute about how to resolve the problem. Years of child molestation would have been prevented. This is why we need independent compliance officers. Problems often require a trained individual with proper authority and an independent reporting relationship to the board. Doing the right thing is not always simple, as evidenced by Penn State, but effective compliance programs can make doing the right thing the only course of action. \*