

Compliance & Ethics Professional

November
2015



A PUBLICATION OF THE SOCIETY OF CORPORATE COMPLIANCE AND ETHICS

www.corporatecompliance.org



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São José dos Campos-SP, Brazil

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by Roy Snell, CHC, CCEP-F

There is “good money” and there is “problematic money”

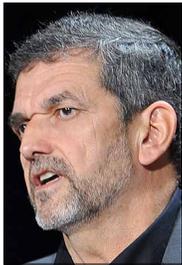
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SCCE and HCCA make an effort to tie our revenue to our mission. This revenue can come from memberships, publications, certifications, conferences, etc. But some associations have a material amount of their revenue coming from vendors or other business relationships, so they have a tendency to focus on those outside relationships. We love our vendors—but we want to love them because they are a part of our professional community, not because of the revenue they provide.



Snell

Many vendors have hired the best and brightest from our profession, so they have a lot to contribute and they have solutions for our members' problems. But we take relatively small amounts of money from vendors—for ads, logos on bags, booths, etc.—because we do not want any one arrangement to be too big to walk away from. We occasionally get asked to do something that is not in the best interest of our membership, and we need to be able to walk away. Money can make that difficult.

Some believe that AARP has lost their way because of their insurance products, that the revenue affects their decision-making. *The Washington Examiner* reported:

But the conflicts of interest are clear. The House Ways & Means Committee issued a report in 2011 studying 'AARP The

Insurance Company.' They found that the board of directors for AARP Insurance Plan was entirely drawn from AARP's board. The Ways & Means report also quoted Marilyn Moon, a former AARP executive, saying: *'The new arrangements with insurance companies create a tremendous number of potential conflicts for AARP, which is a powerhouse...AARP will not be perceived as a truly independent advocate on Medicare if it's making hefty profits by selling insurance products that provide Medicare coverage.'*

www.washingtonexaminer.com/article/2561985

AARP adamantly believes the money doesn't affect their decision-making. But even if they can overcome the conflict of interest, leadership's valuable time has been spent defending their position and managing the revenue—time that could have been spent on members.

We are occasionally encouraged to provide products—including insurance products—for our profession. But if we did, and it became a material amount of money, we may start to focus on the vendor, product, and revenue instead of our members. And this could happen even if it “fit our mission” of helping our members.

So it's not a question of, “Does the product relate to our members or mission?” It's a question of, “Could the revenue create a conflict of interest?” It may be a very legitimate business opportunity, and these deals may easily pass through the “legal legitimacy” filter—but not the “conflict of interest” filter.

Anything that can cause you to lose focus on the “typical member” should be feared. *