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Compliance & Ethics PROFESSIONAL®

A PUBLICATION OF THE SOCIETY OF CORPORATE COMPLIANCE AND ETHICS

OCTOBER 2018



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Gerry Zack's investigatory reflex

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I am having a blast working with SCCE & HCCA's Incoming CEO, Gerry Zack. I watch him make decisions, and I am very impressed. I keep asking myself, "What has he got that others don't? Why is he different? What is he doing differently? How does he do it?" I have to tell you, my friends, not many people can play the game of business at the level Gerry does. Part of it is his extensive compliance investigatory training. He has tremendous investigatory reflexes, which is one of the keys to success in business. When a decision must be



Snell

made, he thinks, "Start investigating." Others just start talking, shooting from the hip, and blurting out answers. Gerry quietly starts gathering relevant information. I have seen him do this many times.

It's pretty funny. I am no business chump, but I will often start out the business decision-making process with a lot of animation. Gerry starts out the business decision-making process as if he is picking up a Rubik's Cube for the first time and examining it to see how it works before he tries to solve it. It's as if he picks up the business opportunity/problem and starts turning it over and over in his hands and looking at it from all angles. While everyone else is immediately deciding things and

pointing in totally different directions, or while I am wailing and gnashing my teeth, Gerry is quietly asking questions and gathering information. But that is not all.

After he is done investigating, Gerry pulls the most material facts out of a pile of facts and makes a recommendation or decision. Many people can't do this well. Instead of using the most material facts to support their decision, non-business types find a fact or two that supports what they feel like doing or what they want to do. Some people suffer from biased fact-gathering syndrome and are occasionally biased when they select the most important facts from all the available facts. People who don't know what they are doing look like they know what they are doing, because they are confidently making immediate decisions. Gerry, who knows what he is doing, doesn't look like he knows what he is doing, because he is quietly asking questions as if he doesn't know everything. It is one of life's many marvelous ironies. However, people who know business see what Gerry is doing.

Business decision-making has a horrible feedback loop. You might not know the negative impact of your lack of business acumen until much later...maybe years later. Even after people receive clear feedback that they are unable to make business decisions because what they worked on for the last year proves to be a failure, they will often rationalize it away by blaming the failure on decisions others made, or they blame factors that were "out of their control."

Unlike business, football has an immediate feedback loop. If I were to try to play professional football, I would know I can't play football in a few plays. I would get immediate feedback. I might get hurt, and I would immediately look like a fool. People would say, "What were you thinking? You can't play football. What made you think you could do that?" However, that is not how it works in business. There is little immediate feedback in business. When it comes to business acumen, people don't know what they don't know.

I want to get back to the skill Gerry has to pull out the most material facts. This is a very important skill. I have mentioned it before. Gathering facts or having the investigatory reflex is only half the battle. Not all facts are created equal. You must be unbiased in your assessment of facts. You just can't grab the ones you like or the ones that prove your point. Some facts are really important and others are not. You might even need to ask

others which facts are most important to be sure you are picking the right ones to base your decision on. I watch people look at all the facts available, and they pull one or two facts out that support what they feel like doing, or they appear to be pulling out "key facts" randomly. Some people leave very important facts out of their argument to make some business decision.

There is probably an 80% chance we all can learn to use the investigatory reflex each time we make a business decision. However, there is probably only a 5% chance we can be taught which facts are the most relevant. It's a rare talent in my opinion, subjective, and very vulnerable to bias. It's kind of like football—you can teach me the plays, but you can't teach me coordination and speed. You've either got it or you don't. Gerry's got it. Gerry has a one-two punch in business. He investigates before he makes a decision or recommendation, and he can determine what the material facts are like few others can. *

Compliance 101

SECOND EDITION

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